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CONTESTING LIBERALISM, REFUSING DEATH: A BIOPOLITICAL CRITIQUE OF NAVAJO HISTORY

Melanie Yazzie

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**CONTESTING LIBERALISM, REFUSING DEATH: A BIOPOLITICAL CRITIQUE
OF NAVAJO HISTORY**

By

Melanie K. Yazzie

B.A., Political Science, Grinnell College, 2004
M.A., American Studies, Yale University, 2009

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
American Studies**

The University of New Mexico
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to shik'éí, past, present, and future.

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It is difficult to know where and how to begin when the appreciation and gratitude is as monumental as mine. In many ways, this project is about the resilience and resistance of my people, the Diné, and of Native people everywhere. It is about the brilliant and vibrant intellectual and political traditions that we have developed out of a deep love for life, and for each other. As a Diné woman, scholar, and revolutionary in the twenty-first century, I pick up the torch of these traditions and move them forward. Whenever I take my proverbial pen to the paper, I carry my people and their histories in my heart. This project is a labor of this kind. As Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn says, it keeps the plot moving.

I am indebted to all those who have come before me; who have used their gifts to fight, protect, write, think, critique, and speak on behalf of all life. I am equally indebted to all those who refuse extermination. Who practice ways of life that guide us on a path that does not require the destruction of others. Who refuse to back down. And, above all, who refuse to stop being undeniably, fundamentally Indigenous. We will be here for forever. Of this I am sure. I hope this project contributes to this spirit of strength and history.

This project is also about the land, the water, our non-human relatives, and the spirit of resistance that glimmers wherever freedom has never been forgotten and where the will to thrive is strong. These relatives, who I claim and who claim me, continue to teach me much about perseverance, humility, faith, and strength. This project is for them.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the pivotal role that liberalism, particularly as it is expressed and enforced through post-livestock reduction era logics of tribal economic development, plays in advancing a relentless and violent form of U.S. settler colonialism bent on the elimination of Navajo life. I use Michel Foucault's framework of biopolitics as a theory of history to unlock, identify, and interpret what brought Navajo life into the realm of explicit calculation in Navajo political formations. I use the terms 'experimental liberalism' and 'extractive liberalism' to frame the two primary biopolitical formations I see at work in this period of Navajo history. I argue that both the experimentation with, and the extraction of, Navajo life emerged in the post-livestock reduction era as two key paradigms for reproducing the ongoing structures and designs of elimination at the heart of U.S. settler colonialism. I examine archival and oral evidence that sheds light on the ways that academic knowledge (the subject of chapter two), ideologies of nationalism (the subject of chapter three), and practices of rape and misogyny

(the subject of chapter four) function as technologies of death masquerading as promises of life, and I pair these elements of my study with a critique of the liberal underpinnings of Navajo Studies—a field long dominated by normative approaches to history and anthropology. I call for a reframing of Navajo Studies to what I term Critical Diné Studies. Critical Diné Studies draws from alternative political formations that materialized in the 1970s to resist experimentation and extraction. The politics of life that these political formations have developed can best be described as a refusal to die. Following Audra Simpson, I call these alternative political formations “Diné refusals.” Diné refusals have created equally influential historical possibilities by articulating a different politics of Navajo life that contests, redirects, and, ultimately, opposes the violent registers of settler colonial biopolitics that have motivated the liberal formations I track in this study. I therefore draw from their traditions to ground my approach to Critical Diné Studies.

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Chapter One: Matters of Life and Death: Violence, Diné Refusals and The Problem of Navajo Studies

Section 1.1: Project Overview: Towards Critical Diné Studies

On the afternoon of August 14, 2015, over a dozen young Native people—most of them Diné—staged a protest along Arizona Highway 264, the major thoroughfare that cuts through Window Rock, Arizona, the capital of the Navajo Nation. The group later stormed the Navajo Nation Museum and performed a sit in where it was rumored that Senator John McCain, who had descended upon Diné Bikeyah (Navajo Nation) by private plane to ostensibly attend a large celebration for the famous Navajo Code Talkers taking place in the Nation's capital that same day, was meeting privately with Navajo Nation officials. Both actions were part of a larger effort to protest McCain's general presence in Navajo land. While the content of these meetings remains unknown, many online commentators on social media guessed that McCain came to the Navajo Nation to continue ongoing discussions about settling the tribe's outstanding water rights. McCain had been heavily invested in Navajo water rights since at least 2012, when he and another U.S. senator from Arizona, Jon Kyle, worked closely with Navajo officials to negotiate the Navajo Hopi Little Colorado River Settlement (NHLCRS), one of the most controversial water settlements that the Navajo Nation has ever negotiated. Controversy about the NHLCRS arose when, in the spring of 2012, citizens from across Diné Bikeyah began to question the transparency of the negotiation process. Suspicions quickly flared into widespread public discontent, resulting in pressure from the Navajo public for the

Navajo Nation Tribal Council to reject the then-existing terms of settlement, which McCain and Kyle both endorsed. Although the terms of protest were as varied as the people who spoke out against the settlement, a common viewpoint held by all who opposed it was that it did not provide enough water for fulfilling the promise of Navajo sovereignty, livelihood, development, and cultural practice into the future, and therefore could not be trusted.¹

Although taking place more than three years prior to the August 2015 protest against McCain at the Navajo Nation Museum, public outcry over the 2012 NHLCRS was not a memory in 2015. In the intervening three years, a number of important Native-led political battles surrounding tribal rights, land, and natural resource development had risen to the forefront of Navajo public consciousness. The year 2015 was especially active. The movement to “Save Oak Flat”—a site of ceremonial significance for the San Carlos Apache and other tribes in southeastern Arizona—captivated millions and garnered international support to pressure McCain and other Congressional representatives to repeal a bill that authorized the development of a massive copper mine on the land in question.² A small group of young Diné people came together in January 2015 to begin a highly publicized walk called Nihígaal bee liná (Journey For Our Existence). The group, which garnered similarly widespread attention and

¹ For a synopsis of this viewpoint, see Melanie K. Yazzie, “Unlimited Limitations: The Navajos’ *Winters* Rights Deemed Worthless in the 2012 Navajo–Hopi Little Colorado River Settlement,” in *Wicazo Sa Review*, 28.1 (Spring 2013): 26-37.

² See <http://www.apache-stronghold.com/>, accessed May 13, 2016.

support, set out to walk to each of the four sacred mountains that surround customary Diné territory in an effort to raise awareness about the “crisis” of exploitative mining processes, climate change, and pollution in Navajo land, and to pray for the ability of future generations to carry on a Navajo way of life free from the violence of these impositions.³ And the Gold King Mine Spill, which released over three million gallons of toxic liquid into the Animas and San Juan Rivers on August 5, 2015 (just nine days prior to the protest against McCain at the museum), devastated farmers and local residents in the small Navajo community of Shiprock, New Mexico located in the northeastern corner of the Navajo Nation. Like the Save Oak Flat campaign and the walk for Navajo existence, the devastation of this toxic spill captured international attention with alarming images of contaminated, mustard yellow water flowing through the Animas River. It also mobilized thousands to send funds, supplies, and water to Navajo communities in affected areas along the San Juan River to assist with the ongoing emergency.

The August fifteenth protest arose within the context of these ongoing struggles to address the destructive effects of resource extraction, industrial contamination, and dwindling access to clean water on tribal lands in the region.⁴

³ See Nihígaal bee liná’s Facebook page for a more thorough description. https://www.facebook.com/walkforexistence/about/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&tab=page_info, accessed May 13, 2016.

⁴ In fact, many of those who participated in (and organized) the action were associated with both Nihígaal bee liná and the Save Oak Flat movement, both of which had been collaborating on various solidarity efforts throughout 2015.

As a brief and widely circulated video of the protest shows, contestations over the meaning of life, futurity, land, and violence, and critiques of the deceit, exploitation, and destruction practiced by agents of the United States like McCain who have advanced economically-driven agendas concerning natural resources, are at the center of the protest. The opening scene of the video shows protestors seated in a circle in the lobby of the museum holding hands while another group of young men are standing nearby, beating a drum and singing.⁵ Moments later, the group jumps to their feet and rushes toward the main entrance to the museum to exit and confront McCain, whose black transport SUV is visible through the glass doors. Although they are blocked from exiting by police, they quickly storm through the glass doors with the aid of a bystander and rush out towards the vehicle forcefully chanting “tó ei iiná át’é,” or “water is life.” The short video ends with several protestors running after the SUV as it exits the museum parking lot and yelling “get out of here” and “get off our land.”⁶

I open my dissertation with this recent moment in the history of Navajo political movements because it exemplifies some of the major concerns that have inspired this study. The phrase “water is life” (see Figure 1.1) that the protestors yell at McCain as he exits the museum is a common turn of phrase that has appeared with increasing frequency in artwork, protest signs, political slogans,

⁵ For a video of the actions, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIkEraYbUko>, accessed August 19, 2016.

⁶ Ibid.



Figure 1.1 Digital print by Jared Yazzie⁷

and even in spontaneous graffiti on the sides of water tanks, road signs, and abandoned buildings across the Navajo Nation. While this phrase is by no means unique to Navajo political contexts—indeed, it has become a rallying cry for Indigenous-led political movements all over North America and, as I write this, has become a conspicuous element of the visual narrative that has accompanied the escalating struggle taking place in the Standing Rock Sioux Nation to stop

⁷ This artwork was obtained from *Honor The Treaties*, “an organization dedicated to amplifying the voices of Indigenous communities through art and advocacy.” It was downloaded and reproduced for free and without prior permission from the artist pursuant to the Honor The Treaties website, which stipulates that this print is available for public use free of charge for copy, distribution, and transmission so long as it is not used for commercial purposes. See <http://www.honorthetreaties.com/#p3,s2>, accessed August 19, 2016.

the Dakota Access Pipeline—its rise to an almost commonplace parlance within the discourse of Navajo activist struggles and Navajo popular culture raises the question of precisely *why* the phrase has achieved such dominance.

For those protesting McCain's visit in Window Rock on that hot day in August, McCain represents a long (and ongoing) history of extraction—the literal mining and removal—of Diné life in the name of economic development, whether this development be in the purported interest of Navajo people themselves or in the interests of outsiders capitalizing on the vitality and security of metropolitan centers like Phoenix. As the protestors demonstrate, Diné claims to life that motivate the forceful chanting of a phrase like “water is life” are meant to stand in stark contrast to the death and destruction that relationships of extraction represent for Diné (and other Indigenous) people. Proclamations of life, especially as these are articulated in association with phrases like “get off our land” and the insistence on stating the phrase in the Navajo language with force, reveal the very real tensions—and dire consequences—between life and death at play in the relations of extraction that have defined so much of what has transpired for Diné people since resource extraction came to dominate modalities of governance, identity, and social configuration beginning in the 1920s when the first iteration of a centralized governing authority was established on behalf of the Navajo people by the United States to expedite oil drilling leases on Navajo land to outside corporations.

It is within this ongoing history of extraction—and the very real terms of life and death at the heart of its material and discursive content—that I position this

dissertation, both historically and methodologically. I ask, why have disputes over the significance, substance, and purpose of life itself become so central to the relations of power that have come to dominate Navajo existence? And what is the character of these disputes? Can we pinpoint a historical shift towards life and its ascendance as a principle of legibility within certain configurations and structures of power? In the course of answering these questions, I consider the pivotal role that liberalism, particularly as it is expressed and enforced through logics of tribal economic development and self-determination, plays in advancing the death drive of a relentless and violent—but nevertheless “cunning,” to use Elizabeth Povinelli’s term—form of U.S. settler colonialism bent on the elimination of Diné life.⁸ I examine archival and oral evidence that sheds light on the ways that economic development experiments, ideologies of nationalism, and practices of rape and misogyny, function as technologies of death masquerading as promises of life, and I pair these elements of my study with a critique of the intellectual history of Navajo Studies—a field long dominated by normative approaches to history and anthropology—and the foundational role of these disciplines in normalizing and reinscribing the fundamentally colonial (read: eliminatory) nature that underlies relations of extraction. Through these dual analytical and methodological moves, I argue for a reframing of Navajo Studies

⁸ See Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and The Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). My definition of settler colonialism as a structure of power intent on the elimination of Indigenous people comes from Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and The Elimination of The Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (December 2006): 387–409.

to what I have elsewhere called Critical Diné Studies.⁹ Such a reframing would take seriously how biopolitics and liberalism both function as technologies of settler colonialism, defining Navajo life as the process of elimination and death through the experimentation and extraction of our lands, bodies, non-human relatives, and lifeways. I argue that Critical Diné Studies must develop new theories of history, power, and critique that both interrogate, and move beyond, the frameworks of agency, structuralist Marxism, development, culture, and progress that have dominated much of the non-Navajo historical and anthropological literature—as well as Navajo-produced scholarship that presumes certain essentialized categories of culture, authenticity, and tradition—that counts as high-quality Navajo Studies scholarship.¹⁰ In the vein of Jodi

⁹ See Melanie K. Yazzie, “Narrating Ordinary Power: Hózhóǵǵí, Violence, and Critical Diné Studies,” in *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, ed. Lloyd L. Lee (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 83-99.

¹⁰ For a select bibliography of Navajo Studies scholarship that utilizes dependency, development, and structural Marxist frameworks, see Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Colleen O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005); Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). For works that utilize structural Marxist frameworks in their approach to culture, authenticity and tradition, see Colleen O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005); Joanne McCloskey, *Living Through the Generations: Continuity and Change in Navajo Women’s Lives* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Louis Lamphere, Eva Price, Carole Cadman, and Valerie Darwin, *Weaving Women’s Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007). For Navajo-produced works that deploy frameworks of Navajo culture, see Larry Emerson, *Hózhó Nahazdlii: Towards a Practice of Dine Decolonization* (PhD Diss., San Diego State University, 2003); and Navajo-related selections from Wanda D. McCaslin, ed., *Justice as Healing: Indigenous Ways: Writings on Community Peacemaking and Restorative Justice from the Native Law Centre*, (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2005).

Byrd's methodological call in *The Transit of Empire* for an "indigenous critical theory" that might "provide a diagnostic way of reading and interpreting the colonial logics that underpin cultural, intellectual, and political discourses," Critical Diné Studies centers itself "within indigenous [in this case, Diné] epistemologies;" grounds itself in the "specificities" of Diné contexts" and "looks outward" to engage European theories in order to address the social, cultural, political, and historical problems of settler colonialism that continue to condition and, in many ways, overdetermine, Navajo people's future.¹¹

This dissertation functions as my first attempt to execute a full-length, Critical Diné Studies project that channels the spirit of indigenous critical theory. In it, I diagnose and uncover the colonial logics and mechanisms of violence and elimination underlying liberal projects like the development of Navajo studies spearheaded by John Collier and his contemporaries in the 1940s; the implementation of large-scale economic development experiments in the form of planned farming communities in the northeastern part of the Navajo reservation in the 1950s; and the consolidation of a new form of Navajo nationalism with the economic windfalls ushered in by the discovery of high-quality coal and uranium deposits on Navajo land in the 1960s. As an important part of my Critical Diné Studies approach, I use Michel Foucault's framework of biopolitics as a theory of Navajo history to unlock, identify, and interpret "what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations" in Navajo political

¹¹ Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011), xxix-xxx.

formations.¹² Through biopolitics—which at once serves as both a theory of history, and a theory of liberalism in this study—I examine the various “pressures,” tensions, conflicts, and registers “through which the movements of life and processes of history” came to “interfere with each other” in the aftermath of the livestock reduction era when hundreds of bureaucrats, academics, lawyers, and teachers descended upon Navajo people to enforce a new and diverse array of knowledges, institutions, and normativities—the formations that Foucault identified as constituting biopower— that preached the unique promise of liberal ideologies of economic growth for securing equally liberal notions of tribal self-sufficiency, self-determination, and national development.¹³ Moreover, biopolitics is a relevant methodological tool for this study because it illuminates how struggles over life come to determine historical movement, and, more specifically, how they came to determine material conditions in the Navajo context precisely because liberal desires for tribal development and economic growth placed Navajo life at the center of academic experiments, studies, and aggressive economization policies like resource extraction. In other words, an approach to reconstructing Diné history that centers biopolitics allows for an explanation of how Navajo life became a main field of intelligibility through which history unfolded. It also provides a historical method for scholars to track the proliferate trajectories, formations, and projects concentrating on Navajo life as

¹² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 142.

¹³ *Ibid.*

these have unfolded in their fullest material complexities without reducing historical movements, as Navajo Studies scholars often have, to ahistorical matters of cultural renewal, cultural agency, or cultural resilience demonstrated by Navajo people in the face of—and in spite of—widespread historical change.¹⁴

I use the terms ‘experimental liberalism’ and ‘extractive liberalism’ to frame the two primary liberal biopolitical formations I see at work in this period of Navajo history. I argue that both the experimentation with, and the extraction of, Navajo life emerged in this historical period as two key paradigms for reproducing the ongoing structures and designs of elimination at the heart of U.S. settler colonialism. Operating through liberal aspirations for Navajo growth, economization, development, and self-determination, the paradigms of experimental liberalism and extractive liberalism differ from earlier liberal and/or biopolitical regimes of intelligibility in that they created new material trajectories and sociohistorical conditions for Navajo people that were meant to align with distinctly experimental and extractive biopolitical ideologies for tribal (and more generally, liberal) development that sustained mid-twentieth century approaches to federal Indian policy, foreign policy, popular culture, law, and political economy in the United States. Although the archive does not go so far as to support the

¹⁴ Indeed, Foucault argued that “in order to make a concrete analysis of power relations...we must begin by letting them operate in their multiplicity, their differences, their specificity, and their reversibility; we must...study them as relations of force that intersect, refer to one another, converge, or, on the contrary, come into conflict and strive to negate one another.” See Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 1997/2003), 265-66. A Critical Diné Studies approach would start from these same suppositions about the actually existing complexity of power relations.

claim that biopolitics is a discursive regime unique to this period of Navajo history (or American liberalism, for that matter), the evidence does reveal that experimentation and extraction ascended as two key modes of organizing prevailing changes in the fields of power related to Indian administration and American liberalism more broadly, and they are therefore useful mnemonic devices for identifying and parsing out the dynamics of liberalism, biopolitics, and settler colonialism at work in a given Navajo political or social formation.

I consult numerous different types of primary sources in this dissertation. Much of my argument relies on the government documents, correspondence, and personal memos that comprise the voluminous John Collier Papers. My fourth chapter, which excavates the settler colonial underpinnings of experimental liberalism by tracing the emergence of new forms of gender and sexual violence in Navajo social life that attended the privatization of previously blunt forms of elimination and extraction into new spheres and practices of silence, concealment, and containment, relies heavily on a select number of documents, particularly newspaper articles and biographical materials, about famed Navajo leader Annie Wauneka. This chapter also draws from the ethnographic field notes of Cornell University PhD students Tom Sasaki and Layla Shukry, who both worked with other notable anthropologists (and Navajo studies scholars) like Alexander Leighton and John Adair, on the Cornell Southwest Project during the summers of 1947 and 1948. Sasaki and Shukry collected data on Navajo social and cultural life in an effort to assist with government plans to implement economic development projects in the northeast

region of the reservation surrounding the small farming community of Fruitland, New Mexico, and I use their ethnographic field notes and published works to anchor my argument about the entanglements between rape, gender, economic development, and Navajo studies in this chapter. In Chapter Three, I draw from the writings and oral accounts of Diné activists like John Redhouse and Roberta Blackgoat to ground my discussion of extractive liberalism, which I argue works alongside experimental liberalism to exert a form of necropolitics intent on extracting energy from Diné life in an effort to eliminate Diné life ways and minimize the protective and defensive function of Navajo authority vested in its status as a political entity. I also examine newspapers, public relations documents from mining corporations like Peabody Coal Company, and mining trade magazines, to examine the role of famed Navajo tribal chairman Peter MacDonald in the creation of extractive liberalism.

All of the archival material I consult in this project has been generated by state and university sponsored research projects, as well as by corporations, both of which I stridently critique throughout this entire dissertation. As I point out at various points and moments in my argument, these types of projects overpopulate the Navajo studies canon, which emerged in the 1930s during the new era of federal Indian policy introduced by John Collier as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge fed by a diverse array of disciplines like medicine, psychology, anthropology, the biological sciences, and geology, all of which helped to usher in the era of Indian self-determination. With the introduction of extractive liberalism came, also, the development of new forms of knowledge, most notably

in the form of archaeology projects that were funded by extractive corporations like Peabody as public relations stunts meant to quell Diné discontent at the violence of removal happening on Black Mesa.¹⁵ As a methodological exercise in Critical Diné Studies, I use these Navajo studies sources in a way that their authors likely never intended. Indeed, my interests in excavating the colonial and biopolitical underpinnings of Navajo history lead me to use and analyze these sources in a manner far different from their function within the episteme of experimental liberalism. This points to another of my concerns regarding the development and articulation of critical historical methods, namely, that I see violence as a baseline concern for Critical Diné Studies' attention to the relations of power and violence that characterize Navajo political, social, and cultural history.¹⁶ Critical Diné Studies pays special attention to the ways in which gender, sexuality, nationalism, environmental factors and materialisms, land, social movements, religion, culture, age, and class figure in the relations of power and violence that animate colonial, capitalist and biopolitical formations in Navajo history and contemporary experience.¹⁷ I pay special attention in Chapter

¹⁵ For example, Peabody funded two separate archaeological excavations on Black Mesa conducted in 1968 by Prescott College, and a decade later in 1978 by Southern Illinois University. See George J. Gumerman, *Survey and Excavation in Northeastern Arizona*, 1968 (Prescott: Prescott College Press, 1970) and Anthony L. Klesert and Shirley Powell, Eds., *Excavation on Black Mesa, 1978: A Descriptive Report* (Carbondale: Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, 1979).

¹⁶ See Yazzie, "Hozhoójí, Violence and Critical Diné Studies," 83-99.

¹⁷ For a select bibliography of Critical Diné Studies works, see Andrew Curley, *Coal and the Changing Nature of Navajo Tribal Sovereignty in an Era of Climate Change* (PhD Diss., Cornell University, 2016); Klee Benally, "Ecological Destruction Doesn't

Four, which exposes the failure of anthropological and historical writings on Navajo women to account for the epidemic rates of gender and sexual violence in Navajo society, to developing a method and theory of violence consistent with a Critical Diné Studies program of research.

Along with a handful of other articles and books (which I list in Footnote 17), I hope this dissertation marks a paradigm shift in how knowledge is produced—and to what ends—about Navajo life. Rather than replicating the assumptions about liberal promise, culture, and development that guide canonical Navajo Studies, especially as this field has operated as a vehicle for the experimentation, extraction, and elimination of Diné life, Critical Diné Studies instead redirects the field toward questions of power, materiality, violence, capitalism, settler colonialism, and the myriad ways in which the politics of life infuse Navajo social and political formations. Culture is no longer an assumption or a framework for engagement; rather, it is treated with a critical eye and

Equal Diné Sovereignty,” accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.indigenouaction.org/ecological-destruction-doesnt-equal-dine-sovereignty/>; John Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System* (Millett: Redhouse/Wright Production, 2014); Selections from Lloyd L. Lee, ed., *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014); Lloyd L. Lee, *Diné Masculinities: Conceptualizations and Reflections* (North Charleston: Createspace Independent Publishers, 2013); Melanie K. Yazzie, “Unlimited Limitations: The Navajos’ Winters Rights Deemed Worthless in the 2012 Navajo–Hopi Little Colorado River Settlement,” *Wicazo Sa Review*, 28.1 (Spring 2013): 26-37; Jennifer Nez Denetdale, “Securing Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 24.2 (Fall 2009): 131-148; Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Jennifer Nez Denetdale, “Chairman, Presidents, and Princesses: The Navajo Nation, Gender, and The Politics of Tradition,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 21.1 (Spring 2006): 9-28; and John Redhouse, “The Geopolitics of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute,” (Albuquerque: Wrights Publication, 1985).

understood as a biopolitical category saturated with the historical complexities that attend the dynamic terrain of political contestation.

Section 1.2: Biopolitical Registers and The Emergence of Diné Refusal

While it is crucial to examine the dominant colonial formations of experimentation and extraction that have been routed through liberal biopolitical expressions, the archive also reveals that a number of alternative political formations materialized in the Diné context as a consequence of these two dominant formations. Following Audra Simpson, I call these alternative political formations “Diné refusals.” Diné refusals have created equally influential historical possibilities by articulating a different politics of Navajo life to contest, redirect, and, ultimately, oppose the violent registers of settler colonial biopolitics that have motivated the liberal formations I track within the disciplinary development of Navajo Studies and other sites of post-livestock reduction investments in Navajo life. Although not exclusive to Navajo people, these refusals, and the politics of life that have animated them, have been crafted primarily by Diné organic intellectuals and liberation advocates to respond to the effects of liberal biopolitical programs that centered the capacitation and development of Navajo life as central to the project of Navajo self-determination and nationalism, and particularly those programs organized through relations of extraction after the 1960s. The orientation of these refusals (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three), although diverse, possess a commonality: their political programs, politics of protest and activism, and intellectual frameworks all center on the diagnosis of violence and death, including cancer, forced

relocation, loss of sheep, and environmental destruction, that Navajo people were experiencing as a result of liberal economic development initiatives like commercial farming experiments in the 1950s and coal mining on Black Mesa beginning in the 1960s. They also advance sophisticated and well-defined critiques of colonialism. John Redhouse, an expert on the history of uranium, water, and coal extraction in Diné Bikeyah who rose to prominence as a key Diné advocate against colonialism in the 1970s, exemplifies the general orientation of Diné refusals. Throughout his thirty-plus years of political and intellectual production, Redhouse meticulously proved that resource extraction, and liberal economic development schemes in Navajoland more generally, operated as harbingers of death, violence, invasion and theft, despite the dominant position held by the liberal, pro-development tribal government and industry representatives that resource extraction would improve and secure Navajo life for the posterity of Navajo self-determination. He continually linked—through evidence—how liberal economic development schemes delivered a colonial politics of elimination and death. Indeed, as he argues in his 2014 memoir *Getting It Out Of My System*, uranium development on Navajo tribal lands in the mid-1970s was a particularly glaring example of the politics of death underwriting colonialism because it displayed characteristics identical to previous periods of U.S. settler colonialism:

with the renewed uranium rush, our tribal homelands were being invaded or reinvaded by outsiders. It was a foreign invasion or reinvansion. Land

was being taken. People were dying. These are the elements of war. The Indian Wars are not over.¹⁸

By casting uranium development and other forms of resource extraction as a form of ongoing colonial warfare, Redhouse typifies Diné political formations that have assumed an antagonistic character in the register of refusal. I concentrate on these types of formations—as opposed to other formations whose politics of life have formed around other agendas that cannot so readily be cast as anti-colonial or oppositional—because such formations have dominated the landscape of Navajo activism and grassroots organizing in the post-livestock reduction era precisely to defend Diné livelihoods against the violence and terror that liberal biopolitics has wrought. Indeed, the forcefulness of the August 2015 protest at the Navajo Nation Museum is a current example of this continued tradition of crafting a politics of life like “tó éí iiná at'é” to challenge, oppose, and expose the politics of death underwriting pro-economic development approaches to land, water, bodies, and animals.

Beyond their strident anti-colonialism, Diné refusals have assumed what I argue is a character of rearticulation. I follow Joanne Barker's deployment of the term in *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity*, where she draws from the theory of articulation first proposed by political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to explain how Native peoples use the law “to rearticulate their relations to one another, the United States, and the international

¹⁸ John Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System* (Millet: Redhouse/Wright Production, 2014), 106.

community.”¹⁹ According to Barker, rearticulations are “political antagonisms” that can lead to “social formations” other “than those characterized by colonialism and imperialism.”²⁰ Rearticulations in this context name struggles over power that are characterized by a Native-driven “politics of antagonistic reformation” that, as ongoing processes of contention, are impactful but “never complete.”²¹ Unlike the structuralist Marxist preoccupations with agency and structure in Navajo Studies that have tended to reduce Native agency to straightforward, zero-sum notions of resistance and acquiescence, rearticulation, with its poststructuralist Marxist concerns about the socially, politically, and relationally constructed nature of power, domination, subjugation, and resistance, allows for a more expansive reading of Diné responses to the violence of liberal biopolitics, one that frames Diné political formations as productive forms of power with the potential to redirect discourses of life and death towards different ends and different historical possibilities.

Although such rearticulations are transformative in nature, they are nevertheless articulated against, and therefore in relation to, the violence that structures political relations between Native peoples and their occupiers in settler colonial nation states like the United States. The politics of life that animate

¹⁹ Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 11. For original ruminations on the theory of articulation, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

²⁰ Barker, *Native Acts*, 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*

antagonist political formations of the kind that have arisen in the post-livestock reduction tend to center notions of cultural renewal and movements to reclaim and mobilize Diné notions of sacredness, identity, and philosophy, a move that risks essentializing and depoliticizing the antagonistic struggles over life and death that I see as fundamentally political and anti-colonial.²² Audra Simpson's concept of refusal is helpful here for reframing the type of Diné rearticulations of life I examine in this dissertation as political (rather than merely cultural), for she argues that acts of (Indigenous) refusal are thoroughly enmeshed in the realm of "political form, positioning, and strategy," which itself is always already conditioned by the constraints of settler colonialism.²³ Indeed, while the politics of life that distinguish antagonistic Diné political formations may certainly derive from cultural elements consistent with notions of the "sacred," they are not reducible to them.²⁴ And while she deploys the term to understand the movements and motivations that frame issues of Kahnawake sovereignty, nationhood, law, and tribal membership, her notion of refusal describes "contesting systems" of political "legibility and acknowledgement" that can travel

²² There are several contemporary examples of this tendency that exist in Diné political movements, especially those that claim environmental advocacy as their issue of focus. This is most apparent in the popular hashtag and catchphrase "Protect The Sacred" that abounds in the rhetoric of groups like Nihígaal bee liná and Save Oak Flat that center notions of the sacred in their politics of life.

²³ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 12.

²⁴ As Simpson herself argues, refusal is not based on an "esoteric or sacred knowledge" but, rather, on political contestations that arise under circumstances of colonial occupation and imposition. See Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 105.

to other spaces of anti-colonial contestation and political possibility like the oppositional politics that characterize the refusal of Diné people to accept the deadly colonial logics of liberalism masquerading as promises of life and futurity.²⁵

Simpson's insights regarding the complex materialities of settler colonialism, as well as Barker's clarification about the ways in which Native rearticulations open up new historical trajectories and social possibilities, are also useful for explaining how rearticulations manifest within the movements and tensions that structure hegemonic relations in the political contexts produced by settler colonialism.²⁶ As Simpson argues in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, settler colonialism, despite its desire for totalization and universality, is neither settled nor given; it is a historically and geopolitically contingent process that Indigenous people have always influenced, shaped, and redirected.²⁷ The history of Diné refusals attests to this fact, for Diné people have creatively generated different biopolitical projects in order to combat

²⁵ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 22.

²⁶ In their overview of discourse analysis, Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips define hegemony according to Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory, in which discourses are "constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses." According to Jørgensen and Phillips, "Different discourses – each of them representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world – are engaged in a constant struggle with one other to achieve hegemony, that is, to fix the meanings of language in their own way. Hegemony, then, can provisionally be understood as the dominance of one particular perspective" achieved through struggle. I use this discursive definition of hegemony to ground my discussion of Diné refusals that are rearticulated through biopolitical registers. See Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 6-7.

²⁷ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 7, 12.

and refuse settler colonialism's politics of death, thereby shaping its historical trajectories. The contestability of settler colonialism, then, conditions another of its key aspects, namely that it is shaped through contests over Indigenous life and death, which take myriad forms, with oppositional or antagonistic forms like the Diné refusals I examine in this dissertation being but one. In this sense, one could argue that Navajo and other Native political formations fashioned against settler nation states are also thoroughly biopolitical.

To my knowledge, Foucault himself never theorized or historicized biopolitics as a dialectic between its totalizing impulses to govern all life and the emergence of subaltern resistance to such totalization. In general, biopolitics for Foucault was a top-down formation that allowed very little possibility for alternative configurations of life and politics.²⁸ While the high rates of gender and sexual violence in Navajo social life certainly suggest that Navajo people are subject to Foucault's definition of biopolitics, activists like those who came to the foreground of Diné resistance struggles in the 1970s to contest extractive liberalism demonstrate that Navajo people have also engaged in biopolitics through an entry point more accurately characterized by what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling." As Jenny Bourne Taylor notes,

²⁸ This is likely because, as Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze point out, Foucault spent most of his career articulating an ur-history of structural power, tracking power as it worked to seize, shape, and gain access to all realms of human life through various apparatuses like law, knowledge, and institutions. See Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze, eds., introduction to *Biopolitics: A Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 1-40.

Williams first used this concept to characterize the lived experience of the quality of life at a particular time and place. It is, he argued, “as firm and definite as ‘structure’ suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities.” Later he describes structures of feeling as “social experiences *in solution*.” Thus a “structure of feeling” is the Culture of a particular historical moment...It suggests a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation...²⁹

At first glance, this definition of structures of feeling seems almost identical to Foucault’s idea of the episteme as an unconscious structure of knowledge and power that forms the limits of a particular historical period or epoch. However, the difference between the two lies in the ways in which structures of feeling form the fabric of alternative forms of life, politics, knowledge, and, indeed, feelings, that, when assumed as full-blown counterhegemonic formations, challenge the very idea that the hegemonic “common sense” of a given episteme is totalizing or given.³⁰ I argue that the emergence of Diné refusals, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three, is one such epoch of Navajo history that has since formed into a full-blown counter hegemonic formation characterized by an insurgent biopolitics that not only turned the tables on the settler colonial equation of Indigenous life and death, giving rise instead to a politics of life that staunchly rejects and refuses the deathly imperatives of settler colonial

²⁹ Jenny Bourne Taylor, “Structure of Feeling,” in *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory, Second Edition*, eds. Michael Payne and Jessica Rae Barbara (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 670.

³⁰ Although Raymond Williams fashioned the theory of structure of feeling within the context of literature and cultural production, I find his concept useful for explaining how counterhegemony finds its force in the kinds of social, material, and political action that characterize Diné biopolitics. Also, for a more detailed discussion of Foucault’s notion of the episteme, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1966/2012).

biopolitics, but also forged the conditions for an alternative politics of life premised on anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism to take root, one that we are seeing come to fruition in contemporary Indigenous struggles that have mobilized in the name of protecting sacred sites; blocking tar sands production, pipelines, and other forms of extractive capitalism; and addressing climate change.

In *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, Circe Sturm notes that counterhegemony, in a straightforward Gramscian sense, is a formation that “arises from lived experiences and material conditions of oppression,” which are themselves conditioned and produced by hegemonic domination.³¹ Sturm, like Barker, argues that hegemony (and counterhegemony) are “partial, messy, and incomplete.”³² The framework of counterhegemony implies that Diné resistances and refusals, as well as the relations of coercion and blunt violence underwriting extractive liberalism, and the relations of persuasion and cunning violence that underwrite experimental liberalism, are thoroughly enmeshed in the field of power relations and political struggles that Simpson underscores as central to the material force of settler colonialism on the ground. In this way, the Critical Diné Studies theories and methods I advance in this dissertation lead us towards a multiplicity of biopolitical imaginaries and material possibilities, not just those that are active within the register of refusal.

³¹ Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in The Cherokee Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 20.

³² Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 21.

Finally, I have chosen to concentrate on the antagonistic politics of Diné refusals because, despite their ubiquity within the landscape of Navajo politics, as well as their obvious significance in shaping Navajo history throughout the period under examination in my study, these formations have received almost no attention from scholars.³³ Much of the historical and political science literature on Navajo politics and Navajo political history has narrowly construed what counts as “political,” limiting political machinations to formal and institutional sites like the tribal council, the law, and federal administration departments. I address these gaps in the literature by undertaking some provisional methodological musings in the concluding chapter of this dissertation on the potential of Diné refusals for providing a fertile base from which to begin articulating the parameters of a Diné intellectual tradition that has a great deal to offer to the emerging field of Critical Diné Studies.

Section 1.3: Some Musings on Experimental and Extractive Liberalism

So far in this introductory chapter, I have identified experimental liberalism and extractive liberalism as useful terms for describing the major paradigms through which elimination and biopolitics have operated in the post-livestock reduction period of Navajo history. In this section, I want to briefly outline these two paradigms and unpack how they reproduce the violence of settler colonialism

³³ An exception (although still quite recent) is Andrew Needham’s book *Power Lines*, which discusses the upsurge of Diné anticolonial activism in the 1970s within the context of Phoenix’s metropolitan growth during this period. See Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and The Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

in distinct but interlocking ways. As I argue in Chapter Two, experimental liberalism experienced its most productive decades in the 1940s and 1950s when a fluorescence of state-sponsored research projects emerged and quickly culminated in the new field of Navajo Studies. The primary goal of Navajo Studies in this era was to leverage social scientific research to bolster federally-sponsored economic development projects and reform Navajo life according to liberal logics of economization, productivity, and maximization. With its focus on applied research in service to economic development, the methods, research projects, and forms of knowledge that emerged were experimental in nature; the researchers and policy makers who collaborated on these endeavors began to recruit thousands of Navajos into multi-million dollar funded experiments (like the farming laboratory in Fruitland, New Mexico that I focus on in Chapter Four) in order to test, facilitate, and maximize the capacity of Navajo test subjects for performance under the rapidly shifting post-war capitalist economy. In other words, these experiments created a new politics of Navajo life—a biopolitics—that turned Navajo life into a productive laboratory for testing the efficacy and limits of liberal notions of self-help, economization, self-determination, and growth.

With their emphasis on on-the-ground applied research in Navajo communities, such experiments gave traction to the widespread shifts underway in the character and form of American liberalism more broadly.³⁴ In the decade

³⁴ Indeed, the field of Applied Anthropology, which still actively courts the now all-Diné Navajo Studies Conference Inc. board, was founded in 1941 at the precise time

following the monumental shifts introduced by livestock reduction in the 1930s, economic growth and democratic promise dominated American liberal agendas, especially as the United States sought to reorganize its national and economic identity in the aftermath of World War Two. The historical record on mid-twentieth century federal Indian policy, domestic urban growth, institutional responses to global underdevelopment, and American anthropology, reveals that Navajo people were at the center of these agendas. Portrayed by bureaucrats, land developers, anthropologists, and policy makers as a national and, ultimately, global test model for development and self-determination, Navajo reform became nothing short of an institution fueled by endless investments and interventions—w experiments—designed to solve the “Navajo problem” (and the larger and longstanding “Indian problem”) through implementation of liberal ideologies of economization routed through notions of self-sufficiency, rehabilitation, capacitation, development, and improvement.³⁵ Whether through Congressional legislation in the form of the massive 1950 Navajo Hopi Long Range Rehabilitation Act that appropriated \$90 million for largescale economic and human development projects in both tribes, or several pieces of legislation a few

when experimental liberalism was taking shape. For more information on its founding, visit the Society for Applied Anthropology’s website at <https://www.sfaa.net/>, accessed September 24, 2016.

³⁵ The term “Indian problem” first appeared in the famous Meriam Report of 1928. The report, whose official title was “The Problem of Indian Administration,” was commissioned by the Institute for Government Research (IGR) and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The IGR appointed Lewis Meriam as the director of research for the report, which was intended to provide comprehensive information on the conditions of American Indians across the nation. You can find a full copy of the report at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED087573.pdf>, accessed May 15, 2016.

years later intent on terminating tribes' political-legal standing, the U.S. state and its many pseudo-governmental partners—most notably anthropologists—demonstrated a persistent interest in approaching Navajo and Indian administration as a laboratory for perfecting liberal ideals of economization and development through experimenting with Native life. Experiments came in many forms: the control of Navajo women's bodies; the commodification of wool shorn from Navajo-tended sheep herds; the transformation of land use through federally-subsidized farming projects; and the comportment of gender along strict heteronormative lines. With the aid of social science research, all of these experiments were meant to align, harness, and capacitate Navajo life—essentially, to economize human and non-human life according to the logics of maximum productivity—with new forms of labor and flows of capital and power underwriting the “gospel of growth” at the heart of post-war American liberalism.³⁶

Indeed, John Collier and his contemporaries labored throughout the 1940s to rehabilitate tribes by ending what they saw as the devastating, death-dealing policy of allotment and, later in the 1950s, the policy of termination. In their place, Collier especially sought to confer power and agency onto tribes by establishing tribal constitutions and promoting tribal self-determination. During his time as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and through his enduring impact on Navajo administration as the founder and president of the post-war Institute for Ethnic

³⁶ Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty In Common: The Politics of Community Action in The American Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 17.

Affairs, an institution that drew its impetus in large part from Collier's experiments with combining social science research and policy development in Navajo administration, Collier effectively established a new paradigm of tribal political, economic and social organization that has endured through discourses of self-determination and economic development premised on the incorporation of tribes and individual Indians into liberal modalities and their attending biopolitical social and political configurations.

While incorporation into liberal schemes of life appeared to deliver the promise of democracy and progress to Native peoples, I argue that liberal development projects in the post-livestock reduction era simply reproduced the larger structure of elimination through a new paradigm of state intervention into Native life. Within settler colonial contexts like the U.S., the many forms of liberal experimentation worked to defer and deny Diné/Native political demands, as well as alternative configurations of life and relationality found in Navajo/Indigenous epistemologies that might challenge liberal expectations. But this is not the only way that experimental liberalism worked to eliminate Diné life. It also marked a shift from organized state violence of the kind exacted through the Indian Wars of the nineteenth century and aggressive allotment policies of the early twentieth century (the very approaches to federal Indian policy that Collier condemned so fervently and against which he organized), to biopolitical violence exacted through increasingly privatized, regulatory, and individualized experimentation with Native life, which happened most strikingly through new forms of gender and sexual violence, a key modality of experimental liberalism that I outline in more

detail in Chapter Three. Despite its self-congratulatory rhetoric of saving Indian lives and securing Navajo futures, experimentation essentially created new forms of Indigenous elimination and exploitation that were more difficult to pinpoint because they were made to appear as either the singular vehicle for fulfilling Indigenous political and personal livelihood (as in the case of agricultural activity in the Navajo Nation), or as non-political matters of the private sphere detached from structural, as well as academic, concerns (as in the case of gender and sexual violence).

Because of their passion for liberal ideals, experimental liberals like Collier supported and, in many cases, exalted the new boon in the 1960s that oil drilling, coal mining, and the discovery of uranium deposits under Navajo lands represented to Navajo life, vitality and futurity. In fact, Collier argued that these types of economic development ventures, which had been in place long prior to the advent of experimental forms of development in the mid-1940s, were as essential for pulling Navajo people out of their state of perennial destitution as experimental development ventures, which typically concentrated on fostering economic and individual self-determination through increasing the capacity of agriculture with projects like the construction of irrigation networks for experimental farming plots, the delimitation of soil conservation zones, and the creation of livestock regulation districts.³⁷ By the 1970s, the violent effects of coal

³⁷ As Collier notes in a foreword he authored to accompany the 1962 reprinting of his 1949 book, *On The Gleaming Way*, the Navajo “though oil and gas and mineral developments, in the last decade has grown wealthy as a body corporate. A Tribal Council, now genuinely “grass-rooted,” is using the scores of millions in varied

mining on Black Mesa and the political economic restructuring and population shifts in reservation border towns like Farmington, New Mexico that attended the rapid development of coal and oil extraction in the northeastern corner of the Navajo Nation, were being felt by everyday Diné people. They began to question the ethics of these forms of economic development, which they argued introduced aggressive forms of racism, dispossession, environmental destruction, and the dissolution of traditional ways of life, into the very fabric of Diné society.³⁸ An outpouring of activism—some of the most important in the history of twentieth century American Indian political movements—erupted to address these concerns. While I go into more detail about this history in Chapter Three, for the purposes of this introduction I want to point out that these new Diné political movements emerged to combat the politics of death that fueled a version of Navajo self-determination and economic development premised on resource extraction. The political platforms and resistance strategies devised by Diné activists drew a clear parallel between the extraction of coal, oil, and uranium, and the extraction of life from Diné people and Diné lands. Although other Navajo actors, such as tribal council delegates, had in the past questioned

enterprises toward the long future of the Navajo people.” John Collier, foreword to *On the Gleaming Way: Navajos, Eastern Pueblos, Zuñis, Hopis, Apaches and Their Land and Their Meanings to The World* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1949/1962), no page given.

³⁸ For a selective sample of these perspectives, see historian Andrew Needham’s examination of editorials, drawings, and manifestos from grassroots Diné people and groups that entered public discourse in the 1970s in publications like *Navajo Times* and *Diné Baa-Hani*. Andrew Needham, “A Piece of The Action,” in *Power Lines: Phoenix and The Making of The Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 213-245.

the long-term effects of resource extraction, it was not until organized Diné efforts emerged in the 1970s to resist the violence of resource extraction in Black Mesa and Farmington that the framework and impact of extractive liberalism came into fullest view. My thesis on extractive liberalism thus comes from the work of these Diné activists who initiated highly organized resistance struggles and who exposed the relations of violence underwriting both experimentation and extraction.³⁹

Section 1.4: On The Limits of Culture in Frameworks of Extraction

In the opening section of this chapter where I outline the interventions and methodological possibilities made possible by the transition from Navajo Studies to Critical Diné Studies, I make a few passing claims about the ways in which a Critical Diné Studies approach treats notions of culture, tradition, and authenticity differently than previous studies that have dominated Navajo Studies. I argue that culture should no longer operate as an assumption or a framework for engagement in the milieu of Critical Diné Studies; rather, it ought to be treated with a critical eye and understood as a biopolitical category saturated with the historical complexities that attend the dynamic terrain of political contestation. In this section, I draw from the argument that I advance in the concluding chapter of this dissertation in order to elaborate on these claims and provide a preliminary orientation to the type of Diné intellectual tradition I trace in this dissertation. In that chapter, I stage an Indigenous feminist intervention into discourses of the

³⁹ See Redhouse, *Getting It Out of My System*.

sacred that are currently circulating in Diné political formations that center on the notion of “resource colonization.”⁴⁰ I argue that, by limiting their interpretation of resistance against extractive liberalism to one that presumes a defense against the violation of the sanctity of Navajo culture and religion, Diné activists who advocate this notion on terms of religious freedom and protection/defense of sacred sites tend to reduce the totality of Diné resistance struggles to matters of spirituality or cultural difference. And while their political programs, politics of protest and activism, and intellectual frameworks all center on the diagnosis of violence and death inherent to the capitalist and colonial underpinnings of liberal development schemes in Diné Bikeyah, their reliance on certain essentialized understandings of culture and authenticity leads them to often ahistorical conclusions about how resistance ought to behave in order to be truly authentic, and what kinds of solutions are authentic enough to qualify for pure cultural and religious standards.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For a synopsis of resource colonization, see my analysis of Klee Benally’s poster entitled “Diné Bikeyah: Resource Extraction” in Chapter Five of this dissertation. It is also important to point out that these uses of culture exist not only in formations that bolster forms of tribal nationalism steeped in the language and logics of heteropatriarchy—an articulation between tradition and politics that Joanne Barker and Jennifer Nez Denetdale have pointed as central to contemporary expressions of Navajo nationalism—but also in supposedly oppositional and radical political formations like the Diné refusals at work in formations like Benally’s imaginary of the sacred that underwrite his thesis on resource colonization. See Barker, *Native Acts*; Denetdale, “Securing Navajo National Boundaries;” Denetdale, “Chairman, Presidents, and Princesses.”

⁴¹ The types of formations that I discuss here tend to frame their anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics as a defense of the sacred. In following, they often frame their politics as a ‘return to the sacred’ or as an act of ‘cultural renewal.’ I discuss this in more detail in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

In Chapter Three, I certainly argue that oral histories given by Diné elder matriarch resisters from Black Mesa like Roberta Blackgoat and Pauline Whitesinger evidence an epistemology and ontology of life that is fundamentally Diné in origin and character, and therefore classifiable as cultural. However, I also point out that the notions of life that these women articulate, which are often routed through popular phrases like “dibé bei iiná” (Sheep is Life), a phrase as common as “Water is Life” in Diné political formations, are also thoroughly political, since their utterance occurs *in response to* and *in relation to* a field of struggle thoroughly enmeshed in the political battles over life and death that characterize the on-the-ground landscape of post-livestock reduction era Diné politics. In this sense, while demands like those issued by Black Mesa’s matriarch resisters to respect the religious rights of Diné residents to live on Black Mesa are undeniably cultural in the sense that they derive from a distinct Diné way of knowing and understanding the world—and ought to be understood as such—they are also political, and therefore cannot be reduced only to notions of the cultural.

I follow Joanne Barker here in urging Diné scholars and resisters to place notions of culture, tradition, religion, and authenticity within the realm of the social, which, as she notes, is “a much more nuanced and provocative approach for thinking about Native cultures.”⁴² In her discussion of the ways in which Navajo and Cherokee traditions have been used to alibi sexist and homophobic

⁴² Barker, *Native Acts*, 197.

forms of tribal nationalism, she argues that “Under any given historical and social set of conditions, cultures and identities are negotiated within the specific relations of power that define those formations.”⁴³ The given historical and social conditions, and therefore specific relations of power, under examination in this dissertation are the variously situated politics of life and death (i.e. biopolitics) that have defined the post-livestock reduction era of Navajo history. I thus argue that Navajo culture and its related discourses of the sacred, healing, and tradition, must be understood in relation to the biopolitical struggles in, and against, which they are expressed and formed. This would challenge the presumption made by some Diné activists that it is “self-evident that a necessarily radical or oppositional form of Native governance [or politics] will result if based on Native cultural traditions,” instead arguing that “Native cultures and identities are always in negotiation, transformation, change, and exchange and so never possess a moment of “authenticity.”⁴⁴ In other words, instead of assuming that Navajo culture or notions of the sacred are indisputable or somehow agreed upon frameworks for positioning one’s politics of resistance or refusal, a Critical Diné Studies approach that channels Barker’s insights would place these utterances squarely within the field of political contestation in which they emerge and analyze them in relation to the biopolitical formations structuring their articulation. This approach would similarly focus on how and why—and by

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Barker, *Native Acts*, 197-8; 216.

whom—culture is being invoked, and to what ends and gains, and consider culture as a product or a regime of truth that can be mobilized for certain political agendas.

On a final note, my use of Indigenous feminism as a method of critique is not meant to accuse or cast the politics of Diné refusal under consideration in this dissertation as sexist, *per se*, or to uncover the ways in which gender and sexuality structure these movements. Rather, I argue that Indigenous feminist critiques of the politics of tradition, culture, and authenticity provide one of the only existing frameworks for theorizing and historicizing the politics of culture, particularly in the context of Diné political contestation. Indeed, since it appears that the politicization of culture is pervasive within the normative political contexts of Navajo tribal governance and nationalism that scholars like Denetdale and Barker choose as their site of analysis and critique, it is no analytical or theoretical stretch to apply these critiques to all iterations of Navajo political formation, including the politics of life that underwrite Diné refusals. In other words, my usage of Indigenous feminism here is not so much to uncover or deconstruct the workings of gender and sexuality, or the violence of heteropatriarchy and sexism, in these political formations (although this is certainly a worthy project) but, rather, to mobilize the unique critiques of culture, tradition, and authenticity that have been developed by Indigenous feminists to analyze, historicize, and theorize the larger landscapes of struggles over power and questions of the political that characterize Diné political formations in all their manifestations.

Section 1.5: Overview of Body Chapters

This introduction functions as this dissertation's first chapter. Chapter Two, "An Archaeology of Self-Determination: John Collier, Navajo Studies, and The Dawn of Experimental Liberalism," provides a critique of anthropology, arguing that changes in the field occurring throughout the 1940s were instrumental to the inception and solidification of a new era in Navajo history, one distinguished by a certain form of biopolitics intent on maximizing the productive capacities of Diné life in the name of liberal notions of growth, self-determination, and development. I argue that Navajo Studies, under the overarching guise of the newly forming regime of IRA-style Navajo self-determination, was essentially a vehicle for Collier and his contemporaries in anthropology and Indian administration to test the efficacy of their liberal doctrines through experiments with Navajo life. I concentrate on the works of former Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier and renowned anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, both of whom were founding fathers of Navajo Studies, to demonstrate how experimentation was a central technology of knowledge that gave discursive shape and material energy to emerging biopolitical regimes of life, political expression, and social formation during this period.

Chapter Three, "From Experimentation to Extraction: Death, Diné Refusal, and the Rise of a New Biopolitics," traces the emergence of Diné refusals within the historical and political conditions of extraction that arose from the rapid development of energy resources, specifically uranium and coal, on the Navajo Nation in the 1960s and 1970s. I use Achille Mbembe's analytic of necropolitics

to describe and frame the politics of death that gave shape to extractive forms of liberal economic development like Indian killing in reservation border towns (epitomized by Farmington, New Mexico) that were experiencing an economic boon and population influx because of the windfall from coal gasification, uranium mining, and coal mining in nearby locales. I focus on the legacy of one of the Navajo Nation's most well-known tribal chairmen/presidents, Peter MacDonald, and his involvement with the powerful Council of Energy Resource Tribes, to demonstrate the almost total convergence of ideologies of extraction and necropolitical practices with the ascendance of the newly formed Navajo Nation as one of the—if not the—most powerful tribal nations in the United States (and perhaps North America as a whole), a historical development that resulted in the new formation that I call extractive liberalism. I use oral histories from elder Diné matriarch resisters, as well as the writings of John Redhouse, an important figure in the history of Diné refusals and critical intellectual production, to frame and elaborate the politics of life that Diné activists developed as they mobilized widespread resistance against the necropolitical death-drive of extraction in their communities. Finally, I channel Redhouse's brilliant political writings to intervene into the existing historical and political science literature on Navajo politics, which limits the realm of the political to formal and institutional modes of governance. I argue that the fluorescence—and diversity—of Diné refusals that came into existence in the 1970s proves a need to expand our notions of the political to include actors and groups like Redhouse, Pauline Whitesinger, Roberta Blackgoat, The Coalition for Navajo Liberation, and Indians Against Exploitation,

amongst others, who have profoundly shaped Navajo political history and intellectual production.

Chapter Four, “The Hidden Value of Rape: Experimental Liberalism and Economies of Navajo Womanhood,” argues that the obsessions with reform, capacitation, and rehabilitation underlying experimental liberal approaches to human and economic development within the context of Navajo administration worked to conceal, ignore, and in some cases, reproduce violence against Navajo women. I use an Indigenous feminist analysis to expose how the anthropological and historical studies that constituted the liberal experiments under examination in this chapter fail to capture or apprehend the violence that ails Navajo society: violence against Navajo women. I offer a provisional methodology for capturing such violence that depends upon poststructuralist approaches to Marxist critique that center on theories and methods of violence rather than culture, labor, and agency, categories that have long dominated white Marxist feminist studies of Navajo women, and which fail to acknowledge the actually existing high rates of violence that Navajo women have historically experienced. In order to understand why violence is absent from this literature—despite its astonishing ubiquity within the historical and ethnographic record—I spend most of the chapter deconstructing the ways in which rape, and notions of Navajo womanhood and gender more generally, became entangled with the logics of economization that were taking root in Navajo society during this period of intense biopolitical investment in Navajo political and economic reform, growth, rehabilitation, and self-determination. I examine the biography of famed Navajo

tribal council delegate Annie Wauneka in concert with two important social science experiments spearheaded by Cornell University researchers in the 1950s in order to understand the ways in which Navajo women were expected to conform to these liberal logics of economization. The result of conforming with these logics was to maximize the productive/economic potential of Navajo life on all fronts. For women, maximization occurred in the form of new spheres of labor and influence over domestic, political, and marketplace concerns (as evidenced by Wauneka's rise to power), but also through experimentation with Navajo women's bodies in the form of sexual torture like rape that opened up every aspect of women's lives to the panoptic imperatives of biopolitical intervention. I conclude this chapter by relaying several anecdotes about gang rape, domestic abuse, and sexism compiled from the ethnographic field notes of Cornell University anthropologists in a large experimental farming project in Fruitland, New Mexico in order to consider how a Critical Diné Studies approach might treat such evidence differently than the Marxist feminist or experimental anthropological studies that have dominated the literature on Navajo women within Navajo Studies.

In the fifth and final chapter of this dissertation, I leverage Indigenous feminist critiques of culture and tradition to position my critique of the politics of culture that animate certain forms of Diné refusal—especially those that pivot on notions of the sacred. I treat these Diné refusals as not merely sites or archives for analysis, but, rather, as fully formed, expert intellectual frameworks (what I call a Diné intellectual tradition) that deserve the same attention and critical

engagement as those derived from institutional academic spaces, which have historically dominated Navajo Studies bibliographies. In particular, I focus on the writings and intellectual production of Klee Benally to unpack the ways in which discourses of extraction, resource colonization, and cultural sanctity work together to inhibit more expansive and complex considerations of power and politics. Although I have a positive appraisal of the potential that Diné refusals hold for grounding a critical Diné intellectual tradition that advances intersectional critiques of power manifest in colonial, capitalist and heteropatriarchal violence (Benally's approach to Diné refusals certainly achieves such a critique), I seek to problematize (and politicize) the role of culture in these formations.

My critique of culture is political and methodological. It seeks to articulate and define a Diné intellectual tradition that does not reduce matters of political formation that self-conceive as resistance or refusal to culture or notions of the sacred. Why is this problematic assumption? Because, like anthropological and historical categories of culture-against-development, it depoliticizes and dehistoricizes politics by presuming that political movements are only based on notions of the sacred or culture, rather than seeing culture as a regime of truth that lends legibility to a political perspective rooted in struggles over power. I ask, how does biopolitics help us think differently about this? I consider how biopolitics is an analytic that allows us to take claims that privilege the rhetoric of sacredness, spiritually, and culture seriously by placing them within the context of a contestational politics of life.

Chapter Two: An Archeology of Self-Determination: John Collier, Navajo Studies, and The Dawn of Experimental Liberalism

...We are going to crush these men and these nations and their ideologies and their thrones of evil...we are going to organize a world of peace and justice and the rights of men. We are going to organize a world where the sentiment-qualified, knowledge-endowed economic man of the 19th century can indeed be content, stable in that stable new world...⁴⁵

- John Collier, "Total And Local Democracy For World Order" (1942)

Section 2.1: Introduction

In *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, Jennifer Nez Denetdale undertakes a project to "recover Diné intellectual traditions," which she accomplishes by using Diné oral traditions as the reference point for writing a decolonized Navajo history that challenges Navajo Studies' historic role in perpetuating the ongoing colonization of Diné life and land.⁴⁶ In the book's second chapter, Denetdale traces the history of the field by describing the major movements within anthropology and history that have defined Navajo Studies since its inception in the late nineteenth-century. As she argues in the opening pages of the chapter, "I provide a critique of Diné studies in order to illuminate how these studies have been projects of imperialism...and I offer a

⁴⁵ John Collier, "Total and Local Democracy for World Order (A merely suggested name for a suggested effort or organization)," November 30, 1942, Part 3, Series 3, Box 41, Folder 1, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Underline in original.

⁴⁶ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 18.

Navajo perspective on that past, one that places Diné philosophy at the center.”

She goes on to state that “In writing a Navajo history, I also outline a methodology that better fits the needs of the Navajo community” and that “provides a more accurate reconstruction of the Navajo past.”⁴⁷

Denetdale argues that the process of recovering Diné intellectual traditions requires a critique of what has counted in the past as knowledge about Diné people. She concentrates on anthropology and history because these two disciplines comprise the vast majority of studies on Diné life that populate the Navajo Studies canon. Noting the colonial underpinnings of many of these studies, she endeavors to practice and model a different kind of Navajo Studies (what she calls Diné Studies) that privileges Diné oral traditions as historical methods originating in the concerns, needs, understandings, and philosophies of Diné people. *Reclaiming Diné History* is the first published study in the history of Navajo Studies to critically review the history of the field, and it is the first study to attempt a “critical Diné studies method” informed by interdisciplinary frameworks like feminism, decolonization theory, and Indigenous historiography.⁴⁸ As the only book-length historical study in the field of Navajo Studies authored by a Diné person, it is also the first to work outside of—and across—the disciplinary conventions of anthropology and history that continue to dominate much of what is written about Diné people by non-Indian scholars.

⁴⁷ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 14, 18.

⁴⁸ Yazzie, “Narrating Ordinary Power,” 94

I begin this chapter with *Reclaiming Diné History* and its interventions into Navajo Studies in order to frame my own argument in the pages that follow. Like Denetdale, I provide a critique of anthropology, arguing that it was instrumental to the inception and solidification of a new era in Navajo history, one distinguished by a certain form of biopolitics intent on maximizing the productive capacities of Diné life in the name of liberalism. As I note in the introduction to this dissertation, I interpret this era and formation of Navajo history as an expression of *experimental liberalism*. In this chapter, I trace the specific moments and forms of overlap between scholarly studies and federal superintendence of Navajo life that began in the 1930s when John Collier's infamous livestock reduction measures and Indian rehabilitation programs forever transformed Diné life. Like livestock reduction, the creation of Navajo Studies was a historical watershed for Diné people and our non-human relatives. It came into existence at a time when Collier's philosophy of Navajo "self-government" and "economic self-sufficiency"—what I call 'self-determination' throughout this chapter—looked to early- and mid-twentieth century liberal principles of development, growth, progress, and democracy to rationalize widespread intervention into—and experimentation with—Diné life.⁴⁹ As a field of integrated knowledge drawing from science, anthropology, medicine, psychology, geology, hydrology, and

⁴⁹ Collier details his ideas about Navajo "self-government" and "self-sufficiency" in a well-known piece he penned in 1945 titled, "United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations." See John Collier, "United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 12.3 (Fall 1945): 265-303, 275, Part 3, Series 2, Box 49, Folder 61, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

agronomy, Navajo Studies was central to implementing the extensive scale of rehabilitation programs that Collier and other Indian agents had in mind for the Diné. Although he frequently cited the preservation of Navajo culture as the impulse behind his fervor for enacting widespread policy change amongst the Navajo, I argue in this chapter that Collier's obsession with "the Navajo problem" (as he frequently called it) was motivated by an entirely different concern, one embedded in his passionate dedication to American liberalism, capitalism, and imperialism.⁵⁰ I argue that Navajo Studies, under the overarching guise of the newly forming regime of IRA-style Navajo self-determination, was essentially a vehicle for Collier and his contemporaries in anthropology and Indian administration to test the efficacy of their liberal doctrines through experiments with Navajo life. I concentrate on various documents from Collier's voluminous papers, and on the published works of anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, who was deemed the "prophet" of what John S. Gilkeson has called "the New

⁵⁰ Although I focus less on Collier's participation in American imperialism in this chapter and this dissertation as a whole, it is important to note that his many writings on democracy, and the promise it held for steering American Indian tribes into a postwar future, cast American democracy as a global project. He frequently mused in his postwar writings about the unique benefits that American democracy held for rehabilitating Indigenous groups in American imperial and colonial territories like the Philippines and Guam. For a more detailed review of his writings on the global application of democracy in the context of rehabilitating Indigenous groups in the Pacific, see an editorial he published entitled "America's New Stepchildren," *Common Sense Magazine*, July 1945, Part 3, Series 4, Box 48, Folder 9, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. See also various of his articles in the IEA's monthly newsletters published from 1946-1950, Part 3, Series 3, Box 46, Folder 72, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. See also several unpublished notes and memos on the subject he drafted throughout 1946, Part 3, Series 2, Box 37, Folder 175, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Anthropology,” a major movement in the history of American anthropology that reached its culmination in the 1940s with Kluckhohn’s work amongst Navajo people, to demonstrate how experimentation was a central technology of knowledge that gave discursive shape and material energy to emerging biopolitical regimes of life, political expression, and social formation during this period.⁵¹

Kluckhohn’s rise to prominence within the field of Anthropology corresponded with his rise to prominence in Navajo Studies during the 1940s and 1950s, and his research in both fields was directed toward assisting with state reform programs being devised under the guise of the IRA. Such programs endured long after Collier left his position as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1946 through the type of social science experiments that Kluckhohn and other non-Indian practitioners of Navajo anthropology spearheaded amongst the Navajo. Concentration on this period of Navajo Studies thus sheds light on how *experimental liberalism* became a persistent and, in many ways, normalized epistemological formation that continues to dominate not only academic knowledge produced about Navajo people, but also the material and social conditions of everyday Navajo life that were transformed in this period through controlled experiments like grazing and soil conservation districts, small-scale agricultural studies, and Japanese internment camps in the region administered

⁵¹ John S. Gilkeson. “Clyde Kluckhohn and The New Anthropology: From Culture and Personality to The Scientific Study of Values,” *Pacific Studies* 32.2 (2009): 251-272, 252.

by the same anthropologists and federal employees who staffed experiments in Navajoland.⁵² Indeed, concentrating on this period of Navajo Studies sheds light on how these biopolitical experiments have achieved a level of social normativity amongst and between Navajo people. As I argue throughout this dissertation, experimentation with life has become one of the most potent regimes of truth in twentieth- and twenty-first century Navajo history, and it functions as one of the primary modalities of everyday social relations.

Although I discuss these normative dimensions of experimentation elsewhere in this dissertation (see Chapter Four), this chapter focuses on the political and historical conditions that gave rise to *experimental liberalism*. In so doing, it speaks to a broader concern that I share with Denetdale about how

⁵² In fact, Collier and other notable Navajo Studies anthropologists and experimental liberals like Tom Sasaki, one of John Adair's (another important anthropologist) anthropology PhD students who conducted his dissertation research at Cornell University's Southwest Project in Fruitland, New Mexico, used what they saw as the opportunity occasioned by the establishment of World War Two Japanese internment camps in locales like Poston, Arizona to conduct experiments on Japanese American prisoners similar to those that were already underway within Navajo studies to bolster the colonial administration of Navajo life. It is thus not surprising that as soon as the war ended, agents of Navajo administration called upon the Cornell Southwest Project to write a report on the opportunities that the soon-to-be deserted internment camp held for relocating thousands of Navajo families in order to promote further modernization and self-sufficiency. In her critique of the cacophony of colonizations that characterize U.S. imperialism, Jodi Byrd sums it up with this passage: "by naming the relocation centers and internment camps "colonies" within their internal documents, the United States revealed the deeper logics of removals and reservations, and Collier, who saw in Poston an opportunity to develop a social experiment that might innovate future management strategies within the Office of Indian Affairs, had already laid the groundwork so that Hopi and Navajo families might join those relocation colonies after the war ended to continue the work started by the Japanese American internees." See Jodi Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 187. For more information, see the report on the Colorado River resettlement project prepared by Cornell anthropologist Milton Barnett for the Cornell Southwest Project, Box 6, Folder 215, Papers of Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

Navajo history is understood and written. Indeed, this chapter argues for the utility of deploying a framework like biopolitics to read post-livestock reduction Navajo history. This is an important intervention into Navajo historiography, which continues to use what I argue Chapter Four are problematic frameworks of cultural adaptation, resilience, and dependency to interpret Navajo history during this same period. As a way to counter these frameworks, the biopolitical registers that I use in this chapter (and throughout the dissertation) serve as historical methods that capture the liberal and life-obsessed agendas that have dominated the intellectual, political, and social projects circulating in Navajo existence since the 1930s. This chapter thus advances critical concerns about the intellectual traditions and politics that have historically guided the field. It mirrors Denetdale's concerns with providing a more accurate account of the past (and present) that challenges mainstream scholarly and popular studies of Navajo life.

Section 2.2: John Collier, American Liberalism and The Fervor for Democratic Freedom

In this section, I examine Collier's retrospective writings on the impact and legacy of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) to ground my contention that Collier's philosophy of research-driven Navajo administration ought to be read through his overarching commitments to liberal democracy. Previous studies about Collier have offered straightforwardly historical and descriptive accounts of the circumstances surrounding his role in introducing New Deal reforms to

American Indians.⁵³ However, there are notable examples of historical treatments that have been critical of Collier.⁵⁴ As Denetdale has argued, Richard White's 1983 comparative study, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environmental and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*, "paved the way to understand the Navajo past within a broader global framework and highlighted the larger colonial forces" like "U.S. capitalistic interests" that created the conditions for "Navajo dependence on outside forces."⁵⁵ Using Marxist frameworks of dependency theory and world systems theory to interpret Navajo experiences with Collier's livestock reduction initiatives, White challenged conventional histories about Collier by pointing out that livestock reduction, rather than centering, as Collier argued, the preservation of sustainable Navajo economies and ways of life, actually created the conditions for Navajo decline through disastrous programs like soil conservation, sheep reduction, and district restrictions that forced the Diné into a permanent state of dependency upon the a

⁵³ See Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of The Navajo* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); Donald Lee Parman, *The Navajos and The New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); and Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Navajo Indians and Federal Indian Policy* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968).

⁵⁴ Peter Iverson, for example, provides a very brief section on anthropologist William Y. Adams, who, in a reflection on his time growing up in Window Rock during the 1930s, noted that livestock reduction reflects the "colonial mentality," arrogance, and "paternalism" of Indian agents under the direction of John Collier. See Iverson, *Diné*, 151-2.

⁵⁵ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 31.

powerful and dominant global capitalist system.⁵⁶ Yet, despite his focus on the impact of capitalism on Navajo life, White nevertheless seems more concerned with the kind of revelations that dependency theory offers to the practice and interpretation of American Indian history, than with a critical historical understanding of Collier's specific motivations regarding Navajo administration.

I build on Richard White's critical treatment of Collier in order to set my historical argument in this section apart from previous studies that have failed to engage with Collier's legacy in a critical manner. Although most of these accounts are based on the same archive (the John Collier Papers) upon which I base my analysis, they seem to either overlook or disregard the profoundly liberal character of Collier's writings, speeches, and reports, especially those he

⁵⁶ However critical *The Roots of Dependency* may be of the capitalist designs of livestock reduction, White, like Collier, nevertheless uses anthropological definitions of culture-based subsistence as evidence of Navajos' resilience in the face of widespread economic change, an assumption that I critique heavily throughout this dissertation. As one of the first southwest Indian histories working from a comparative perspective, *The Roots of Dependency* assumed a broad geographic view of the effects of Spanish and English mercantilism and, later, American capitalism on Choctaw, Pawnee and Navajo subsistence economies and cultures. For White, subsistence was linked to tribal sociocultural mandates. Therefore, as economic changes began to shape the fates of tribes like the Navajo, these communities adapted traditional cultural patterns to maintain stability (White, 1983, p. xv). Incorporating the colonial economy of the southwest into his extensive discussion about Navajo subsistence and cultural transformation, White portrays the Navajo as shapers of these changes in their superb ability to graft traditional cultural customs onto new forms of economic organization (White, 1983, p. 316). Using dependency as an explanatory framework for the cultural, economic and political choices tribes made to adjust to colonization, White highlights how Indians like the Navajo capitalized on their status as economically peripheral to manipulate the emerging colonial and American economic hegemonies for self-directed schemas of tribal security and cultural resistance (White, 1983, pp. 316-19). In underscoring the cultural agency wielded by Pawnee, Choctaw and Navajo people, it is clear that White's analysis of tribal dependency was also critical of the devastating effects of colonization on the eventual depletion of tribal subsistence. Indeed, for White dependency was "the result of white contact, the growth of the market, and the political chaos that [Europeans] brought in their wake" (White, 1983, p. 317).

authored in the decades following his tenure as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. I thus focus on this aspect of his political philosophy to draw connections between his approach to the implementation of Navajo self-determination and more broadly applied shifts in liberal thought and practice that happened between the 1930s and the 1950s in the United States. Such a focus seems necessary in order to understand how Collier's vision for Navajo self-determination was essentially a liberal project meant to rehabilitate and reorganize—or literally restore—life for Diné people.

During his tenure as the Commissioner and, later, as the President of an international organization he founded in 1945 called the Institute for Ethnic Affairs (IEA), Collier implemented numerous programs to advance the philosophy of self-governed self-determination at the heart of the IRA, his hallmark piece of legislation. The IRA required Tribes to establish for the first time 'self-determined,' centralized governments modeled after corporations and municipal governments. Like other populations subject to U.S. political economy, this shift had a profound impact on Tribes and Tribal citizens under colonial occupation by the United States. Tribes and their peoples were conscripted into the grand social experiments that materially produced mid-century liberal expectations for the capacitation of human and other forms of life to feed the rapidly evolving reorganization of the U.S. state toward massive economic growth following Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR) term as President, and following equally aggressive ideologies of free market liberalism that emerged in the decades that followed. Starting in the 1930s under Collier's direction and as a result of the

expansion of the social welfare State under FDR's New Deal, such experiments for Indians were performed by government-sponsored IRA programs like arts and crafts enterprises and stock reduction quotas designed to promote economic growth by maximizing Tribal profit, utility, progress, and development at all turns.⁵⁷ By the 1950s, the practice and ideology of termination that emerged from within the ranks of Congress sought the wholesale transfer of these experiments from federal responsibility to Tribes themselves to manage under the same guise of 'self-determination.' Although Collier fought vehemently against termination, citing it as a renewed effort by the United States to dissolve Tribes in order to privatize trust lands and gain unrestricted access to resources for national economic gain, the goal of both eras of federal Indian policy was the same: to capacitate Indians in preparation for optimal performance under a coalescing and massive shift in liberal democratic expectations for economic growth.

As Alyosha Goldstein has argued, American liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s relied on the framework of "growth theory."⁵⁸ Among the "principle features of growth theory" was the "preoccupation with economic growth on the part of policymakers and social scientists" like Collier.⁵⁹ Starting in the 1950s and into

⁵⁷ Indeed, in a foreword he authored for a newer edition of his 1949 book, *On The Gleaming Way*, Collier praised the wealth and economic security that the combined reforms of timber, arts and crafts, farming, mining, education and lending had endowed to Navajo people. See Collier, foreword in *On The Gleaming Way*, no page given.

⁵⁸ Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, 18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the 1960s, growth theory evolved into a theory of human capital. Human capital theory

defined individuals as rational, self-interested, profit-maximizing agents who operated along the same principles as capital itself. Thus...it was possible to make investments—in the individual through such means as education and training—that would increase future returns, including enhanced individual economic mobility and improved aggregate productivity.⁶⁰

From the 1930s through the 1960s—the precise period when Collier was most active within Indian and Navajo administration—liberal theories premised on growth and human capital theory were merging to create new forms of subjectivity, knowledge, and statecraft on a grand scale.⁶¹

Whether funneled through state-sponsored stimulation or the trickle down benefits of corporate expansion, preoccupations with economic growth from the New Deal onward remained the backbone of liberal thought and policy in the United States. Already brewing in the 1930s, these expectations required the reorganization of social relations according to new logics of capitalist accumulation—namely growth and human capital theory—that attended the burgeoning resurrection of classical liberalism, which precipitated the culmination of what is more commonly known as ‘neoliberalism’ in the United States.⁶²

⁶⁰ Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, 18-9.

⁶¹ Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, 19.

⁶² Indeed, Friedman would go on in the 1980s to serve as a major advisor to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, both widely recognized as harbingers of neoclassical liberalism in two of the most powerful empires in world history: the United States and Great Britain.

Following the liberal leitmotif of economic development introduced through New Deal programs in the United States in the 1930s, and addressing the horrors of fascism that exploded onto the international scene during World War II soon thereafter, political and economic philosophers like F.A. Hayek and, just a decade later, Milton Friedman, began in the 1940s to formulate new and aggressive theories of liberalism that resuscitated the ideas of classical liberals like Adam Smith and Alexis de Tocqueville to form a neoclassical ideology that championed and glorified the benefits of unrestricted capitalist economic practices represented by free market enterprise. They saw renewed faith in free markets as the only vehicle for ensuring liberal democratic values of freedom against the perceived fascism of centralized economic control demonstrated by socialist nations and expansive government programs like the New Deal.⁶³

Horrified by the very real possibility that another Nazi Germany might emerge in

⁶³ From the threat of monopoly represented by all forms of collectivism, including socialism and totalitarianism, that compelled Hayek, one of the progenitors of neoliberalism, to write *The Road to Serfdom* published close to the end of World War II, to the parallel threat of monopoly represented by the post-World War II Keynesian State that so alarmed Friedman in *Capitalism and Freedom*, the specter of absolutism (i.e. fascism) *cum* monopoly of power pervades the discourse of the liberal individual from Thomas Hobbes' 1651 *Leviathan* to Friedman's disgust with the Kennedy administration over three hundred years later. In each of these treatises, liberals like Hobbes, Friedman, and Hayek read the tyranny of centralized power as a threat to the political and economic system designed to guarantee individual freedoms at any cost. Liberalism thusly responds with equal force and vigor to reformulate the system in an effort always to preserve the sanctity of individual freedom. See Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962/2002); F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1944/2007); Thomas Hobbes, "Leviathan," in *On Violence: A Reader*, eds. Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). See also Karl Polanyi's Marxist analysis of neoliberalism in Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944/2001).

a different time and place, Hayek and Friedman also saw the liberal ideal of freedom as the only method to effectively prevent the repetition of this particularly gruesome episode in world history, a concern that, as I note in the fourth section of this chapter, also preoccupied Collier and the social scientists populating Navajo Studies during this era.

It was within this mid-twentieth century liberal milieu of growth theory, the transformation of human life into capital, exaltations about liberal freedom, and fear about the specter of fascism and other forms of monopoly, that Collier commenced and tested his ideas about tribal and Indian self-determination. Although it would be grossly inaccurate to categorize Collier as a neoclassical liberal on par with thinkers like Hayek and Friedman, like FDR, Collier nevertheless embraced—and often to the point of zealotry—vehement and renewed investment in the promise of democratic freedom that characterized New Deal and post-war rhetoric in the United States, including the rhetoric of economic philosophers like Hayek and Friedman with whom Collier would likely have shared very little else. Indeed, while Collier continued until the end of his career in Indian affairs in the 1950s to embrace the social welfare agenda of the New Deal era that made compassionate calls for the federal government to uphold its trust and fiduciary responsibilities to Tribes by expanding and improving bureaucratic programs and administration for Indians, he fell in line with other liberal contemporaries by seeing federal responsibility as a necessary precursor to the eventual achievement of liberation by Tribes and individual Indians through the adoption of ‘self-determination’ and practices like economic

self-sufficiency, individual responsibility, and democratic legal systems that would ensure Indians' ability to contribute to the overarching goal of U.S. economic growth.

In this sense, while seemingly at odds with the hostility that neoclassical articulations of liberalism directed towards socialist and socially-inflected forms of statecraft, the philosophy of liberalism that Collier developed through his work in Indian administration was, in actuality, deeply aligned with the shared and prevailing concerns of competing liberal agendas about hedging U.S. power through defending democracy and promoting U.S. economic prosperity by any means, at any cost. Indeed, during his final years as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Collier began to prepare for his transition from the role of a government bureaucrat to an independent advocate for democratic ideals. Starting in 1942, Collier began to consolidate these ideals into concrete plans for what the IEA. In a November 30, 1942 confidential memo entitled "Total and Local Democracy for World Order," Collier laid out a prototype for the IEA. In the memo, he states that the objective of the new institute would be

a War and Post War World order which shall search the heart and the powers of every individual on the globe until each individual consciously shall give from his own center something to the world of order. This means a world order...which shall rest its hope in developed democratic personality.⁶⁴

Heavily influenced by his efforts as Commissioner to get Tribes to universally implement the IRA, his plans for the IEA extended directly from his opinion that

⁶⁴ From Part 3, Series 3, Box 41, Folder 1, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Indian administration in the United States was a uniquely productive “laboratory” for extending and testing the limits of democracy.⁶⁵ For Collier, Tribes represented not only a cultural treasure to be saved through the application of American values like charity and moral rectitude, but they were also the most mistreated and wretched of all populations subject to U.S. jurisdiction, and therefore most deserving of the fair, just and equal treatment that New Deal liberalism epitomized for him.⁶⁶ Indeed, as Collier argued in an article entitled, “Our Indian Policy: Why Not Treat the Red Man as Wisely, as Generously as We Have Treated the Filipino?” that appeared in the March 1923 issue of *Sunset Magazine*, “We have destroyed the soul and blown out the vital spark from the body of these Indians.”⁶⁷ Published in the same year that Collier founded the Indian rights advocacy organization, American Indian Defense Association (AIDA), the *Sunset Magazine* article used the language of morality, civility, and compassion that characterized AIDA publications to portray a condition of Indian misery that demanded urgent action on the part of the government and U.S. citizens. Along with his AIDA work, this article serves as a precursor to the more fully developed version of Indian self-government and self-sufficiency he would

⁶⁵ John Collier, “United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations.”

⁶⁶ As Gary Gerstle has argued, the New Deal was seen by “ordinary Americans” as “above all a great moral crusade meant to restore justice, fairness, democracy, and equality to their rightful place in the republic’s economic life.” See Gary Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” *American Historical Review* 99.4 (1994): 1043-73, 1043.

⁶⁷ Part 1, Series 5, Box 30, Folder 54, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

champion during the New Deal era to serve as a vehicle for moral and ethical redress for previous violations of Tribal political and Indian human rights on the part of the U.S. government and, in some cases, citizens. The article also reflects his persistent attitude about federal Indian policy in which he saw the conditions of life for Indians as a nation-wide crisis that would end in catastrophe for Tribes if the federal government and white citizens did not intervene to rehabilitate Tribes and bring them to a level equivalent to other Americans experiencing the benefits of renewed democratic fervor under sweeping social welfare reforms and economic growth.

It is important to highlight Collier's compassionate calls for Indian advocacy and crisis management because the manner in which he framed such calls mirrored prevailing liberal logics of growth and human capital. Indeed, while he acknowledged the struggles and refusals that accompanied IRA programs like soil and land conservation, Collier attributed its success to its foundations in the moral imperatives of democratic action that fueled New Deal economics. As he argued in a 1943 magazine article entitled, "What the American Indians Will do in the Future For Themselves and For Us," the IRA was successful precisely because it was achieved "not by compulsion but through democratic action, though the free and sustained choice and voluntary sacrifice of the tribes."⁶⁸ As he would frequently state in dozens of writings and speeches about the success

⁶⁸ John Collier, "What the American Indians Will Do in the Future For Themselves and For Us," *Predictions of Things to Come* Section titled "Forecasts by Experts," Summer Issue 1943, Part 2, Series 4, Box 49, Folder 78, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT

of the IRA, Collier detailed later in the same piece how the introduction of democracy to Tribes and Indians through the IRA transformed their conditions of life and possibilities for prosperity in the future:

...Before 1930...very few steps had been taken to bring Indian energies and values and white energies and values into a two-way flow, each giving to each and taking from each. Hardly had it been conceived that the tribes and their individual citizens could rise into a partnership with other races in nation-building and in world-building...Indian tribes in their fullness and effectiveness of democracy now, are out on the farthest frontier of American democratic striving. In the solving of one of the dominant problems of our country and of the world—the conservation, through wise use, of natural resources—the Indians have established themselves as our national pioneers....they are accepted partners in the common-wealth-building of America.⁶⁹

For Collier, these gains in democratic spirit meant that self-determination not only suited Tribal and Indian interests better than other (previous) forms of federal Indian policy, it also had the best chances of saving Tribes for dissolution by providing intertwined mechanisms for the defense of cultural difference and (and often through) the promotion of Tribally controlled and administered programs for economic self-sufficiency, as well as more abstract ideals of democratic promise to which his political philosophies were enduringly attached.

Section 2.3: John Collier, The ‘New Anthropology,’ and The Emergence of A New Liberal Biopolitics

By 1942, Collier, who was approaching the end of his ten-year tenure as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, was making plans for his transition out of the position amidst the horrors of World War Two. The war deeply affected Collier.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

His writings from this period solemnly contemplated the war's ongoing catastrophes and their impact on the future of human existence. As was characteristic of his prolific and impassioned advocacy for human welfare, his writings about the war indicted the unprecedented misery, devastation, and despair it had brought to human affairs. At the center of his writings were a series of admissions that the "evil" of the war had completely unsettled his assumptions about the solidity of liberalism, which had long functioned as the horizon of his visions for progress in matters of human welfare, most notably in his approach to Indian administration. However, Collier refused to allow the war's gruesome lessons in human behavior move him to abandon his trust in liberalism. Instead, he employed fundamentals of liberal thinking to argue that the war represented an unpredictable and radical break from nineteenth century liberalism, which he saw as a champion of "the sentiment-qualified, knowledge-endowed economic man."⁷⁰ In place of this liberal economic man, both world wars had introduced a distressing trend into history; whole nations had discarded the tenets of nineteenth century liberalism, instead devolving into a state of nature characterized by primordial violence and evil originating in the "irrevocable mutations of the central nervous system before the ice-age."⁷¹ For Collier, the death and devastation of the war was not a consequence of the failure of liberalism, but, rather, the result of liberalism's inability to overcome the "human

⁷⁰ John Collier, "Total and Local Democracy."

⁷¹ Ibid.

evil” inherent to “the nature of man.”⁷² It was his zealous belief in the general good will of humanity—a belief he appealed to in every written instance of advocating for Indian rights over the course of his career—that faced the greatest upset from the war. The solution, therefore, was to envision, design, and implement what he called a plan for a “stable new world” order that would create the optimal political and social conditions—manifested exclusively through liberal democratic modes of subjectivity and policy making—for the economic man to thrive and, conversely, for fascism to wither.⁷³

With its focus on economic man, growth, and human capital, Collier’s war-era approach to liberalism reflected major shifts underway in American anthropology at the time, whose major figures were busy realigning its disciplinary identity with the war effort and, after the war’s end, with postwar reconstruction. Along with Margaret Mead, two of Collier’s contemporaries and major figures within the discipline, Clyde Kluckhohn and Ruth Benedict, spearheaded these changes. In his acclaimed 1949 book, *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life*, Kluckhohn, who had served as president of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) just two years prior, coined this change “the New Anthropology.”⁷⁴ The New Anthropology, according to historian John Gilkeson, was “anthropology with a message”—the message

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and the New Anthropology,” 251-272.

that anthropology now commanded “the knowledge needed to reform the world.”⁷⁵ Gilkeson goes on to note that, “In *Mirror for Man*, Kluckhohn declared that anthropology was “no longer just the science of the long-ago and far-away,” as it had been described by Clifford Geertz; rather, it was changing into “an aid to useful action.”⁷⁶ Kluckhohn attributed this shift to anthropology’s emerging interest in universal values, which focused on “the principles that undergird each culture.”⁷⁷ With its vision of universality and strong dedication to applied methods, the New Anthropology had a unique capacity to overcome the “unbridgeable gap” between “competing ways of life” that impeded the realization of a peaceful postwar world.⁷⁸

Kluckhohn’s enthusiastic vision for the New Anthropology paralleled Collier’s equally enthusiastic call for a new liberal democratic order. In addition to his efforts to secure a foothold for this new approach within mainstream anthropology during his time as the president of the AAA, and with the publication of *Mirror for Man*, Kluckhohn regularly participated in the interdisciplinary Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life. Founded in 1940, the Conference

⁷⁵ Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and the New Anthropology,” 251.

⁷⁶ Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and the New Anthropology,” 252.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

“mobilized American intellectuals in a democratic crusade against fascism.”⁷⁹ As part of the “democratic revival” of the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Conference provided an opportunity for scholars to share and create research agendas, methods, and theories that might challenge “the rise of totalitarianism abroad by affirming the American way of life” and championing the global promise of liberal democracy.”⁸⁰ Kluckhohn used the Conference as a platform for honing a method of universal values that would contribute to the its stated goals. Called “scientific humanism,” Kluckhohn’s method acknowledged human difference and diversity as facts of life that were also the root cause of conflict and, at a larger scale, war.⁸¹ In the context of promoting world peace through democratic values, scientific humanism was “the only hope for American culture” because it provided a scientifically calculable means by which to ensure that cultural difference would not lead to conflict.⁸² According to the method, the best way to achieve this objective was through identifying salient “aggressive impulses” across different groups and then extrapolating universal frameworks for understanding and interpreting aggression that could then be applied to different contexts.⁸³ Once

⁷⁹ Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and The New Anthropology,” 259.

⁸⁰ Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 165, quoted in Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and The New Anthropology,” 259.

⁸¹ Clyde Kluckhohn, “The Way of Life,” *Kenyon Review* 3 (Spring 1941): 160-79, 174-5, quoted in Gilkeson, “Clyde Kluckhohn and The New Anthropology,” 260.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Clyde Kluckhohn, “Anthropological Research and World Peace,” in *Approaches to World Peace: Fourth Symposium*, eds. Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein,

the dimensions of aggression had been identified, classified, and tested by researchers, policy makers could step in, draw from the research, and implement effective peacemaking projects designed specifically to minimize aggression.

In addition to their shared investment in the far-reaching potential of liberal democratic ideals, Collier shared Kluckhohn's zeal for the the notion that anthropological research ought to assume a practical function in the postwar order. In his vehement wartime tracts and manifestos against fascism, Collier, like his contemporaries, claimed that fascism could only be overcome by permanently reorienting the world toward what he called "the good life."⁸⁴ It was during this time of deep despair and reflection that Collier laid his plans for what would later become the IEA. He envisioned the IIE as a crusader for democracy. Like Kluckhohn's vision of the New Anthropology, the IEA would sponsor research directed at fostering world peace. On November 30, 1942, Collier issued a seven-page confidential memo outlining his initial plans for the IEA. The memo, entitled "Total And Local Democracy For World Order (A merely suggested name for a suggested effort or organization)," argued that the creation of an organization with a global reach like the IEA was imperative for battling the "evil" of fascism, which he saw as the antithesis to liberalism and democracy. This "evil," according to Collier, was totalizing in the sense that it could take hold of every aspect of human life, including the body (what he called the "human

and Hobert M. Maclver (New York: Harper, 1944), 143-5, 149, quoted in Gilkeson, "Clyde Kluckhohn and The New Anthropology," 261.

⁸⁴ John Collier, "Total And Local Democracy For World Order."

breast and brain”), affect and common sense (what he called “individual and racial personality”), and political expressions of nationhood and national ideology.⁸⁵ It had an “orienting influence” on everyday life to the extent that it exerted a “dominating value” in determining a “special program of life.”⁸⁶ Collier’s characterization of fascism as an all-encompassing evil that manifests through the total control of human life echoed Kluckhohn’s assertion that scientific humanism must draw from multiple aspects of the social and biological sciences to redirect all of life’s forces away from fascist tendencies.

Because of his view that fascism results in the total control of human life, Collier argued in the memo that only a large-scale research program targeting “the heart and the powers of every individual” could restore liberal values in the postwar world.⁸⁷ He urged American intellectuals to pursue grants and develop research agendas that might answer what he saw as the central guiding question for social science research in the postwar order: “How are personalities, capable of profound democracy, brought into being?”⁸⁸ He envisioned the IEA as playing a central role in advancing these new pragmatic and scientific directions, for

it is certain that more, and especially more of biologically, psychologically, anthropologically integrated, research is called for...When all is known that

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

needs to be known, application of the discoveries—diffusion of knowledge about them, and experimental application—will be the main task.⁸⁹

The IEA would thus serve as a global clearinghouse and engine for this type of research and practical experimentation with democratic values.

However, these projects were not aimed at assisting populations in the emerging First World, but, rather, at capacitating underdeveloped populations everywhere. As was characteristic of his writings and speeches about the proper role of Indian administration in ensuring the welfare of Indians under the care of the United States, “Total And Local Democracy For World Order” extended an impassioned, moral plea for bolstering the welfare of underdeveloped peoples all over the globe through development schemes that would prepare all individuals for enjoying the good life of liberty, responsibility, and education. Specifically, it focused on the ways in which the discipline of anthropology that Collier so praised could become a key agent in the spread of the liberal ethos of *economic man* on a global scale, which Collier saw as a site for liberal intervention and as a model for techniques of development in other “underdeveloped” contexts across the colonial and imperial world.⁹⁰

With their totalizing visions in hand for applying the liberal calculus of, in Kluckhohn’s case, scientific humanism, and, in Collier’s case, economic man, to large-scale projects and experiments meant to spread democracy and peace on

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ As I note in Footnote 50, readers can find a more detailed review of Collier’s writings on the global application of democracy in the context of rehabilitating Indigenous groups in the Pacific in various sections of his collected papers.

a global level, Collier and Kluckhohn essentially devised a new formation of knowledge (and politics) that made the capacitation and economization of human life—and Native and other forms of “underdeveloped” life, in particular—the centerpiece of postwar liberalism and American intellectual practice. Fashioned against the specter of a fascist monopoly, this formation desired an equally extensive monopoly of “profound democracy” that could be executed at the most minute levels of individual self-care and quality. As the first epitaph of this chapter suggests, a project of this scale would require a proliferation of methods, ideas, strategies and practices—in other words, research on all aspects of human life—to counter, undo and ultimately prevent the totalizing effects of fascist forms of power over human life. Such a project would also require the development of numerous other forms of political and social organization, state apparatus, ideology, and institutional expansion that could harness human life for the interests of liberal democracy, thereby crushing the evil of fascism and ensuring once and for all that it could never again gain a foothold in human existence. In other words, in the immediate postwar period the IEA and the New Anthropology represented and reflected what historian Gary Gerstle calls a trend of reinterpretation in American liberalism that took paradigmatic concerns with monopoly, freedom, and self-development and reinvented them in different historical and political contexts. In the case of experimental liberalism, such reinvention worked to position human life in its totality at the center of political,

economic, social, and cultural organization.⁹¹ Indeed, the expansiveness of Collier's phrase "new world order" implies that American liberals during this historical period were not only feverishly realigning human life with liberal values, but also transforming the very configuration and field of intelligibility of liberalism into what essentially became a new biopolitical formation realized through a global project of human development—Collier's economic man—that implemented, and experimented with, the frameworks of growth theory and human capital theory.

Section 2.4: Economic Man and The New Biopolitics

Because of my interest in tracing the formation of Navajo Studies and the related introduction of Indian self-determination into Navajo life, I concentrate on a period of liberal reform where the intertwined questions of biological life, politics, and economic growth were as central to liberals like Collier and Kluckhohn as they have been to advocates of the later period of neoliberalism. This leads me to understand biopolitics—especially formations routed through the framework of economic man—less as a defining feature exclusive to neoliberalism, and more as an enduring framework for the practice of twentieth century American liberalism more broadly, including New Deal and socialist liberal projects like Collier's that stood in stark contrast to the conservative calls for economic privatization and the shrinkage of the State coming from proto-neoliberals like Hayek and Friedman. Various situated biopolitical projects have

⁹¹ Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," 1046.

long given form to liberal preoccupations with reform, invention, alteration, and improvement. Historian Gary Gerstle calls American liberalism “protean” precisely because of the central importance given to reform and reinvention by American liberals throughout different periods of history.⁹²

Gerstle’s thesis about the ever-changing nature of American liberalism lends to my current argument about the long and variable history of liberal biopolitics. Within liberal traditions, reform justifies the never-ending reproduction of programs organized to improve the conditions of life for populations, regions, communities, or environments that are deemed to be in need. Collier’s own track record of reform work with dozens of populations like the Navajo, Guamanians, Filipinos, Japanese Americans, Pueblos, and others, proves this. Within this reformist milieu, American liberals like Collier have constantly retooled, reinvigorated, recycled, and reapplied liberal values like individual responsibility, self-interest, and profit-oriented action—all the hallmarks of economic man—to craft new sites for liberal intervention (what I call reinterpretation earlier on in this section). These sites, while varied, have often centered biopolitical discourses of life—saving it, improving it, preserving it—to gain legibility. This may help to explain why Collier, whose writings are saturated with liberal biopolitical language, philosophy, and attitudes, presented experimentation with Indigenous life as the only pathway for turning the tide of history away from death and towards life. Indeed, he frequently framed the IRA as a vehicle for life that would

⁹² Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” 1043.

bring an end to the death, misery, land loss, and atomization that characterized pre-IRA policies like allotment and assimilation by introducing happiness, productivity, self-esteem, freedom, cooperation, and other hallmarks of possessive individualism into Indian life.⁹³

The liberal figure of *economic man* has long been associated with biopolitics. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Michel Foucault traces the formation of “homo economicus,” a centerpiece of important and enduring configurations of liberalism that emerged in the eighteenth century.⁹⁴ He argues that homo economicus emerged as the key “grid of intelligibility” for the “new individual” that liberalism thinks into existence in the late eighteenth century, and which is replicated in neoclassical writings and rhetoric 175 years later.⁹⁵ He locates the origins of homo economicus in Adam Smith’s 1774 treatise, *The Wealth of*

⁹³ Collier’s early writings are replete with such characterizations. For example, see John Collier, “Are We Making Red Slaves,” *Survey Graphic*, January 1927, Part 1, Series 5, Box 29, Folder 34, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. See also John Collier, “Our Indian Policy: Why Not Treat the Red Man as Wisely, as Generously as We Have Treated the Filipino?” *Sunset Magazine*, March 1923, Part 1, Series 5, Box 30, Folder 54, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Collier also lauded the benefits of the IRA in his later criticisms of termination, which he saw as equivalent to earlier policies like allotment that operated according to a logic of “liquidation”. His papers contain numerous letters and memos from 1950 onward that denounce termination. For these writings, see Part 3, Series 2, Box 25, Folder 13, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

⁹⁴ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 227. Homo economicus is the Latin translation of economic man. Although I follow Collier’s own usage of the term in English when referring specifically to his writings, I use the Latin and English translations synonymously throughout the remainder of this chapter.

⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (New York: Picador Press, 2004), 252.

Nations, where Smith develops his famous notion of the invisible hand, or the supreme potential that a market free from all restriction holds for guiding and maximizing men's natural inclinations toward what he calls "self-love," the basic calculus of individual interest that drives the competitive spirit of market exchange as well as the specialization, or division, of labor upon which the growth of a nation's wealth depends.⁹⁶ The self-love that drives individual identities and behaviors fashioned in the likeness of homo economicus is one that operates according to "the internal rule of maximum economy," or the notion that individuals in liberal societies are rational, self-interested, profit-maximizing agents who operate according to the same logics as capitalist accumulation itself (human capital theory is a form of biopolitics that aligns closely with the figure of homo economicus).⁹⁷ In other words, homo economicus is a liberal framework for socialization, state formation, and the development of technologies of governance premised on recognizing and encouraging individuals to act in the image of entrepreneurs who make calculated decisions in order to maximize productivity and, thus, profit. The role, according to Foucault, of knowledge production within this framework is "optimization," or the cultivation of individuals'

⁹⁶ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations Books I-III* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1776/1997), 119-20. For a thorough treatment of Smith's influence on neoliberal theory, see Simon Clarke, "The Neoliberal Theory of Society," in *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, eds. Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston (London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2005).

⁹⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 318.

and collectivities' (like Tribes) productive capacities towards the logic of maximum economy itself.⁹⁸

In *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, Thomas Lemke expands upon Foucault's argument that liberalism is essentially a biopolitical project that operates according to the internal rule of maximum economy that animates homo economicus. Lemke examines dozens of works on biopolitics, mapping various interpretations and applications across several bodies of literature, including political philosophy, affect theory, Marxist critiques of capitalism and imperialism, and critical science studies. In a chapter about bioeconomy and human capital theory, Lemke argues that human capital theory, as it gained prominence in liberal reforms following World War Two, extended the obsession with formal economic growth that underwrote earlier iterations of growth theory into the social principles governing everyday life, a shift that transformed life into the primary field through which political intervention gained legibility and influence. As both Lemke and Foucault have argued, the specific form of homo economicus that animates mid-century human capital theories of liberalism is essentially a form of biopolitics that subordinates human life "to the economic imperative of valorization."⁹⁹ This form of biopolitics organized through the figure of economic man is akin to what Lemke, in his discussion of Melinda Cooper's 2008 book, *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*, points out are

⁹⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 319.

⁹⁹ Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 107.

the ways in which later forms of neoliberal capitalism after the 1970s came to adopt a “biological” format.¹⁰⁰ Beyond “simply becoming a new object of exploitation and expropriation,” biological life itself became the site of economic calculus and political motivation.¹⁰¹ As Lemke notes, neoliberal capitalism ““lives” from the vision of biological growth that can overcome all limits.”¹⁰² Such biological growth reflected and justified biopolitical projects like the IEA that experimented with biological life in order to promote the growth of political and economic aspirations for democracy and capitalism, which they hoped would permanently overcome the limits of fascism and evil.

It is thus important to understand Collier’s influence on Navajo history through the dual register of biopolitics and liberalism because such a shift opens up possibilities for seeing seemingly laudable and benevolent actions like the IRA, stock reduction, or agricultural experiments in a new light. Indeed, Lemke argues that “an analytics of biopolitics...enable us to perceive new possibilities and perspectives or to examine those that already exist from a different point of view.”¹⁰³ In many ways, identifying Collier as a liberal who embraced key biopolitical values and frameworks like homo economicus is an important intervention that places twentieth-century federal Indian policy—and twentieth

¹⁰⁰ Lemke, *Biopolitics*, 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Lemke, *Biopolitics*, 120.

century Navajo history—squarely within an American liberal tradition of biopolitical experimentation. This is a critical move because it opens up possibilities for drawing connections between the kind of life-giving biopolitics that Collier envisioned through experimental liberalism, and the actual death-dealing violence of biopolitical technologies of discipline and power that scholars have pinpointed in their studies of neoliberalism.¹⁰⁴

Section 2.5: Experimental Liberalism and The Origins of Navajo Studies

“[Anthropological] images of Navajos have been used in various ways to justify the historical treatment of them by a host of federal officials, missionaries, health officials, scholars, educators, traders, and so forth...”

- Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Chief*

Manuelito and Juanita (2007)¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ While other theorists have used Foucault’s notion of racialization to highlight the way in which biological life—especially human “life itself”—has entered the realm of political calculation, most, like Cooper, have framed biopolitics as a unique phenomenon of neoliberalism, a historical period of liberalism that began in the 1970s and which many scholars argue has distinctly biopolitical characteristics. See Didier Fassin, “Another Politics of Life is Possible,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.5 (2009): 44-60. For examples of this approach to biopolitics and neoliberalism, see Aiwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010); and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004). Moreover, many of these studies focus on the political aspects of biopolitics, often to the detriment of focusing on its economic dimensions. While Cooper’s analysis of the political economy of biopolitics is an exception to this general trend in the literature, Lemke nevertheless points out that “very few studies that employ the term “biopolitics” have pursued the question of how the politicization of life is intertwined with its economization.” See Lemke, *Biopolitics*, 116.

¹⁰⁵ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 18.

In this section, I trace the specific ways in which Navajo Studies participated in the emergence of experimental liberalism. As I have already noted, the IRA was the hallmark piece of legislation that articulated Collier's vision for Indian self-governance. The IRA and its numerous political, economic, and social development projects required the mobilization of thousands of administrators, researchers, and Indian advocates. Of particular importance for carrying out IRA mandates were academically trained social scientists, who Collier saw as instrumental for creating the optimal conditions for Indian rehabilitation to take permanent root in Native societies. Collier recruited the help of prominent mid-century American anthropologists like John Aberle, Ruth Underhill, Gladys Reichard, Clyde Kluckhohn, Alexander and Dorothea Leighton, and Ruth Benedict, to create test sites—what Collier often called “laboratories”—in tribal communities across the nation that focused on issues that Collier himself was passionate about, including soil conservation, stock reduction, and the promotion of Indian self-sufficiency through improving irrigation for farming.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of these test sites was to examine local conditions—their challenges, strengths, and specific cultural and geopolitical dimensions—in order to determine the most effective course of action that Indian administrators might take to ensure that the principles of rehabilitation would become normative structures of Indian life.

¹⁰⁶ Collier would frequently use the language of experimentation—and the term “laboratory”—in his writings. His most well-known piece in these regards is his 1945 piece “United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations,” which I cite earlier on in this chapter.

Collier was close with Aberle, Kluckhohn, and the Leightons, who had all, along with Benedict and Underhill, held official positions within U.S. Indian administration. Not coincidentally, all of these major figures within American anthropology also made their careers out of studying Navajo life.¹⁰⁷ As part of the disciplinary conventions of anthropology at that time, many spent years living with Navajo families, learning the Navajo language, and recording thousands of pages of raw data on every facet of Navajo existence. Their various appointments by the U.S. government as administrators of Indian policy related to Navajo life brought them into contact with dozens of Navajo communities across Arizona and New Mexico. Between the late 1930s and early 1960s, they all (including Collier) authored and collaborated on hundreds of authoritative studies, books, and articles on Navajo life, effectively creating the field of Navajo

¹⁰⁷ In *Reclaiming Diné History*, Denetdale offers a wide-ranging intellectual history of Navajo Studies, which she similarly points out has traditionally been dominated by American anthropology. See Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 17-50. Some of the most highly regarded accounts of Navajo ceremonial life come from anthropologists who designed their research to assist with the implementation of Indian policy, a school of anthropology that came to be known as 'applied anthropology.' As The Society for Applied Anthropology, which was founded in 1941 around the same time that experimental liberalism began to take hold on Navajo life through Navajo studies, notes on its webpage, applied anthropology promotes "the investigation of the principles of human behavior and the application of these principles to contemporary issues and problems," accessed September 23, 2016, <https://www.sfaa.net/>. The applied anthropology that helped to found Navajo studies exemplifies this approach. For a select bibliography of works by these anthropologists, see Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft* (Beacon Press, 1963); Ruth M. Underhill, *The Navajos* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956); Alexander H. Leighton and Dorothea C. Leighton, *Gregorio, the Hand Trembler: A Psychobiological Personality Study of a Navaho Indian* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1949); Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea C. Leighton, *The Navaho* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946); and Alexander H. Leighton and Dorothea C. Leighton, *The Navaho Door: An Introduction to Navajo Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945).

Studies and forming its canon out of the overlap between social scientific research and the administration of IRA-style federal Indian policy.¹⁰⁸ In *Reclaiming Diné History*, Jennifer Nez Denetdale describes this period of Navajo history as marking “a new era in Native-White relationships in which the federal government shifted from a determination to eradicate Native traditional lifeways, ceremonies, and language to a policy of tolerance, to promote the preservation of traditional practices and Native languages.”¹⁰⁹ With Collier shepherding this new era into existence as the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, a “contingent of experts,” most notably anthropologists, “descended upon Diné Bikeyah” to use “their expertise to influence” changing demands under his new programs of rehabilitation.¹¹⁰

The Navaho, an expansive 1946 study of then-contemporary Navajo life dedicated to John Collier and authored by Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, exemplifies these historical shifts. In it, Kluckhohn and Leighton argued that social scientific research and Indian policy had a profound symbiosis in the context of Navajo administration; indeed, the marriage of the two was all but necessary for implanting the philosophy and practice of rehabilitation in Navajo

¹⁰⁸ As historian John S. Gilkeson points out, Kluckhohn in particular was instrumental to the shaping of Navajo studies from an applied anthropological point of view: “It is no small wonder...that the 1940s and 1950s were known as “the Kluckhohn era” in Navajo studies” (255). For an exemplary work in the tradition of applied anthropology from this era, see Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).

¹⁰⁹ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 21-2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

life, which they, like Collier, viewed as as a perennial “problem” in need of urgent, thoughtful, and thorough solutions.¹¹¹ In the book’s preface, they provide a synopsis of this view, stating:

In an endeavor to meet the highly critical situation of the Navahos since 1933, the government has drawn on the resources of many physical and social sciences—ecology, agronomy, animal husbandry, medicine, education, and others. Whatever its defects, the government program has been without a doubt one of the closest approaches yet achieved to an intelligent, planned, and integrated application of scientific knowledge to the practical affairs of a whole people. In some ways the result of this experiment have been gratifying, but in others they have been disappointing in terms of the knowledge, skills, and resources expended. Where is the flaw? The central hypothesis of this book is that the incomplete success of the program [of Navajo administration] has been due in an important degree to lack of understanding of...the [Navajo] psychological and cultural factors involved.¹¹²

This passage is striking for several reasons. First, Kluckhohn and Leighton identify a vast range of disciplines deployed on behalf of post-1930s Navajo administration. The sheer number and range of these named disciplines points to the kind of epochal transformation that attended the inception of rehabilitation. Indeed, by pointing to the practical need for multiple, integrated disciplinary mechanisms of knowledge production in order to apprehend the dimensions of life for a “whole people” in their entirety, Kluckhohn and Leighton essentially demonstrate that Indian rehabilitation was a novel approach to addressing “the highly critical situation of the Navahos since 1933” precisely because it sought to map and probe Navajo social, cultural, and physical life. In other words, Indian

¹¹¹ The language of Native people and Navajos as a “problem” comes from the 1924 Meriam Report.

¹¹² Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 25-26, 27.

rehabilitation gained legibility and material influence, at least in part, through the *total apprehension* of Navajo life. Citing psychology and culture as markers for understanding Navajo life, Kluckhohn and Leighton imply that this total apprehension included numerous dimensions and registers of Navajo daily existence, including affect, bodily functions and comportment, forms of humanity defined through relations with non-human life forms like water, soil, plants, and animals, and brain function and capacity. This project of apprehension was undertaken to ensure the success of state administered programs designed to rehabilitate Navajos and their non-human relatives like sheep and earth through livestock reduction and soil conservation programs.

I argue that this total apprehension of Navajo life shapes the limits of an episteme that came into existence largely through the formation of Navajo Studies as a field of integrated scientific, medical, ethnographic, sociological, and applied administrative knowledge. As Michel Foucault argues in *The Order of Things*, an episteme is the unconscious structure that orders what is understood as knowledge.¹¹³ Human beings inhabit and create epistemes, which function as epochs of knowledge with distinctive historical, theoretical and material characteristics. Most readily recognized as the era of Indian self-determination ushered in by the IRA, the episteme I discuss in this chapter is one such epoch that emerged through experimentation with Navajo life. As a “whole new regime in discourse and forms of knowledge,” the episteme of Indian rehabilitation

¹¹³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1966/2012).

gained legibility and material influence through the development of several new disciplines of knowledge whose main objective was to categorize, classify, and assign value to—indeed, to experiment with—all forms of Navajo life.¹¹⁴ As the field of knowledge that emerged to signify this epistemic shift, Navajo Studies introduced “new ways of seeing and speaking” and a whole new “ensemble of practices,” including research, forms of political organization, social relations, gender expressions, sexualities, and sites of governmental intervention into everyday affairs, as a means to give form to rehabilitation.¹¹⁵ This may help to explain why, “From the 1930s into the 1950s, Diné Bikeyah became a prime study area for anthropologists.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, rather than pursuing their purported mission of preserving Native culture, I argue that anthropologists, with their liberal principles in hand, saw Diné life as fertile ground for conducting studies that fed the larger objectives of experimental liberalism.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ James D. Faubion, ed., *Michel Foucault: Power* (New York: The New Press, 1994), 114.

¹¹⁵ Ibid; As I discuss in Chapter Three, the Diné-led grassroots resistance movements that developed in the 1970s to challenge the violence of self-determination were part of this emergent ensemble of practices. So, too, were the new forms of gender and sexuality that emerged in the 1940s to conceal the structural violence of self-determination. While these histories are largely absent in canonical Navajo Studies, I offer them as examples of the sheer proliferation of practices that attended the ascendancy of self-determination as a key regime of truth in twentieth century U.S. history. In this sense, the seemingly hybrid application of academic research and Indian administration in Navajo studies actually functioned as the streamlined expression and consolidation of an entire ensemble of practices—both normative and insurgent—that lent intelligibility to the logic of Indian rehabilitation.

¹¹⁶ Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History*, 21-22.

¹¹⁷ With his messianic philosophy of Indian self-determination newly minted into law through the IRA, Collier approached the Navajo situation in October 1933 with

particular enthusiasm for implementing the IRA's key principles among the nation's largest tribe. Indeed, Navajo life was at the center of his reform agenda during his tenure as Commissioner. However, what transpired over the next five years baffled Collier. He infamously attempted (and failed) to implement comprehensive stock reduction of cattle and sheep on the Navajo reservation, citing overgrazing by livestock as a critical threat to the conservation of soil, which he saw as a key priority for ensuring the long-term economic viability of Navajo husbandry. During this same period, and despite his success elsewhere, Collier also failed to convince the Navajo people to adopt an IRA style government. Collier was so concerned about the Navajo problem (to borrow from the term "Indian problem" famously advanced in the 1924 Meriam Report), that he dedicated a substantial portion of his prolific writings to the Navajo case. By the time he sat down in 1944 to write the words that open this chapter, Collier had written dozens of somber retrospectives about his failure to secure self-determination for the Navajo. Although his writings covered a number of different topics related to Navajo administration, he cited this failure as a consequence of poor planning and execution on the part of the Indian administration. For Collier, the Navajo were "the most magnetic of all Indians," possessing what he saw as a valuable, almost magical, vigor for life that deserved protection, reverence, and a guiding role in self-determination programs affecting the tribe (John Collier, "United States Indian Administration as a Laboratory of Ethnic Relations," 1945, p. 286). With equal measure, he condemned Indian agents and administrators who deployed racist stereotypes like Native backwardness and simplemindedness to interpret Navajo intractability to IRA policies. Instead, he blamed the lack of progress towards Navajo self-determination on his failure to impress upon policy makers and agents the need to integrate the sophistication and "genius" of the Navajo worldview into efforts to build Navajo self-determination (John Collier, *On The Gleaming Way*, 1949, p. 64). As he argued in *On The Gleaming Way*, a 1949 book-length reflection on the Southwest tribes (including the Navajo) that he had come into contact with during his work as Commissioner, "Indian Service never has brought to bear the patience, perseverance, will and art needed to connect itself and its programs with the local complexes which really *are* the civilization and society of the Navajo" (72).

Of particular concern was the effect that the Indian Service's errors with Navajo administration had on the establishment of democratic principles in all aspects of Native life. As part of his broader sociological concern about the harms that contemporary social, political, and economic changes were bringing to the human character, Collier viewed tribal cultures as models of a disappearing democratic and communal approach to life (John Collier, "What the American Indians Will Do in the Future For Themselves and For Us," 1943). His notions about the 'wonder' of Navajo life were thus tied to his ideas about the promise of democracy, for he saw the 'magnetic' character of Navajo culture as resting in the "deeply democratic spirit" referenced above that characterized his understandings of family, leadership, and ceremonial practice in local Navajo community life. In terms of the practical application of policy, Collier saw the incorporation of Native culture into the political, economic, and social structure of tribal self-determination as a guarantor for the permanent installment and influence of such a democratic spirit (John Collier, "Our Indians in the War for Democracy," 1944). The IRA, and its various tribal capacitation projects premised on the creation of cultural industries like arts and crafts that preserved cultural art forms while also bolstering tribal economies, marked the transition from the conditions of living death brought on by

The passage from *The Navaho* is striking for a second and equally important reason, one that lies in the last four lines about the central hypothesis of the book. Published thirteen years after John Collier first stepped into Navajo country to begin implementing IRA changes among the tribe, *The Navaho* functions as a sort of retrospective on the successes and failures of the first decade of Navajo Studies. With the lessons of history in hand, Kluckhohn and Leighton set out to offer a comprehensive overview of “those aspects of Navaho culture that bear most immediately upon the government’s capacity to help The People,” which was approaching an important period of transition due to Collier’s resignation as Commissioner in 1946.¹¹⁸ As I note in the following section, their conclusions about the reasons for previous failures, and therefore future plans to remedy these failures, were entirely consistent with Collier’s own musings on the Navajo case. They blamed previous failures on the “lack of understanding of...the psychological and cultural factors involved” in Navajos’ reactions to the complex economic, political, and social programs—particularly stock reduction and the introduction of IRA style governance—that were the hallmark of Indian

allotment and assimilation, to a paradigm of resilient life represented by self-determination and the promise of democracy. Rather than seeing Native culture as an impediment to progress, then, Collier envisioned it as the touchstone to his entire philosophy of self-determination; self-determination could only be achieved by empowering Native people to practice and utilize the very essence of their life-giving force: culture. It is with this in mind that I frame my critique of anthropologists and their use of culture.

¹¹⁸ Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 28.

rehabilitation in Dinétah.¹¹⁹ With this assessment in mind, Kluckhohn and Leighton recommended that *more* research was needed in order to gain a fuller understanding of these factors, which, when applied to Navajo administration, would increase the efficacy of future rehabilitation programs among the Navajo. They also argued that anthropologists and their specific method of apprehension, ethnography, were essential interlocutors in the design and implementation of new research projects towards these ends.

In their minds, the recommendation for more research was all the more critical because of the apparent state of emergency in which these failures had placed Navajo people, especially following World War Two. As they state at the opening of the book, “In recent years the Navahos have become the nation’s foremost Indian problem.”¹²⁰ In his book *On The Gleaming Way*, which appeared a few years later in 1949, Collier used the same language of emergency and “crisis” to characterize the Navajo situation, a position he would leverage that same year to champion the 1949 Navajo Hopi Rehabilitation Act, a piece of Congressional legislation crafted in response to a 1949 blizzard in the American Southwest that captivated the American public with images of Navajo disaster and catastrophe.¹²¹ Fashioned as a timely response to the seemingly urgent needs of Navajo people, *The Navaho* exemplified the very approach to future

¹¹⁹ Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 25-26, 27.

¹²⁰ Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 24.

¹²¹ Collier, *On The Gleaming Way*, 73.

Navajo administration that Kluckhohn and Leighton were advocating in the book. Indeed, *The Navaho* was the product of a state-sponsored research grant called the Indian Education Research Project (IERP) undertaken jointly by the Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago and U.S. Office of Indian Affairs.¹²² The objective of the IERP was “to investigate, analyze, and compare the development of personality in five Indian tribes in the context of their total environment—sociocultural, geographical, and historical—for implications in regard to Indian Service Administration.”¹²³

The Navaho was the first full-length publication that emerged from the IERP. It was also a landmark Navajo Studies text that established a formidable, masterful, and wide-ranging precedent for what was to be considered legitimate knowledge in the post-Collier era of Indian administration. It is the book’s depth and scope in these regards that grounds this second striking element of this passage: Kluckhohn’s and Leighton’s recommendations about increasing research reflect the idea that the knowledge formations feeding Navajo Studies and underwriting the regime of Indian self-determination possessed a built-in logic of reproduction that reflected the logic of reform at the heart of other liberal formations in the United States. By framing Navajo life as an object of perennial state of peril, crisis, and emergency, Navajo Studies essentially created the conditions for a permanent state of reform and intervention into Navajo affairs.-

¹²² Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 24.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Put another way, with its call for *more* research as a fundamental aspect of Indian administration, Navajo studies provided the means for the reproduction and proliferation of a seemingly endless supply of research-related apparatuses like policy writing, collaborative research projects, bureaucratic positions, philanthropic endeavors, field laboratories, and the establishment of non-profits, institutes, and other institutions, designed to reinforce the use of Navajo life under the guise of self-determination as a laboratory and field of intelligibility for mid-century liberal concerns about U.S. global power, democracy, and economic growth. In this sense, despite the exaltations of pro-Navajo advocates, agents, bureaucrats, and social scientists about the unique quality of Navajo culture and the desire to re-grant autonomy and authority to Navajo people, both Navajo Studies and Navajo self-determination served as codes for the broader interests and investments of mid-century liberalism that were aligning closely with the biopolitical framework of economic man being formed under the twin guises of growth theory and human capital theory. As White points out in *Roots of Dependency*, these interests and investments worked against Navajo people and devastated Navajo economies. Self-determination and IRA reform were thus not the life-giving force that Collier and his colleagues presumed. Rather, and as I argue in the next chapter, experimental liberalism was, in fact, a false politics of life that masked the ongoing politics of death underwriting the settler colonial project.

Section 2.6: Conclusion

As I note above, for Collier, the preservation and motility of Native culture was integral to self-determination. However, this was not because culture in and of itself was a site of special investment, change, and experimentation under paradigms of self-determination. Indeed, it is worth repeating that even a cursory review of Collier's diverse oeuvre reveals that he articulated his political positions on Indian policy by condemning policies like allotment, assimilation, and, later, termination, for their racist codings of Native culture as an anachronism in need of salvation, intervention, or annihilation in the name of human progress. Rather, Collier foregrounded culture because he viewed it as evidence of the inherent democratic personality that Native people supposedly possessed. As I discuss in the first two sections of this chapter, Collier maintained an almost obsessive preoccupation with democracy throughout his career. In his writings from as early as the 1920s, Collier saw Indian administration—and the Navajo case, in particular—as an ethnic laboratory purposed with developing mechanisms for experimenting with Native life in order to maximize the democratic potential of Native people. Experimentation, if executed correctly with the help of research, would determine the optimal administrative and bureaucratic plan for establishing liberal democracy in Native life. It also provided an opportunity for liberals like Collier to test and perfect their liberal imaginaries on subjects who were obligated to participate because of federal oversight.

And while John Collier certainly was not the only determining factor in the anthropological approach to culture within Navajo Studies and Navajo

administration that I trace here, his unique combination of liberal fervor and a strong track record of advocacy, policy, and implementation meant that he was an important figure in this history because he had the unique zeal to actually forge the worlds he wished to create into existence. And while one of his greatest experiments, Navajo stock reduction, failed in significant ways, it and IRA structures, as well as the idea that culture is the linchpin in the survival and rehabilitation of Indians, have had an enduring impact, which proves the salience and epochal impact of his unique vision of experimentation.

It is because of this unique and enduring position that I use Collier's post-World War Two writings on liberalism, and particularly those related to Indian administration in the United States, to anchor this chapter. And while it may seem strange to formulate and organize the first chapter of a dissertation ostensibly about twentieth century Navajo history through attention to a white bureaucrat with an infamously troubled relationship with Navajo people, this dissertation is as much about understanding the related impacts of mid-twentieth century settler colonialism, liberalism, and capitalism on Navajo political and social formation—and Navajo experiences with these impacts—as it is about understanding how Navajo life was (and continues to be) a primary field through which settler colonialism, liberalism, and capitalism collectively reimagine and remap their interrelated logics and scopes. Indeed while this chapter traces the genealogy of experimental liberalism and the figural role of anthropology in its emergence, I do not treat this connection as a historical coincidence, or somehow as a consequence of shifts in liberal formation during this period. Rather, I argue that

experimentation with Navajo life carried out through policy-oriented social scientific research was, in fact, pivotal to the larger biopolitical shifts in American liberalism more broadly. At the center of these such experiments was Navajo life. Whether human, animal, plant, or water, life was the qualitative object and method through which experimentation unfolded, and experimental liberalism became an expansive, new formation of knowledge and politics organized around experimenting with human life to discover, uncover, and prepare its capacities for fulfilling Collier's vision of peace and justice premised on the free reign of economic man. Aligned closely with the politics of life underwriting growth theory and human capital theory, experimental liberalism is thus best understood as the deployment of Indian rehabilitation, capacitation, and development as a field of intelligibility for the biopolitical economization of life. In Chapter Four, I examine the ways in which the seeming promises of rehabilitation, capacitation and developed that invigorate experimental liberalism actually function to conceal and reroute the structural violence of settler colonialism through increasingly privatized and secretive forms of gender and sexual subjectivity.

Chapter Three: From Experimentation to Extraction: Diné Resistance and The Rise of The New Biopolitics

“Oh my god, we were a colony, an exploited energy and water resource colony of the master race. The colonialism was by design. The exploitation was part of a grand plan. And we in the bordertown ghettos were fighting the sons of the colonizers and exploiters who had set up shop and were running their resource raids out of Farmington. We the indigenous people of this land were being screwed...”

- John Redhouse (2014)¹²⁴

“Nááná dibédó’ dooda danihijíní nidi nihí éí dibéhígí t’áá deiyíníit’a’...T’áá níléí háádéé’ shjį t’áá éi téí bee hiniináá lago baa ákódaniidzjį’. Dá’ák’eh dó’. Éi nanise’ niljńgí naadáá’ niljńii t’óó ahayóígóó choo’j bi tadídín hóló. Éi hostóí nahalái yee nahalá. Éi biniinaago éiyá doo beediyii’nahda nihi dá’ák’eh naaznilóó. Yéego éi nihik’éi át’éego éi baa nitsídikees nihikéyahígí. Háálá éi bikáá’ neidá.iBiniinaa áádoó át’éhígóó “Dooda” nihi’di’nínígí éi doo ákwíiniidzinda. Doo hak’eho la’ ániit’édadoodo niidzin.”

- Ruth Benally (1998)¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System*, 82.

¹²⁵ This passage translates as, “The law says that sheep are not allowed here, but we hold on to them...We learned how to live by taking care of the livestock. It is like the cornfield. There are many ways to prepare corn and use the pollen. The pollen is used by healers in the Blessing Way ceremony. So that we never lose the memory of a cornfield we have a natural kinship that is woven into the land. It is how we walk on the land. That is why even when we are told, “No,” we have to resist. We do not want to live

Section 3.1: Introduction: On The Character of Politics: From Experimentation to Extraction

So far in this dissertation, I have focused on some of the key ways in which experimental liberalism gained hegemonic status within Diné life through epistemic formations like the creation of a Navajo studies canon in the 1940s, and through biopolitical experiments conducted in the name of the self-determination and development in that same decade and into the 1950s. I have focused on federal research programs that were devised to fund and implement scholarly experiments with Diné life like those advised by anthropologists like Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton. While their goals and scopes differed, these experimental projects had one thing in common: to capacitate and improve Navajo life according to liberal notions of growth, human capital, and economization that had entered Navajo social, political, and cultural existence in the 1930s when John Collier descended upon Navajoland to implement his liberal visions for governmental reorganization, democratization, and rehabilitation. In this chapter, I turn to Diné activists who, starting in the late 1960s, began to organize open resistance to the biopolitical imperatives of capacitation underwriting experimental liberalism. Grassroots groups, non-profit organizations, multi-group alliances, and citizen action groups began to crop up in parts of the Navajo Nation like Black Mesa and the Four Corners where the extraction and development of natural resources—both key aspects of the tribe's

in any other way.” Ruth Benally in Malcolm Benally, ed., *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2011), 54, 58.

booming economic development projects during the 1950s—had begun to exact their toll on local communities, causing diseases like cancer, poisoning livestock, contaminating water supplies, and forcing thousands of families off of customary lands to make way for industry operations. While the government-sponsored academic projects of experimental liberalism dominated Navajo political, economic and social life from the 1930s into the early 1960s, by the mid-1960s the philosophy of economization underwriting liberal development paradigms found a new vehicle for expression and materialization in the full-blown political form of Navajo nationalism premised on the extraction of low-sulphur coal and high grade uranium from deposits resting underneath Navajo lands. And this new era of economization-via-extraction, which I call extractive liberalism, proved to be even more lucrative and productive than experimentation for liberal notions of self-determination. Indeed, with the celebration in 1968 of Navajo Treaty Day, which signaled the one-hundred year anniversary since the Treaty of 1868 had been signed between Diné leaders and the United States to establish a permanent reservation for The People and release Diné from their four-year imprisonment at Fort Sumner, ideologies of liberal development that had been at work in shaping Navajo political, economic, and social life since the mid-1930s had morphed into a full-blown (and celebrated) ideology of tribal nationalism and collective self-determination that consolidated liberal notions of economic development and democratic forms of political sovereignty into the singular entity of the “Navajo Nation.” This era of Navajo history has been so influential in shaping contemporary Navajo life that historian Robert W. Young has called it

the “golden age.” Historian Peter Iverson has similarly coined it the age of “opportunity.”¹²⁶

Both of these characterizations imply that this era is the pinnacle of modern Navajo history, representing an idyllic age of Navajo independence, prosperity, possibility, and futurity. In this chapter, I contest such characterizations. Instead, I suggest that the ascendance of extractive liberalism as a structure of Diné life is not a history that ought to be celebrated. Rather, it is a period that ought to be treated critically, for it was during this era that diverse forms of Diné political activism—what I call refusals in the introduction to this dissertation—appeared to highlight and contest the actual, extreme violence that descended upon Diné life because of these new forms of extractive liberalism. Although I agree with Young and Iverson that this era represents a watershed in Diné history, it is an era that I would more aptly characterize as an age of death. Indeed, it is a period of American liberalism in which the persistent theft of Indigenous life at the heart of U.S. imperialism morphed into new spheres and mechanisms of control, containment, and death that operated according to the seductive promises of “opportunity” that Iverson so blithely points out. In other words, U.S. liberalism at this time carved out new terrains for its materialization and supremacy as an organizing structure of global capitalism and wealth-making through the literal extraction of life from Diné lands, bodies, and waters.

¹²⁶ Robert W. Young, *Political History of the Navajo Tribe* (Tsaile: Navajo Community College Press, 1978), 162; Iverson, *Diné*, 180.

Harkening back to previous eras of Navajo liberalism in which concerns with so-called economic growth and economic development dominated liberal biopolitical formations routed through the practice of experimentation, extractive liberalism was similarly concerned with economic matters, except these matters were increasingly addressed through actions on the part of Navajo officials to seek economic and political security through leasing with outside corporations (and settling water rights with federal, state and private entities) to extract natural resources like coal and uranium from subterranean deposits within the boundaries of Navajo tribal land. However, this new and aggressive agenda for Navajo economic development, which began to coalesce in the late 1950s and which crystallized in 1963 when the Four Corners Power Plant opened near the Navajo farming community of Fruitland, New Mexico, becoming the first coal-fired power plant on the Colorado Plateau, produced something that industry giants like Peabody Coal and power-hungry Navajo politicians failed to predict: a widespread, diverse, and rigorous grassroots response from everyday Diné who resisted the violence that extractive industries brought—quite literally—to the doorsteps of their hooghan.

While I trace the formal political and economic history of this period in order to contextualize the politics of life that developed out of these grassroots Diné struggles, my aim is neither to center, nor document, the dynamics of Navajo economic and political history during this period. Instead, I center the voices, thoughts, writings, and actions of everyday Diné people who stepped forward to challenge the decisions of actors like Indian commissioners, CEOs,

and tribal chairmen who continue to overpopulate the historical record, and the historiography, on this period of Navajo history. Indeed, normative historical accounts about this period have tended to use archives compiled by tribal leaders, traders, and government officials to reconstruct a nationalist history of Navajo political and economic development. Often deployed without a sustained critique of settler colonialism, liberalism, or capitalism, these nationalist accounts narrate Navajo history through the impact that formal actors like tribal chairmen, tribal attorneys, and tribal council delegates have had on Navajo existence.¹²⁷ While this approach to Navajo history is helpful for understanding the manner in which history unfolded within these public realms of influence in Navajo life, historians who have written these types of histories have generally tended to advance limited and uncritical assumptions about what constitutes ‘power,’ ‘struggle,’ and ‘politics.’ A telling example of this type of history can be found in Peter Iverson’s *Diné: A History of The People*, a study that Iverson conceived as a comprehensive survey of Navajo history told from the perspective of Diné people themselves. In the book’s seventh chapter, which covers the historical period from 1962-1982, Iverson details former tribal chairman Peter MacDonald’s rise to power and subsequent impact on Diné history. Iverson cites MacDonald’s personality flaws—his charisma, his corruptive tendencies, and his inability to accept criticism—as key motivational factors in the political decisions and political power that MacDonald wielded during this period. Iverson goes on over the next

¹²⁷ By formal actors, I mean actors who served in an official capacity that allowed them direct access to decisions regarding Navajo political economy.

handful of pages to expand on this thesis of agency, narrating MacDonald's actions and decisions—and thus important episodes in Navajo history—through the lens of MacDonald's political personality and idiosyncrasies. Summarily collapsing MacDonald's personality into his political style, Iverson concludes that MacDonald's character can most aptly be described as a “me and us versus them” mentality, which he then deploys to interpret MacDonald's political actions and impact of Navajo history.¹²⁸

While these aspects of MacDonald's personal and political style may very well be true, a historical accounting of this transformative period like Iverson's that explains Navajo agency through these limited kinds of personality attributes fails to engage other definitions (and types) of historical agency, let alone a critical analysis of power. Rather than analyzing, for example, MacDonald's decisions to spearhead unprecedented resource extraction on the reservation through the critical lenses of exploitation and extraction of Diné life—the very lenses that Diné activist and intellectual John Redhouse used in the 1970s to narrate these same histories as they were actively unfolding—Iverson instead narrates MacDonald's impact on Navajo history through the normative framework of politicking that we more readily associate with popular television programs like *House of Cards* and *Veep*. I argue that framing Diné history in this way not only lacks theoretical and scholarly rigor, but it also forecloses other ways of understanding history that do not rely on (and which directly challenge) normative

¹²⁸ Iverson, *Diné*, 250.

frameworks like Iverson's that limit *what* is considered 'political' to arenas of formal government, and which also limit *who* is considered a historical actor to those like MacDonald with enough power to influence the theater of governmental politics.¹²⁹

By challenging definitions of Diné historical agency that drive existing historical scholarship on Navajos, I also challenge existing definitions of 'the political' that exceptionalize actions that transpire in the realm of formal government—whether tribal, state, or federal—thereby offering a more expansive and a more critical definition of 'the political' that necessarily includes important actors and actions like protests, grassroots resistance, intellectual production, non-profit advocacy, and other forms of political engagement that occur beyond formal spheres like the Navajo tribal council chambers or within the corporate offices of industry giants like Kerr McGee. While this shift in analytical framing is driven primarily by the historical record itself, it is also inspired by recent scholarship on American Indian politics and activism that asks scholars—and historians, in particular—to expand our understanding of 'the political' to include numerous scales and sites of analysis not limited to (but certainly including) recognizable projects like tribal self-determination programs or more militant American Indian Movement (AIM) style politics.

¹²⁹ See David E. Wilkins, *The Navajo Political Experience* (Tsaile: Diné College Press, 1999) for another normative study that frames Navajo political history through the lens of formal political economy.

In their introduction to the edited volume, *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900*, Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler call this expansive politics a “politics of survival.”¹³⁰ In a prefatory chapter for the collection, Frederick E. Hoxie expands on the framework of survival advanced by Cobb and Fowler, arguing that “When the definition of [Indian] politics is expanded, a new universe of discussion and activism comes sharply into view.”¹³¹ Hoxie goes on to argue that this “new universe” centers “Indian agency” in all of its complexity, including the “engaged, rapidly evolving, articulate, adaptive” methods—including intellectual traditions—that Native political actors developed to ensure the survival of their communities.¹³² Hoxie rails against the tendency within mainstream historiography to limit Native political activity to suffering or mere reaction to the imposition of outside governmental forces. He instead urges scholars to move beyond federal government documents in our practice of constructing histories of American Indian politics, treating Native people as complex and multi-sited historical agents who actively initiate and create political histories, and who engage in a variety of arenas, tactics, and frameworks.

¹³⁰ Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds., *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Global Indigenous Politics Series, 2007), x.

¹³¹ Frederick E. Hoxie, “Missing the Point: Academic Experts and American Indian Politics,” in *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900*, eds. Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Global Indigenous Politics Series, 2007): 16-32, 26.

¹³² Hoxie, “Missing the Point,” 21, 22.

Hoxie's interventions into American Indian history are complemented by Audra Simpson's interventions into the fields of Anthropology and Political Science. In *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, Simpson develops a definition of "the political" that refuses the ethnographic quest for "ahistorical and depoliticized" categories of culture that has driven a great deal of the literature—both anthropological and historical—on Native politics that has been produced over the last one hundred years.¹³³ Critiquing political science, government, and political theory for their "Western, institutional, and statist focus," she argues that "none of these disciplines have dealt evenhandedly, robustly, or *critically* with Indigenous politics and how they challenge what most perceive as settled" (emphasis in original).¹³⁴ She goes on

¹³³ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 11.

¹³⁴ Ibid. Simpson's critique of Political Science is also important given the authoritative position that one particular study, David E. Wilkins' 1999 book, *The Navajo Political Experience*, continues to hold within the Navajo studies literature on Navajo politics. A straightforward political science text, *The Navajo Political Experience* concentrates almost exclusively on describing the institutions and processes that condition Navajo tribal government, including federal Indian policy, media, elections, special interest groups, local governing jurisdictions like grazing committees, and the three branches of government. While the book provides an impressive and masterful survey of institutional forms of Navajo politics, it tends to limit notions of 'the political' to formal processes and structures, thereby replicating the "Western, institutional, and statist focus" of Political Science studies about Indigenous politics that so clearly vex Simpson. This tendency is most noticeable in the "Timeline of Diné Political History" that Wilkins offers in the book's appendices. Items that count as "political"—or worthy of mention—in the timeline include voting, elections, federal policy implementation, government reform measures, military service, constitutional reform, the establishment of chapters, the Navajo-Hopi land dispute, Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity, U.S. supreme court decisions, right to taxation, state issued apologies, public health policies, acquisition of land, gaming, economic development, and oil and uranium development (203-219). Nowhere in this timeline do grassroots or citizen-led organizations appear as significant political actors shaping what is considered by Wilkins as significant "Diné political history." In fact, the only place where groups like the Coalition for Navajo

to clarify that her usage of the term ‘settled’ means “done,” “finished,” “complete.”¹³⁵ Like Hoxie, Simpson is thoroughly critical of existing scholarship that, because of its investments in the naturalization of settlement and the ensuing diminishment of Native land and political power, denies Native people the political agency that actually exists; a sophisticated and complex form of agency that Native people have possessed—and wielded—throughout the entire period of colonization, and one that continues to challenge and shape the ongoing, open-ended, and incomplete (rather than done, finished, or complete) material histories of settler colonialism. I build on Hoxie’s and Simpson’s

Liberation (CNL) or Diné C.A.R.E. (Citizens Against Ruining the Environment), both historically important citizen-initiated groups, appear in the book is under a one-page long sub-section in Chapter 10 entitled “The Navajo Nation “As Subject” to Inside Interest Groups,” where they are labeled “interest or lobbying groups” and listed with one-two line descriptions (165). When compared to the space and attention given to institutionalized political activity in the book, the relative lack of space and attention given to these political groups—and the labeling of these groups as “special interests” in a manner that conforms with mainstream American politics and lobbying—underscores the book’s general assumption that “Diné politics” only occurs within the realm of tribal governance, and in response to federal measures that impact tribal governance and notions of tribal sovereignty. Indeed, in the sub-section mentioned above, groups like the CNL are listed only to demonstrate that the Navajo Nation deals with special interest groups and lobbyists in a manner similar to the U.S. government. Wilkins states, “Navajos, like citizens of states, sometimes become disenchanted with their own government and form interest or lobbying groups which seek to pressure their government to create particular policies or to withhold support from policies that run counter to that group’s political agenda” (165). This characterization of groups like the CNL and Diné C.A.R.E. commits the same errors as Iverson’s characterization of Peter MacDonald in that it assumes formal government institutions overdetermine all activity that might be deemed “political,” and thus limits the agency of these groups to normative (liberal) understandings of self-interest-driven “politics” and “politicking.” Indeed, these groups are only granted agency by Wilkins *through* their relationship to the Navajo tribal government, rather than through the words, thoughts, and writings of activists themselves. See David E. Wilkins, *The Navajo Political Experience* (Tsaile: Diné College Press, 1999).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

interventions to argue that Diné politics requires an equally expansive, evenhanded, robust, critical, historical, and articulate framework for discussion and analysis, one that draws from critical Diné intellectual traditions like those offered by John Redhouse, and one that centers different spheres and forms of political engagement. This is a particularly important intervention given the new, highly organized political spheres and projects that emerged from within Diné communities both on and off the reservation between the 1960s-1980s to oppose, usurp, and redirect the power of existing political institutions like the tribal council for different ends. I turn my attention to these projects in the next section of this chapter.

Section 3.2: Towards a Diné Methodology of Life

While my choice to center Diné actors like John Redhouse is certainly meant as a corrective to tendencies within the field of History that continue to dominate much of what counts as exceptional scholarship within the Navajo studies canon, I also focus on these types of actors simply because the archive—both written and living—reveals that they have, in fact, had a profound influence on Navajo history (despite their relative absence in studies like Iverson's).¹³⁶ Moreover, with their remarkably prolific contributions to Navajo history, historical actors like Redhouse have also produced frameworks and epistemologies for engagement that ought to serve as a collective starting point

¹³⁶ As I note elsewhere in this dissertation, these subfields of History include Navajo women's history, the history of Navajo political economy, and Marxist histories of Navajo development and dependency.

for understanding and analyzing Diné history, rather than as mere archives for cultural knowledge or opportunities for documentation, which is very often how Diné interlocutors are treated in the historical scholarship that exists on Navajo people, if they are considered at all. As I note above, the framework and epistemology that I mobilize in this chapter builds on ideas that Diné resisters like Redhouse developed through intense political struggle over the meaning, value, and substance of Diné life. Such struggles and their attendant frameworks for engagement emerged to contest, challenge, and, ultimately, stop the unbridled extractive practices that defined this era. Indeed, the Diné politics of life that emerged from grassroots responses to extractive liberalism meant something completely different from the liberal promise of life underwriting extractive economies, which came in the form of rhetoric about economic prosperity, jobs, and infrastructure coming from tribal government and U.S. federal officials like Peter MacDonald, Peterson Zah, and Stewart Udall, all of whom championed the transformative potential that resource extraction held for Navajo 'economic development' and 'tribal sovereignty.'

This upsurge in the 1970s of Diné grassroots struggles marks an important transition in the history of The People, and especially in the political history of twentieth century Diné experience. Whereas prior to this period resistance undertaken by everyday Diné people focused almost exclusively on resisting stock reduction and typically came in the form of dispersed, spontaneous action, by the 1970s organized and politicized resistance became an increasingly ubiquitous facet of Diné political life. With groups like the

Coalition for Navajo Liberation marching in downtown Farmington, New Mexico in the summer of 1974 to protest racism and violence directed at Diné people in this boom-and-bust border town, and the establishment of a National Indian Youth Council chapter in the Diné community of Shiprock, New Mexico followed by the launch of a reservation-wide coalition known as the Navajo Longest Walk Steering Committee in 1978, a new form of Diné political activity came into being, one that exceeded and, in many ways, rejected, the confines of normative political institutions like the tribal government.¹³⁷ It was during this era of unprecedented resistance that the idea of Diné ‘politics’ also became increasingly understood as the opposition between formal political institutions and grassroots political organizing, the legacy of which we see today in contemporary Diné political organizing intended to address environmental concerns like water security, the protection of sacred sites, land conservation, and the prevention of industrial pollution.¹³⁸

It is no coincidence that the upsurge in organized political activism during this time period coincided with the precipitous increase in extractive industrial operations on the Navajo Nation. Although the Red Power movement had been growing on an international scale for quite some time and one of the movement’s

¹³⁷ Redhouse, *Getting it Out of My System*, 55.

¹³⁸ The founding of the still-active Diné Citizens Against Ruining the Environment (or Diné C.A.R.E.) in 1988 is a contemporary example of this kind of oppositional politics formulated to address environmental concerns. Numerous other groups and activists have become active in recent years to address environmental concerns, including Klee Benally, Tó Bei Nihi Dził, Nihígaal bee liná, Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining, Diné No Nukes, Dooda Desert Rock, and Dooda Fracking, to name a few.

leading organizations, the American Indian Movement, had already established operations and collaborations with local Diné activists in the Southwest, the florescence of Diné organizations, coalitions, committees, task forces, and other direct action campaigns in the 1970s cannot be reduced simply to the influence of the larger Indian rights movement on young Diné who were coming of age in the era of Red Power.¹³⁹ Indeed, while recent histories of this era of American Indian politics and activism have stressed the international and global character of Native resistance, I argue that we must understand the character of Diné resistance in a more specific light, one that was certainly connected to broader national and international concepts like treaty rights, sovereignty and community development that were being mobilized across a diverse array of activist struggles, but which nevertheless was conditioned by localized, Diné-driven understandings of life (and death) like those articulated by John Redhouse, and fashioned in direct opposition to the new and specific forms of violence that resource extraction was introducing into Diné life.¹⁴⁰

The autobiography of John Redhouse is particularly helpful for fleshing out the ways in which Diné political activism during this period did not evolve as a

¹³⁹ For one of the only historical treatments of Diné activism in this era, see Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and The Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ For recent studies of this type, see Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008); Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and The Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); and Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*.

simple or straightforward offshoot of the larger Indian rights movements. Redhouse's writings and historical accounts of the 1970s reveal that, for Diné, the struggle over life was connected specifically to the violence and death that resource extraction—particularly the extraction of water, coal, and uranium—brought to the Diné world. For Redhouse, the violence of resource extraction was not isolated to rural pockets of the reservation like Black Mesa where mining operations were taking place. As an avid researcher, Redhouse spent most of the 1970s producing voluminous and meticulously researched reports, articles, and commentary on the development of uranium, coal, and water resources in the Navajo Nation and the Colorado Plateau more generally. Through his research, he uncovered a vast network of connections between multinational resource extraction corporations, tribal governments, U.S. politicians, and other actors that extended through and beyond tribal lands and boundaries. He concluded that the extraction of resources on Navajoland was linked to a larger system of extraction, exploitation, and profiteering characterized by what he called “a grand plan” for the colonization of Navajos.¹⁴¹ He would frequently employ this framework in his writings to trace connections between different forms of violence in locations like Black Mesa, Farmington, and Gallup where the logic of extraction had transformed everyday social relations into a battle over life and death.

¹⁴¹ Redhouse, *Getting it Out of My System*, 82.

In Redhouse's mind, what was occurring through murderous violence and racism in industry-driven border towns had everything to do with extraction of life happening through mining, forced removal, and disease in rural parts of the Navajo reservation where industry operations had also set up shop. Both geopolitical locations were coordinates connected through an economic network of extractive practices that were "raping" the land, killing sheep (the collective Diné bloodline as expressed through the "Sheep is Life" framework that Malcolm Benally highlights as a major theme of the intellectual and social traditions developed by Diné women in the course of resisting forced removal on Black Mesa throughout the 1970s and 1980s), killing people, uprooting families from their homes, and alienating people from their entire way of life, a form of death that Pauline Whitesinger, a Big Mountain matriarch who was prominent in the movement on Black Mesa to resist forced relocation in the 1970s and 1980s, likens to "putting your hand down someone's throat and squeezing the heart out."¹⁴² In a particularly striking passage from his unpublished memoir, *Getting it Out of My System*, Redhouse describes this economic network and the visceral and violent terms of death that extractive economic practices were imposing upon the Diné, even as tribal politicians increasingly opened up Diné land and bodies to service economic deals with resource extraction corporations:

¹⁴² Pauline Whitesinger in Benally, ed., *Bitter Water*, 75. For an exegesis on "Sheep is Life," see Chapter Five of *Bitter Water* in which Benally translates oral accounts from over a dozen Black Mesa residents on the meaning and practice of "Sheep is Life." See Benally, ed., *Bitter Water*, 62-84.

I grew up in Farmington in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a typical bordertown, racist as hell...There were the usual local rednecks...They didn't like Indians but they liked our money...And then came the boomers, the white oilfield trash from Texas and Oklahoma, who were as dangerous as they looked. They hated Blacks in TX and OK but since there were very few Negroes and a whole lot of Indians in the new Energy Capital of the West, we, the local Indians, became their [target]. The energy boom of the 50s and 60s brought the boomers and that's when Indian killing became a regular sport in Farmington. They would kill you just because you were Indian. So [we] grew up fighting during that particularly violent period. We had to fight back to survive...and while we were fighting for our lives, we realized the supreme irony that most of the energy that made Farmington a boomtown came from the nearby...Indian reservations. And that much of the water in the rivers which flowed through our tribal lands were used for regional energy development which benefited not only the area boomers but large off-reservation, non-Indian populations in big cities...Oh my god, we were a colony, an exploited energy and water resource colony of the master race. The colonialism was by design. The exploitation was part of a grand plan. And we in the bordertown ghettos were fighting the sons of the colonizers and exploiters who had set up shop and were running their resource raids out of Farmington. We the indigenous people of this land were being screwed—coming and going.¹⁴³

In this lengthy passage, Redhouse draws material connections between the violent culture of “Indian killing” in border towns like Farmington and the “resource raids” like coal and uranium mining occurring in other parts of the Navajo Nation, the profits of which literally fed border town economies and thus directly fueled Indian killing.

With their emphasis on the colonial nature of extraction, the last few sentences of this excerpt also serve as one of the epitaphs of this chapter. They draw an explicit link between economies premised on extraction and the colonization of Diné life. Patrick Wolfe has argued that settler colonialism is a

¹⁴³ Redhouse, *Getting it Out of My System*, 82.

structure premised on the “elimination” of Native people, land, and lifeways.¹⁴⁴ Redhouse’s definition of colonization mirrors Wolfe’s in the sense that Redhouse traces the specific ways in which resource extraction leads to Indian killing—and thus the elimination of Diné people—in border towns. However, I argue that Redhouse, in placing resource extraction within the context of colonization, also implies that resource extraction is part of a larger system of elimination not limited to Indian killing in border towns. Rather, Indian killing is part and parcel of the structural elimination underwriting resource extraction and colonization more broadly. This may help to explain why Redhouse creates the term “resource colony” to describe the specific ways in which extractive economies trafficked in Indian killing (elimination) on multiple levels, including murder, harassment, exploitation, the plunder of water, and, as he would later argue, forced relocation and the rape of land.¹⁴⁵

I focus on this passage from Redhouse’s memoir to provide a context and rationale for the term ‘extractive liberalism’ I deploy in this chapter and this dissertation more broadly. As Redhouse notes, the pervasive culture of Indian killing that accompanied and facilitated the creation of the Navajo Nation in the 1960s as a resource colony came directly from economic development schemes—what I earlier called extractive economies--that were executed through the exploitation of energy resources on Diné tribal lands. As an era in

¹⁴⁴ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and The Elimination of The Native,” 387.

¹⁴⁵ See John Redhouse, “Geopolitics of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute,” (Albuquerque: Redhouse/Wright Publication, 1985).

which liberal ideologies of development, growth, and economization found unprecedented traction in the Navajo context through the extraction of natural resources like coal and uranium—a historical development epitomized by Peter MacDonald’s rise to power during this time period—the 1960s and 1970s mark a period of liberalism and settler colonialism that is best characterized as extractive, as opposed to earlier forms of experimental liberalism in which the capacitation and economization of Diné life found expression primarily through experiments conducted by state and academic establishments. While experimental liberalism certainly continued into this era, the corporatization of Navajo economic development schemes in the postwar period meant that even traditional spheres of experimentation like agriculture became highly commercialized and industrialized. For example, up through the 1950s agriculture in the Farmington area had been conducted under the guise of primarily state-funded and operated subsistence farming experiments. The establishment of the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry and its subsidiary, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, in the Farmington area in the mid-1970s turned irrigated land in this region into a full-blown agribusiness enterprise managed by the tribe. Following a general trend toward the neoliberalization of economies throughout the global capitalist marketplace, the burgeoning Navajo extractive economy was a new and ripe source of profit for multinational corporations involved in extractive industries, and seemed to provide a veritable boon for the fledgling Navajo Nation.

Redhouse's term "resource colony" is key for understanding the politics of life espoused by Black Mesa matriarchs like Ruth Benally (whose words serve as one of the epitaphs of this chapter) and Pauline Whitesinger that emerged to contest the material realities of death—what Achille Mbembe has called the "necropolitics"—masquerading as a promise of life, development, and progress ushered in by the organizing structure of extractive liberalism. These matriarchs came from a Diné shepherding community called Big Mountain located in the northern part of Navajo-Hopi partitioned land (also known as the Joint Use Area or Bennet Freeze Area) on Black Mesa, a large region within the Navajo Nation. As an internationally known geopolitical site, Big Mountain has been the beating heart of Diné resistance to forced relocation for over forty years, a fact that has attracted the attention of hundreds of sympathetic Navajo and non-Navajo journalists, activists, filmmakers, academics, and lawyers who, together, have produced a voluminous and diverse archive on the history of this persistent struggle to determine rightful belonging in this region.¹⁴⁶ Despite this voluminous attention, however, the local perspectives of Diné women like Ruth Benally and Pauline Whitesinger, as well as other resisters like Mae Tso and Roberta Blackgoat, all of whom have refused to leave their homes in Big Mountain

¹⁴⁶ Some notable works about resistance at Big Mountain include Malcolm Benally, ed., *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Charles Wilkinson, *Fire on The Plateau: Conflict and Endurance in the American Southwest* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1999); David Brugge, *The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute: An American Tragedy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); John Redhouse, "The Geopolitics of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute," (Albuquerque: Wrights Publication, 1985); and *Broken Rainbow*. DVD. Directed by Maria Florio and Victoria Mudd. Beverly Hills: Earthworks Films, Inc., 1985.

despite repeated threats (and attempts) by the U.S. government to remove them, provide a narrative that lies outside of the complex web of legal, theoretical, and political rhetoric that saturates this issue. The narrative they offer is simple yet powerful, and its principle theme lies in the land itself. As Ruth Benally suggests in one of the epitaphs that open this chapter, Diné people have a right to live freely on the land in Big Mountain and other parts of Black Mesa because they have a deep relationship with the land, one that infuses their sense of self and their entire understanding of reality. Roman Bitsui and Kenja Hassan echo this understanding in their contributing essay to *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*. In the essay they argue that Navajos'

religious obligations to the earth, to their family, and community is their purpose in life. All of these things that are important to them spiral back to the land itself. The land is the center of their orientation in experience and the base of their sense of reality and identity, to separate them from it would cause them to lose contact with all that is sacred and holy to them. To force people to live such a life or meaninglessness is religious persecution and a condemnation to a slow death...¹⁴⁷

As this passage implies, the land-based paradigm that emerged from the context of these women's resistance to forced removal had, at its center, an unwavering critique of the almost totalizing death that extractive practices represented to Diné worldviews. Their view of extraction as a far-reaching project of destruction mirrored Redhouse's thesis about resource colonization, which pointed to the

¹⁴⁷ Raymond Bitsui and Kenja Hassan, "Appendix: Natural Law and Navajo Religion/Way of Life," in Malcolm Benally, Ed., *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 94.

ways in which Indian killing, or elimination, was a structural condition of extractive liberalism that had to be resisted at all costs.

Diné resistors like Benally and Redhouse forged the political, historical and intellectual groundwork for my current analysis of extractive liberalism, which crystallized into the basis for this project when I visited Big Mountain in May of 2014. I was invited by Black Mesa Indigenous Support (BMIS), a “non-Native all volunteer, grassroots collective committed to working with the resistance communities of Black Mesa/Big Mountain,” to design and facilitate a workshop on settler colonialism at a training camp they co-sponsored with several local Diné residents.¹⁴⁸ Although intended as a renewed effort to organize a coordinated campaign to terminate Peabody Western Coal Company strip mining operations on Black Mesa, the training camp was also an intergenerational gathering of some of the most important Diné and other Native activists who had engaged in various political struggles and resistance efforts in the region over the previous forty years.¹⁴⁹ While many of the activists had dozens of years’ of experience with actual anti-colonial struggle (although they rarely framed it in these terms), most had never heard the term ‘settler colonialism’ or applied it to their on-the-ground work. With Navajo as their first and, sometimes only, language, many had

¹⁴⁸ See BMIS’s website. Accessed May 31, 2016, <http://supportblackmesa.org/about/mission/>.

¹⁴⁹ Peabody Western is a subsidiary of Peabody Holding Company, Inc., the “largest producer and marketer of coal in the world.” Undated printed document, Box 1, Folder 18, Peter Iverson Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

also never encountered the term 'settler colonialism' from a Diné perspective, either translated into the Navajo language or offered from a Diné interpretative paradigm that would fit with epistemological assumptions structuring the Navajo language.

Given this context, I decided after many days and several outlines that the most effective approach to address and incorporate all of these considerations would be to take my cue from the oral histories given by Diné matriarchs like Ruth Benally in *Bitter Water* and describe settler colonialism through a framework of life integrated with the concepts and strategies of land-based resistance that had emerged from Diné women in Big Mountain who refused to leave on account of their commitment to a Diné way of life. I had written a review of *Bitter Water* for an academic journal almost two years earlier and had been thinking deeply about the oral histories in the collection and their relevance to my growing interests in developing Diné methodologies for analyzing, historicizing, and documenting power and violence in everyday Diné life. To emphasize this approach, I organized the workshop around a diagram I drew on the dry erase board that was available for presentations (the venue was outdoors). I drew two categories on the dry erase board: both were labeled 'life,' with English and Navajo language equivalents. Under the first category I listed several keywords to identify what Diné epistemology considers to be forces of life and vitality, including sheep, water, women, land, family, youth, and naadlé (two-spirit), among others. I encouraged folks in the audience to add onto the list, and at the

end of this part of the workshop we had developed a substantial number of keywords (in English and Diné) for Diné concepts of life.

Under the second 'life' category, I listed several keywords to identify what settler colonialism considers to be forces of life and vitality, including individual wealth, men, straightness, whiteness, profit, cities, selfishness, cities, and technology. I listed each keyword for 'life' next to its designated opposite; for example, I paired the Diné idea that women are central to a Diné definition of life with the settler colonial perspective that life is optimized through male privilege and its attending misogynist behaviors. I then went keyword by keyword to break down the contradiction between each pair, urging workshop participants to see that the definition of life under the 'settler colonial' category not only directly violates the definition of life under the Diné category, but also feeds on the elimination—or death—of Diné interpretations and practices of life. As one final gesture of emphasis, I erased the word 'life' from the Diné side of the board and replaced it with 'death.' I then stated, "Life for settler colonialism means death for Diné people. And what we think of as life is killed, stamped out, or banned in order to make way for settler colonialism to live and thrive. This is a Diné definition of settler colonialism: death."¹⁵⁰

Although I delivered the presentation in English, an interpreter (an adult son of matriarch resistor Roberta Blackgoat) translated the entire workshop into Diné bizaad for people in the audience who were more comfortable engaging in

¹⁵⁰ Author's field notes, 2014.

the Navajo language. Having thus reached everyone in the audience, I ended the presentation and opened up the workshop for discussion. What ensued after that point was truly remarkable. In both English and Navajo, one participant after another shared their thoughts about how helpful this framework was for understanding the ongoing atrocities being committed against Diné people in Big Mountain and beyond. Some participants shared stories about times when they had been made to feel like their ideas, lives, and cultures as Indigenous people were deemed dead or irrelevant by others, and others simply reflected on the potential power of this framework for advocacy ranging from legal work to direct action training. In total, over a dozen people ranging from five years old to eighty-plus years old spoke. It was clear given the enthusiasm and eloquence with which people conveyed their thoughts following the workshop that the framework of life and death resonated with the perspectives and critiques they had already devised through their own experiences with on-the-ground organizing, and that it offered something useful for ongoing struggles to defend Diné livelihoods against the violence of economic exploitation.

I share this anecdote because it marks a pivotal episode in the development of this dissertation project. Although I had already begun to conduct extensive archival research for this project in March and April of 2014, my experience at the Big Mountain Training Camp illuminated and clarified several theoretical and methodological considerations about liberalism, colonialism, and biopolitics that I had been working through since completing my doctoral exams the previous spring. Namely, in the process of listening to, and learning from, the

Diné residents and activists who attended the training camp, I came to understand the relevance of the framework of life and death for interpreting Diné political history. It was from this workshop that I derived the historical and analytical method for this dissertation more broadly, which aims to capture historical developments through analyzing the intense struggles over the meaning of Diné life that have shaped Navajo social and material reality throughout the post-1930s period. As I argue in this dissertation's introduction, this era is replete with struggles over Diné life that have manifested most noticeably in biopolitical registers. In following John Redhouse's analysis of the violence of resource colonization, I argue that the primary register at work in the period is what Achille Mbembe has called "necropolitics."¹⁵¹

According to Mbembe, necropolitics is a form of biopolitics in which "technologies of destruction have become more tactile, more anatomical and sensorial, in a context in which the choice is between life and death."¹⁵² These technologies create what he calls "death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead."¹⁵³ The context that Mbembe examines to develop his definition of necropolitics is colonial occupation, which he argues is characterized by outright warfare where the choice, both politically and

¹⁵¹ Achille Mbembe. "Necropolitics" *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11–40.

¹⁵² Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 34.

¹⁵³ Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 40.

materially, is between life or death. In other words, Mbembe argues that the politics of life that distinguish colonial contexts from other contexts is one of outright, unmitigated death, or what he calls “pure slaughter.”¹⁵⁴

Necropolitics has its roots in earlier periods of Diné history. As Peter Iverson notes, for Diné people, “the sweeping program of livestock reduction [in the 1930s] caused massive trauma within the Navajo world.”¹⁵⁵ Marilyn Help, a Diné elder, expanded upon this claim in a 2001 interview with Iverson, stating,

I think my people really got hurt by the livestock reduction program because they are really close to their animals...Our people cried. My people, they cried. They thought this act was another Hwééldi, Long Walk. They asked the government, “Why are you doing this to us...You gave the animals for us to use, and now you are turning around and killing our livestock.”¹⁵⁶

Another Diné woman related the story of her husband’s death, which she directly linked to livestock reduction:

My husband said, “You people are...heartless. You have now killed me. You have cut off my arms. You have cut off my legs. You have taken my head off. There is nothing left for me.” It wasn’t long before my husband fell ill...and at the beginning of spring he died.”¹⁵⁷

These words, from the mouths of Diné women who remembered the impact of livestock reduction on their everyday lives, tell a story of death and catastrophe that stands in stark contrast to the story of life and triumph proffered by liberal discourses of life. Indeed, for Diné people, Indian rehabilitation did not represent

¹⁵⁴ Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” 25.

¹⁵⁵ Iverson, *Diné*, 137.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

a failure to take their cultural views seriously—in fact, this view was extended by Collier, not by Diné people themselves. Rather, they viewed it as an assault on their entire way of *life*, and one that they had experienced before when the Long Walk, or Hwéeldi, had threatened the total elimination of Diné life.¹⁵⁸ It is therefore from Diné people themselves, both those in the 1960s and 1970s who define themselves as ‘activists,’ and community members like Marilyn Help who

¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the following statement made by Pauline Whitesinger in the late 1990s regarding the forced relocation of Diné families on Black Mesa provides a biopolitical discourse that views the history of liberalism in the periods dominated by both experimentation and extraction, as an assault on Navajos’ entire way of life:

the reason we will not relocate is because the land has become a part of us...We have to resist. We carry a béésh yist’ogi, an arrowhead, and a k’eeet’áán yátti’, a Talking Prayer bundle. And there are ways of life like Dibéshchíín: Sheep is life. There are many ceremonies that have a way of life. To leave the sacred mountains with these teachings would be a great loss. So we are speaking out...This is how we think. This is why we did not sign our names. The sacred places are all we have (47, 48, 50)

In this passage, Whitesinger frames resistance to relocation as the defense of a sacred way of life—a way of understanding and being in the world—that is inextricably bound to land, sheep, and ceremony. As I note in previous parts of this chapter, these themes of life—land, sheep, and ceremony—have been articulated repeatedly throughout Navajo history by grassroots political actors to characterize political engagements like resistance to forced relocation on Black Mesa. Phrases like “way of life,” “lifeways,” “sheep is life,” and “water is life,” all of which are commonly used by Diné people when speaking of the meaning and importance of Diné approaches to existing in harmony with the land, are not, however, just cultural or epistemological phenomena. The concepts of “life” mobilized by interlocutors like Ruth Benally, Marilyn Help, Roberta Blackgoat, Mae Tso, and Pauline Whitesinger in the process of active resistance to necropolitical practices like resource extraction invoke a relationship with the world that is simultaneously cultural, spiritual, epistemological, *and* political. And while I do not cast these ideas about life, land, and resistance as “biopolitical” per se—indeed, these notions of life come from entirely different epistemological and linguistic origins than the structuralist and poststructuralist genealogies from which Foucault derived the notion of biopolitics—their historic circulation within the realm of political theater, which itself is a historical development that arose because of the stranglehold that ideologies of liberal economic development have come to exert on everyday Navajo life, makes them a form of politics—and a form of biopolitics, more specifically—preoccupied with the preservation of certain modes of Diné life and living in the face of violence and death. Pauline Whitesinger, in *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*, ed., Malcolm Benally (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 39-53.

have interpreted Indian rehabilitation from within an ordinary politics of Diné life, that I draw my argument regarding necropolitics as a formation that names the politics of death underwriting the increased normalization of liberal modalities of everyday Navajo life and governance. Moreover, I argue that the salience of necropolitics across various time periods of Diné history spanning from Hwééldi to what Redhouse has termed the “dark period of the fossil fuel age” of the 1960s and 1970s helps to explain the comprehensive discourses of life that have served as the centerpiece of various iterations of grassroots Diné political action since the 1930s.¹⁵⁹

Section 3.3: Peter MacDonald and The New Navajo Nationalism

This image (Figure 3.1) appeared on the cover of the January 1980 edition of *Engineering and Mining Journal* (EMJ), a premier international trade publication for the mining industry. It depicts an idyllic scene of Navajo pastoral life with a Navajo sheepherder on horseback guiding her flock through the red sand dunes and mesas characteristic of the famous and majestic landscape of Monument Valley. The Navajo, along with several other tribes including the Osage, Jicarilla Apache, and Shoshone Arapahoe, had by 1980 led the national movement to funnel tribal economic development initiatives through the extraction of natural resources from tribal lands.¹⁶⁰ Together, these four tribes in

¹⁵⁹ Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System*, 83.

¹⁶⁰ “The CERT Report: Council of Energy Resource Tribes,” September 13, 1982, Box 1, Folder 26, Peter Iverson Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

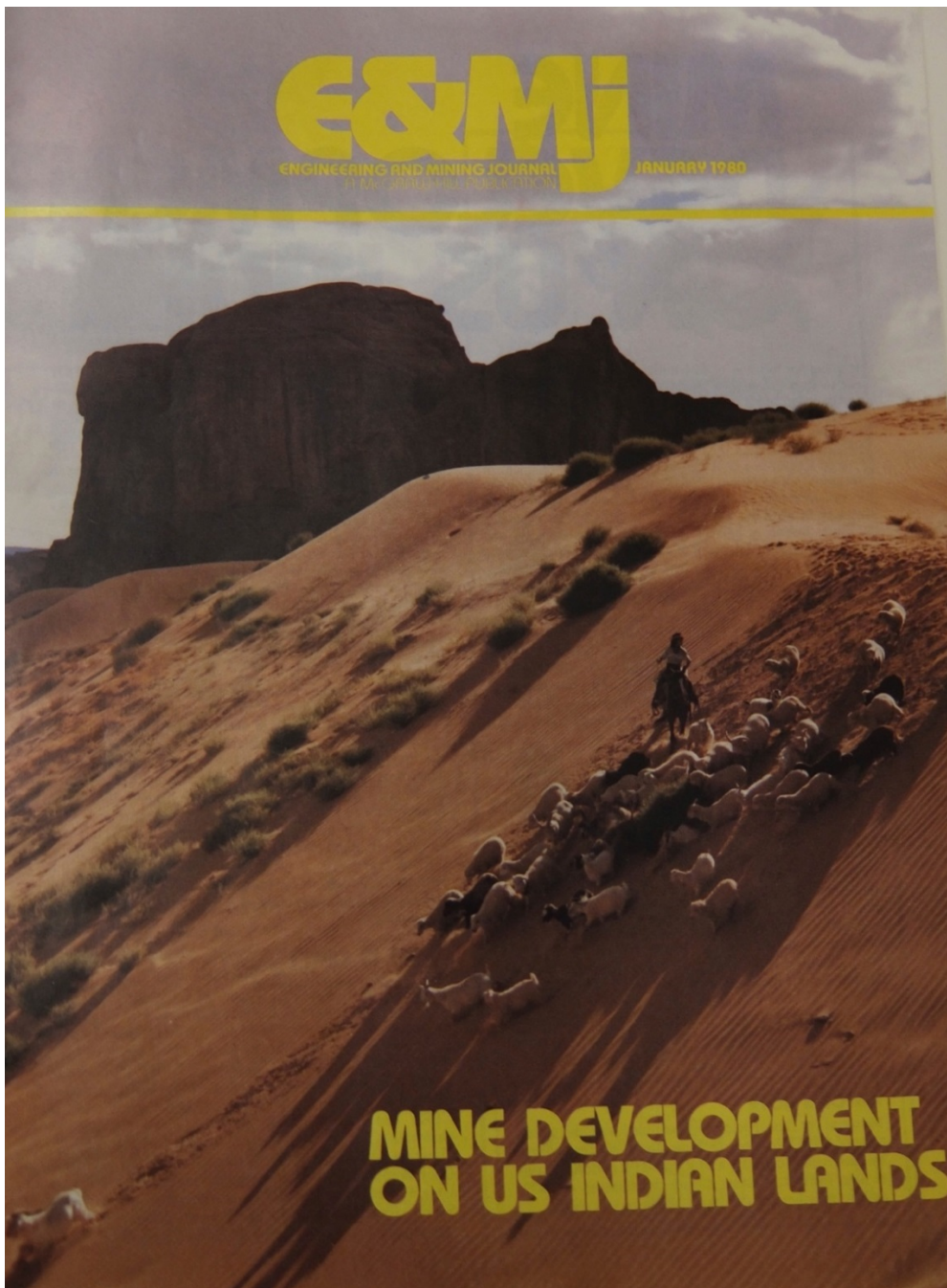


Figure 3.1 This image served as the cover of the January 1980 edition of Engineering and Mining Journal, a premier international trade publication for the mining industry.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Engineering and Mining Journal, January 1980, Box 1, Folder 26, Peter Iverson Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

particular had collectively leased millions of acres of tribal land to corporations that were involved in the mining and development of natural resources like oil, gas, uranium, copper, and coal. This special issue of EMJ, however, exclusively features a Navajo scene on its cover. Why not feature a scene from Osage or Jicarilla Apache life to reflect the prominence of these two tribes in catalyzing mine development on Indian lands in the previous decades? For the previous four years, then-Navajo tribal chairman Peter MacDonald had served as the President of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, or CERT. CERT came into existence in 1975 when 25 natural resource-rich tribes came together to form a coalition that would advocate on behalf of tribal interests in matters concerning the development of natural resources on Indian lands, or, as MacDonald put it, to “assure the Indians of better financial return for the exploitation of their energy resources.”¹⁶² MacDonald was a founding member of CERT, and served as its first Chairman concurrent with his first term as Navajo Nation tribal chairman. MacDonald’s leadership in CERT, which is reflected in the EMJ’s choice to feature a Navajo scene on the cover of its special issue on mine development on U.S. Indian lands, signaled the authority and power that the Navajo Nation wielded in energy resource development in Indian Country and in the U.S. more generally. Such power came from the Navajo Nation’s long-held commitment to arranging its economic and political development around the extraction of natural

¹⁶² “Indians and Arizona’s Future: Opportunities, Issues & Options,” Research Report prepared by the University of Arizona Academy-Sponsor of Arizona Town Halls, February 1979, Box 11, Folder 7, Peter Iverson Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

resources. As is well known, the first iteration of a centralized governing structure in Navajoland appeared in 1923 specifically to expedite the negotiation of leases with Midwest Refinery Company, which had discovered oil on treaty reservation lands and required an entity to drill for oil on Navajo tribal lands.

By the time MacDonald assumed leadership of CERT in 1976, the Navajo Nation had countless active uranium and coal mines, and close to half a dozen coal-fed power plants in Page, Arizona and the Four Corners region of the reservation. It led the nation (and the world, in some cases) in virtually every category of energy resource development. Peabody Coal Company boasted that its strip mine on Black Mesa, which had been approved by the tribe in 1966, was the first and largest tribally-operated industrial project to ever be undertaken. As they note in a company issued report published in the mid-1990s entitled, “A Quarter Century on Black Mesa,”

never before had an industrial complex of this size been built on American Indian lands. Never before had such a large project been developed principally by Native Americans. And never before had Native Americans benefited so much and in so many different ways from a partnership with industry.¹⁶³

The construction in 1963 of the Four Corners Power Plant just twenty miles east of the Navajo community of Shiprock, New Mexico marked an important moment in the history of the western United States; it was the first coal-fired power plant on the Colorado Plateau, and it inaugurated what Charles Wilkinson has called

¹⁶³ “A Quarter Century on Black Mesa,” Report Prepared by Peabody Coal Company, N.D., Box 1, Folder, 7, Navajo Environmental Issues Collection, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

the “Big Buildup,” a period between 1955 and 1975 where civic leaders in the cities surrounding the Colorado Plateau—Denver, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Tucson, El Paso, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and San Diego—“organized a concerted campaign to the rapid, wholesale development of the energy and water of the Colorado Plateau” that “transformed” the region from a “backwater regions of 8 million people at the end of World War II into a powerhouse of of 32 million today.”¹⁶⁴ Wilkinson calls this period of history “one of the most prodigious peacetime exercises of industrial might in the history of the world.”¹⁶⁵

In addition to these two major projects related to coal development in Black Mesa and Shiprock, the exploitation of uranium beginning in the 1950s and continuing well into the late 1970s along the eastern portion of the Navajo reservation turned northwestern New Mexico into the largest uranium producing region in the world, supplying about half of the country’s uranium.¹⁶⁶ As John Redhouse notes, Grants, New Mexico, a small town sitting at the base of Tsóodził, or Mt. Taylor, the sacred mountain demarcating the eastern edge of Diné customary lands and bordering Navajo, Acoma Pueblo, and Laguna Pueblo

¹⁶⁴ Charles Wilkinson, *Fire on The Plateau: Conflict and Endurance in the American Southwest* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1999), xii.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ John Redhouse quoted in “The New Resource Wars: Part II, The Recolonization of U.S. Indian Reservations,” *CALA Newsletter: Community Action on Latin America*, October 1980, Box 2, Folder 3, John Redhouse Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

treaty lands, was known in the 1970s as the “Uranium Capital of the World” because of its location in the center of the Grants Mineral Belt, the largest uranium exploration and production region in the nation.¹⁶⁷ Sitting atop some of the highest quality, and thus most valuable, coal and uranium reserves in the world, and being somewhat of a geographic crossroads between all of the major cities in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona seeking to develop and expand during this period, the Navajo Nation became a veritable epicenter of the aggressive “grow and build” gospel underlying post-World War Two American liberalism.¹⁶⁸ It is thus no surprise—nor a coincidence—that Peter MacDonald’s interests—and the interests of the Navajo Nation more generally—were so centrally featured in the January 1980 special edition of the EMJ on mining on Indian lands.

While MacDonald’s place at the head of CERT, as well as the growing legacy of Navajo mega-development and aggressive exploitation in the sector of natural resource extraction that his leadership in this organization represented, signified the central importance of the extraction of Navajo life to the larger designs of American liberalism, it also signified a shift in how Navajo political institutions, culture, and rhetoric deployed concepts of self-determination, sovereignty, and politics itself. As I note above, MacDonald claimed that CERT was established to assure that tribes received a better financial return for the

¹⁶⁷ Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System*, 103.

¹⁶⁸ Wilkinson, *Fire on The Plateau*, 210.

exploitation of their energy resources. He, along with other founding members, envisioned CERT as a vehicle for increasing tribal control over energy resource development on tribal lands. For them, as well as for the mining industry executives who sponsored the January 1980 issue of EMJ, tribal control meant “getting more income from resource development.”¹⁶⁹ Such income would come in the form of taxes, renegotiated leases, increased royalties and, ultimately, tribal ownership over production and, in some cases, tribal ownership over the sale of processed coal, uranium, or gas for the energy needs of outside entities and municipalities. In a February 1979 report prepared by the University of Arizona Academy entitled, “Indians and Arizona’s Future: Opportunities, Issues, & Options,” the report’s researchers claimed that the “basic purpose” of CERT was not only to obtain “more economic return through selling of resources,” but also create “strategies for resource development by the Indians themselves.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ N.A., “Indians and Arizona’s Future: Opportunities, Issues & Options.” Indeed, the January 1980 issue of the EMJ mirrored other special issues that appeared around this same time, including a special report from CERT issued in the fall of 1982 that detailed the new laws, regulations, and expectations from tribes who were utilizing CERT to exert more power and control over extractive industry operations. Released within two years of one another, the EMJ special issue and the CERT report both read as educational pamphlets designed to inform non-tribal energy development corporations like Peabody, Kerr McGee, and Kennecott on changes that affected their interactions and negotiations with newly empowered tribes. Both documents function as industry guidebooks for how mining corporations ought to consult with, and demonstrate respect for, tribal governments that had gained new forms of power and authority through the establishment of CERT, and as a result of new demands for greater economic benefits from resource extraction on tribal lands. The language dictating these new terms of engagement is focused almost exclusively on maximizing the “mutual” economic benefits of tribes, corporations, and the United States. At the center of the narrative of self-determination and tribal authority presented in these documents is economic exploitation, growth, and progress.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

The report went on to cite the development of lumber resources on tribal lands as an existing example of the superior economic benefits that resulted from tribally owned and operated resource exploitation, stating that “Those Indian tribes which, instead of simply selling their timber to outsiders, have gone into lumber production and sales have realized greater economic returns on their resources than others who have not.”¹⁷¹

In all cases, whether from university reports like this, from MacDonald’s own mouth, or from mining industry executives, the economic boon brought to Native people by resource extraction on tribal lands was seen as a pathway for tribes like the Navajo Nation to revolutionize the scope, power, and authority of their tribal governments, and to redefine and empower new forms of self-determination specifically through the enforcement of laws and regulations regarding resource development on tribal lands. As CERT itself proclaimed in a September 1982 report issued by the organization, “Perhaps the most important impact of the self-determination era is that reservation energy projects are now made through private negotiations between and Indian tribe and an energy developer,” implying that energy resource development projects had an intimate and essential role in expanding modern definitions and practices of tribal self-determination.¹⁷² The report goes on to state in a section entitled, “Expanding Tribal Government Responsibilities,” that

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² N.A., “The CERT Report: Council of Energy Resource Tribes.”

The normal method for asserting tribal authority is through development of tribal ordinances and regulations...During the last few years many major tribes have become increasingly involved in developing planning, regulatory, and enforcement laws related to energy development. Included in these ordinances are taxes, land use, zoning procedures, and environmental regulations.”¹⁷³

In a more general statement given by MacDonald during a 1973 interview on the televised news show, *Face The Nation*, MacDonald echoes CERT’s assertion that tribal self-determination experienced a boost because of energy development on tribal lands. He states that “most Indian tribes agree that because of sovereign status, by treaty or what have you, they have a right to tax as a governmental entity,” implying that authentic sovereignty and self-determination is derived from the authority to enforce taxation laws.¹⁷⁴

Combined, CERT’s definition of tribal self-determination and MacDonald’s definition of tribal sovereignty paint a picture of tribal political power that is organized, and made legible, primarily through the opportunities for economic growth, increased tribal authority, and greater self-sufficiency afforded by the extraction and exploitation of natural resources on tribal lands.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, liberal notions of economization, self-sufficiency, and progress have long been at the center of twentieth-century Navajo political and social organization. Indeed, prior to the 1970s when such proclamations of extraction-driven sovereignty had become

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ “An Interview With Peter MacDonald,” *American Indian Journal*, June 1979, Box 2, Folder 13, Peter Iverson Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Newspaper clipping missing author.

commonplace in Navajo political rhetoric, the Navajo Nation had already begun to experience a profound shift toward political philosophies of sovereignty and nationhood premised on extraction. The year of 1968 was a particularly monumental year in this regard. It marked the centennial commemoration of the Treaty of 1868. Then tribal chairman, Raymond Nakai, presided over the commemoration, which deployed “a century of progress” as its official theme. In his preface to a volume commemorating the centennial, Nakai announced that 1968 would mark “the start of a bold new era of progress, growth, self-sufficiency, industrial and economic development for our tribe.”¹⁷⁵ The following year, the Navajo tribal council passed a resolution declaring that the “Navajo Nation” would become the official term for the Diné, thereby reaffirming the sovereign status of the Navajo tribe that had been established in the Treaty of 1868.¹⁷⁶ A Jennifer Nez Denetdale points out, the rhetoric of Navajo sovereignty and nationalism that dominated the 1968 centennial commemoration reflects a broader trend in the 1960s in which “Navajo leaders fully embraced liberal ideologies” and “the wonders of development” as “the foundation for their political system.”¹⁷⁷ In her critique of the liberal politics of progress and multicultural celebration underlying Navajo commemorations like the 1968 centennial and the

¹⁷⁵ Raymond Nakai, speech delivered at the opening of the centennial year, Window Rock, AZ, and preface to Martin A. Link, ed., *Navajo: A Century of Progress, 1868-1968* (Window Rock: Navajo Tribe, 1968), 108, quoted in Iverson, *Diné*, 244.

¹⁷⁶ Iverson, *Diné*, 245.

¹⁷⁷ Denetdale, “Discontinuities, Remembrances, and Cultural Survival,” 306.

Bosque Redondo Memorial, which opened in 2005 just outside of Fort Sumner, New Mexico, Denetdale describes how “images of Navajo progress”—including “photographs of the development of natural resources”—accompanied news stories in the tribally owned *The Navajo Times* and the border town newspaper, *Gallup Independent*, about the 1968 commemoration. That same summer, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall testified before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee on legislation concerning the industrialization of Indian reservations, stating

I think this type of legislation, which would move us down the road toward the right kind of ultimate independence, is what the Indian people want...When one looks at Indian resources today, one asks himself the question, ‘What would IBM or AT&T, or Standard Oil...do if they owned this particular piece of land and these resources?’...(There is) not a major corporation in this country that would not take the resources these Indians have and increase the value ten or twenty times...The big thing is to get the Indians into the money markets of the country...into the economic mainstream.¹⁷⁸

Having embarked upon a master plan in the spring of 1965 to establish the Western Energy Supply & Transmission (WEST), a consortium of twenty-three utilities and municipalities representing the interests of urban growth in the region, Udall was already deeply involved in coordinating the development of water and energy resources in the American Southwest by the time he offered the above testimony on tribal economic development.¹⁷⁹ His perspective on

¹⁷⁸ Stewart Udall in John Redhouse, “The Geopolitics of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute,” no page given. Accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.angelfire.com/art/hoganview/Geopol.htm>.

¹⁷⁹ Redhouse, “The Geopolitics of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute,” no page given. See also Wilkinson, *Fire on the Plateau*, 213.

“Indian independence” equated such independence with corporate behavior, essentially arguing that the “ultimate” expression of tribal sovereignty and governance was to be found in emulating corporations like IBM, AT&T, or Standard Oil.

It is no coincidence that Udall was advancing a definition of tribal sovereignty and self-determination premised on corporate models of economic development, progress, and self-sufficiency in Washington D.C. while Chairman Nakai was proclaiming the exact same version of Navajo sovereignty and nationhood in Window Rock under the auspices of the one-hundred-year commemoration. Indeed, Udall had been working closely with Nakai for years to settle Navajo claims to the Upper Colorado River to facilitate urban growth, as well as to fund, approve, build, and operate coal-fired power plants like the Navajo Power Plant in Page, Arizona, which began operations in 1969, and to establish the conditions for coal mining operations on Black Mesa to commence one year later in 1970.¹⁸⁰ As the “first modern Navajo political leader” ushering in a new “era of progress,” Nakai embodied the liberal ideologies of development—all of which gained new legibility and traction through the extraction and exploitation of natural resources—that so mesmerized government officials like Stewart Udall and, just a few years later, Peter MacDonald.¹⁸¹ The narratives of Navajo self-determination, sovereignty, and nationalism that came into existence

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Iverson, *Diné*, 228.

during this period were thus consolidated with new ideologies and practices of extractive liberalism to the extent that the nascent 'Navajo Nation' became synonymous with the economic profit that could be secured through the extraction and exploitation of energy resources like coal, oil, and uranium. Indeed, as CERT would argue in its September 1982 report, the ultimate goal of tribal energy development vis-à-vis resource extraction would be to position "Indian resources" as the "foundation for overall economic development" and tribal sovereignty in all forms.¹⁸² Moreover, the development of Navajo natural resources was also cast as serving the mutual economic interests of both the Navajo Nation and the United States, thereby further integrating Navajo political organization into prevailing American liberal ideologies of economic prosperity, growth, and development, an element of the 1968 centennial that Denetdale points out as the basis for its "era of progress" theme. In sum, natural resource development was utilized—an exploited—as an arena for defining a new era of Navajo sovereignty, self-determination, and nationalism.

As Navajo nationalism became increasingly intertwined with extractive forms of liberal governance in Diné Bikeyah and the U.S. more broadly, creating unprecedented monetary profits and political power for the Navajo government through extractive practices, everyday Navajo community members, students, and elders from regions of the reservation affected by resource extraction began to challenge liberal notions of life, promise, and futurity promulgated by

¹⁸² N.A., "The CERT Report: Council of Energy Resource Tribes."

extractivist paradigms. Seeing resource extraction as a new threat that was reorganizing Diné existence and violating fundamental values of life, beauty, and sanctity at the heart of Diné philosophies, these Navajo citizens began to craft highly-organized campaigns, community movements, direct actions, and writings to indict what they saw as the necropolitical force of extractive liberalism. As I note above, John Redhouse was one such Navajo citizen who became one of The People's most vocal and prolific advocates during the 1970s. He participated in numerous organizations and coalitions, including Indians Against Exploitation based in Gallup, New Mexico; Diné Coalition, a group of grassroots Navajo citizens focusing on coal gasification and tribal government reform; the University of New Mexico's Native student organization, KIVA Club; the renowned National Indian Youth Council; and the Coalition for Navajo Liberation (CNL), an umbrella group comprised of the Farmington Intertribal Indian Organization, San Juan County Human Rights Committee, Farmington NAACP Chapter, AIM, KIVA Club, and a number of concerned Navajo individuals that formed in 1974 to advocate for Navajo citizens after the bodies of three Diné men were found mutilated north of Farmington.¹⁸³ As Redhouse notes, the CNL addressed a number of interrelated issues that had arisen because of the violent, destructive, and exploitative economic practices that had descended upon Diné people with the advent of extractive liberalism. The CNL waged campaigns against racist liquor establishments, the exploitation of Navajo culture at the Gallup Ceremonial,

¹⁸³ Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System*, 33.

racism against Native residents in border towns like Farmington, the pollution of Navajo lands and forced relocation of Navajo families because of coal gasification development, tribal corruption, forced sterilization, sexual discrimination, and the theft of Navajo water rights. Redhouse was an active member of the CNL during this period and produced dozens of press releases, reports, articles, and speeches on the Coalition's behalf. He deployed a uniquely polemical and acerbic rhetorical style to expose the greed, profit, and hypocrisy of extraction. For example, on August 28, 1974 in Farmington, New Mexico, Redhouse testified in front of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to The U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In the fiery speech, Redhouse stated matter-of-factly that Farmington illegally occupies stolen Navajo land. In his usual rhetorical style, he contrasted the issue of illegal white occupation of Navajo land in Farmington with the forced eviction of thousands of Diné residents from Black Mesa to make way for coal mining operations:

This past summer, we saw congressional legislation...which would have physically and forcibly removed 8500 to 9000 Navajo people from their ancestral homeland because a white man's court of law said that they were illegally occupying and trespassing on (Hopi) Indian land. But yet I do not see any such legislation that would physically and forcibly remove the white aliens from the Navajo land claim area because they are illegally occupying and trespassing on stolen Navajo land..."¹⁸⁴

Pointing out the glaring contradictions between the lawfulness of illegal trespassing by White residents in Farmington versus the perceived unlawfulness,

¹⁸⁴ John Redhouse, "Testimony to New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission," Speech, Farmington, NM, August 28, 1974, Box 2, Folder 9, John Redhouse Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

and pursuant eviction, of legal Navajo residents in Black Mesa, Redhouse couched this comment in a longer critique of the violence and destruction that resource extraction—which Farmington epitomized in his mind with its common practice of Indian killing—was waging against Diné life. Moreover, Redhouse's use of contrast, sarcasm and, at times, a biting tone, underscored the oppositional position of the CNL and other citizen groups to the energy development industry, as well as to tribal politicians who facilitated resource exploitation on tribal lands.

This oppositional position—which I argue is akin to war—emerged in the 1970s when the term “grassroots” gained common parlance within the rhetoric of emerging activist movements in Diné Bikeyah against resource extraction. Redhouse uses the term frequently in his writings to denote the key differences between everyday Navajo citizens who were resisting—and being steamrolled by—tribally-sponsored corporate development schemes. Like many other community advocates, Redhouse saw such schemes and their sponsors—including corporations, border town politicians, tribal chairmen, and tribal council delegates—as the “enemy” of the “grassroots” people.¹⁸⁵ In an August 1974 fact sheet detailing the CNL's criticisms of then-tribal chairman Peter MacDonald, Redhouse denounced the tribal government, arguing that

By signing the lease, Peter MacDonald sold out the wishes and desires of the grassroots Navajo people who were opposed to the TG&E line. He

¹⁸⁵ John Redhouse, “Statement of Support,” July 1974, Box 2, Folder 9, John Redhouse Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

simply refused to listen to them. But as the saying goes, money talks and TG&E had the money.¹⁸⁶

In a July 1974 statement of support he crafted on behalf of CNL, which condemned two bills under consideration by Congress that would authorize the removal of Navajo residents from joint use lands on Black Mesa, Redhouse used the term “enemy” to characterize the opposition of local Navajo residents on Black Mesa (and the CNL) to outside interference with Navajo political and economic affairs:

in recognizing that your struggle is our struggle and that your enemy is our enemy, the Coalition for Navajo Liberation hereby pledges our full support to all the Navajo people who are being directly threatened with losing their beloved homelands forever. We also stand ready to offer whatever help and assistance is necessary to protect and defend the land that has traditionally been held in sacred trust for centuries by our forefathers; the land that lies between our four sacred mountains.¹⁸⁷

CNL co-founder Fred Johnson echoed Redhouse’s claim, stating that “This is what the Coalition stands for: the protection of grassroots people, the protection of our natural resources against white corporations, the protection of our Mother Earth, the protection of individual rights.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ John Redhouse, “Fact Sheet,” August 1974, Box 2, Folder 9, John Redhouse Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

¹⁸⁷ John Redhouse, “Statement of Support.”

¹⁸⁸ Fred Johnson in Tom Berry and Beth Wood, “Coalition for Navajo Liberation: Spreading out From Shiprock,” *Navajo Times Special Report: The Dissidents: Coalition for Navajo Liberation, National Indian Youth Council*, February 1978, Box 2, Folder 3, John Redhouse Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Along with the ongoing rhetoric of opposition surrounding the refusal of grassroots Diné to relocate on Black Mesa, Redhouse's and Johnson's use of terms like "enemy," "protect," "defend," and "sold out" positions the CNL, as well as those Navajo people designated as "grassroots," as defiantly *in opposition to* the agenda and agents of extractive liberalism. This politics of opposition is at the heart of the form of liberalism that assumed dominance in Navajo history during the twentieth century, and especially during the 1960s and 1970s when resource extraction created new means by which the economization of life could gain traction and form. In a fragment from one of the closing paragraphs of *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault argues that war, with its language of enemies, opposition, and life/death, inhabits a "permanent presence within society."¹⁸⁹ As such, it is "a grid for understanding historical processes."¹⁹⁰ In concluding his February 4, 1976 lecture on the subject, Foucault extends a more precise view that "war is both the web and the secret of the institutions and systems of power."¹⁹¹ In these lectures, Foucault is speaking about the origins, history, and characteristics of liberalism and what he argues is its primary mode of power: biopolitics. The idea that the history of liberalism is a history of war, and that war is a key way to understand the historical manifestations of biopolitics, is echoed in Mbembe's definition of how necropower operates in colonial contexts as a

¹⁸⁹ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 239.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 110.

state of outright warfare.¹⁹² I draw from both Foucault and Mbembe, as well as Diné intellectuals like Redhouse, to argue that extractive liberalism gave rise to an era of Navajo political formation premised primarily on biopolitical wars over life and death. And while scholars have rightfully problematized Foucault's notion of warfare, this mode of understanding the history of extractive liberalism is compelling because it describes the intense struggles over life and death that shape the persistent refusal on the part of Diné "grassroots" people to acknowledge and accept the violence of liberal development ideologies.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 24.

¹⁹³The oppositional character of Navajo political activity during this period was also a result of the U.S. War on Poverty, which created the conditions for tribal government expansion by providing new sources of funding for combatting poverty through self-help and community development programs. The Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity (ONEO), which was established in 1965 to address Navajo poverty under the purview of the War on Poverty, became a powerful new entity in tribal politics right as revenues from natural resource extraction were expanding the power, influence, and reach of the burgeoning Navajo Nation. With economic development as its mandate, the ONEO sponsored dozens of new government-sponsored programs like Dinébe'íiná Náhiilna be Agha'diit'ahii (more commonly known as DNA Legal Services). The ONEO's emphasis on economic development aligned with the growing profits and economic justifications accompanying increased resource exploitation on the reservation. At the center of these developments was Peter McDonald, who served as the first executive director of the ONEO beginning in May 1965. In addition to spearheading this new and powerful branch of Navajo tribal governance, MacDonal also played an instrumental role in expanding Window Rock's influence in the 1970s through entities like CERT focused on exploiting the benefits of resource extraction. By pioneering unprecedented economic growth through energy development and ONEO-driven community empowerment, MacDonal successfully consolidated and solidified the power of the newly formed Navajo Nation.

However, this expansion of official tribal power and authority also had the effect of moving the tribal government away from average Navajo people. Energy development required the relocation of thousands of Navajo people from communities on Black Mesa and, later, in the Four Corners, which the tribal government supported and enforced against the will of Navajo residents. DNA Legal Services, which operated at the "grassroots level" as an "advocate for individual Navajos"—and which had faced strong opposition from the tribal council since its founding—also became an alternative vehicle for political actors who claimed to represent the true wishes of the Navajo people in

Section 3.4: Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the emergence of Diné refusals within the historical and political conditions of extraction that arose from the rapid development of energy resources, specifically uranium and coal, on the Navajo Nation in the 1960s and 1970s. I use Achille Mbembe's analytic of necropolitics to describe and frame the politics of death that gave shape to extractive forms of liberal economic development like Indian killing in reservation border towns (epitomized by Farmington, New Mexico) that were experiencing an economic boon and population influx because of the windfall from coal gasification, uranium mining, and coal mining in nearby locales. I focus on the legacy of one of the Navajo Nation's most well-known tribal chairmen/presidents, Peter MacDonald, and his involvement with the powerful Council of Energy Resource Tribes, to demonstrate the almost total convergence of ideologies of extraction and necropolitical practices with the ascendance of the newly formed Navajo Nation as one of the—if not the—most powerful tribal nations in the United States (and perhaps North America as a whole), a historical development that resulted in the new formation that I call extractive liberalism. I use oral histories from elder Diné matriarch resisters, as well as the writings of John Redhouse, an important figure in the history of Diné refusals and critical intellectual production, to frame and

opposition to the perceived corruption and greed in Window Rock (Iverson 2002, 252). Terms like "grassroots" came to dominate the political rhetoric and philosophies of emergent Navajo political movements to mark the growing gulf between everyday people and the tribal government, and to condemn the tribal government as an entity that sold out the Navajo people.

elaborate the expansive politics of life that Diné activists developed as they mobilized widespread resistance against the necropolitical death-drive of extraction in their communities. I also channel Redhouse's brilliant political writings to intervene into the existing historical and political science literature on Navajo politics, which limits the realm of the political to formal and institutional modes of governance. I argue that the fluorescence—and diversity—of Diné refusals that came into existence in the 1970s proves a need to expand our notions of the political to include actors and groups like Redhouse, Pauline Whitesinger, Roberta Blackgoat, The Coalition for Navajo Liberation, and Indians Against Exploitation, amongst others, who have profoundly shaped Navajo political history and intellectual production. I carry these concerns forward in Chapter Five by considering how we might draw from Diné grassroots actors to develop the groundwork for the emerging project of Critical Diné Studies.

Chapter Four: The Secret Value of Rape: Experimental Liberalism and The Economics of Navajo Womanhood

We had a young woman, an epileptic with psychiatric problems on top of it. She was once gang banged at Cameron by well over 100 men. The trader gave up counting and they had her out in the corral and gave her a pint of wine for each time. The police records showed that she had been caught having sex with a brother but the epilepsy had started earlier.

- Dr. Jerrold Levy (Date Unknown)¹⁹⁴

You take Window Rock. The Navahos call it John Collier's whorehouse. They have a hundred women working in that place. During the day they put these women behind the typewriter, and when the Navahos go to ask for some information, they don't get any satisfaction. They don't get the answer they are looking for. So they think that after these women sit behind the typewriter all day, they get used for some purpose later. Now the Navahos won't spread that unless they know it a fact.

- Elmer Foutz (1949)¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ From an interview conducted by Carolyn Niethammer in the mid-1990s in the course of researching her two biographies on Annie Wauneka. The informant, Jerrold Levy, was a University of Arizona professor who had worked with Annie Wauneka in various capacities pertaining to Navajo health administration. Box 1, Folder 23, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University.

¹⁹⁵ This quotation is from an interview conducted by Tom Sasaki, a Cornell University Anthropology graduate student, in 1949. Elmer Foutz ran the local trading post in Fruitland. Anthropologists like Sasaki participating in the Cornell University

That girl used be around here all the time. She is from Shiprock, but she hangs around. Tom Moffit and Wallace Duncan got her drunk one night up at the squaw dance about four miles from here. That was before these boys were married.

They did something to her, both of them. Then they went to call an old man...They told this old man...that there was something pretty good just over the hill, and they took him to where this girl was. The girl said that she didn't want that old man to lay on her but the two boys just hold her down, and he did it.

When he got up he said, "well my grandsons, I want to sure thank you for bringing me to something good like this...That man died just two months afterwards, and I guess everybody figured that that experience is the thing that killed him. Everybody around here knows about it. That girl is just no good, she is always causing everybody trouble.

- Steve Henderson (1949)¹⁹⁶

Section 4.1: Introduction: Navajo Studies and The Silencing of Rape

In this chapter, I excavate the silences, absences, and reluctances that surround the topic of violence against Navajo women within the field of Navajo

Southwest Project would frequently interact with and record their conversations with traders about Navajo social life. Drinking, work ethic, and sexuality were common themes. Box 7, Folder 264, Papers of Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

¹⁹⁶ From a May 16, 1949 interview conducted by Tom Sasaki with a Navajo informant named Steve Henderson. Box 7, Folder 264, Papers of Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

studies. I examine how obsessions with reform, capacitation, and rehabilitation underlying liberal experimental approaches to human and economic development within the context of Navajo administration worked to conceal, ignore, and in some cases, reproduce violence against Navajo women. I use an Indigenous feminist analysis to expose how the anthropological and historical studies that constituted such experiments fail to capture or apprehend this violence. I offer a provisional methodology for capturing such violence that depends upon poststructuralist approaches to Marxist critique that center on theories and methods of materiality. I intervene into the tropes of culture, labor, and agency that have long dominated white Marxist feminist studies of Navajo women in order to understand why and how this body of scholarship fails to acknowledge the actually existing high rates of violence that Navajo women have historically experienced.

In order to understand why violence is absent from this literature—despite its astonishing ubiquity within the historical and ethnographic record—I spend most of the chapter deconstructing the ways in which rape, and notions of Navajo womanhood and gender more generally, became entangled with the logics of economization that were taking root in Navajo society during this period of intense biopolitical investment in Navajo political and economic reform, growth, rehabilitation, and self-determination. I examine the biography of famed Navajo tribal council delegate Annie Wauneka in concert with two important social science experiments spearheaded by Cornell University researchers in the 1950s in order to understand the ways in which Navajo women were expected to

conform to these liberal logics of economization. The result of conforming with these logics was to maximize the productive/economic potential of Navajo life on all fronts. For women, maximization occurred in the form of new spheres of labor and influence over domestic, political, and marketplace concerns (as evidenced by Wauneka's rise to power), but also through experimentation with Navajo women's bodies in the form of sexual torture like rape that opened up every aspect of women's lives to the panoptic imperatives of biopolitical intervention.

The reports from the Farmington Irrigation Project and the Cornell Southwest Project that I use and analyze in this chapter, as well as the multiple male interlocutors whose jokes about sexual violence populate this chapter, frame rape in the language of economics. These historical actors allude to sexual violence specifically through the terms of economic underdevelopment, whether this be in association with alcoholism or other forms of perceived depravity and poverty that require rehabilitation. I argue that such apprehensions turn rape into an object and act of value—indeed, a laboratory—that is incorporable into the very schemes of economization that fuel the studies, experimentation, and capacitation projects that form the crux of Navajo studies and experimental liberalism. I conclude this chapter by relaying several anecdotes about gang rape, domestic abuse, and sexism compiled from the ethnographic field notes of Cornell University anthropologists in a large experimental farming project in Fruitland, New Mexico in order to consider how a Critical Diné Studies approach might treat such evidence differently than the Marxist feminist or experimental

anthropological studies that have dominated the literature on Navajo women within Navajo Studies.

Section 4.2: Navajo Womanhood and Economies of Rape

It was a calm spring day in the Fruitland Irrigation Project (FIP), a federally sponsored “experimental agricultural community” and irrigation program initiated in the town of Fruitland, New Mexico on the Navajo Reservation as part of John Collier’s larger plan initiated in 1934 for Navajo economic rehabilitation and self-determination.¹⁹⁷ Established in the wake of an ongoing failure to increase the Navajo standard of living through livestock reduction, the FIP was envisioned as another horizon for Navajo economic development that might help to alleviate the strain that livestock reduction had placed on Navajo subsistence. With this renewed vigor in hand, Navajo service personnel set out in 1937 to irrigate over 5,000 acres of land using canals running off the San Juan River. The irrigation project was designed to provide hundreds of Navajo families with enough income from small-scale farming to achieve the \$235 annual figure that newly appointed land management director, W.G. McGinnies, had projected as a target in his 1936 report, “The Agricultural and Range Resources of the Navajo Reservation in Relation to the Subsistence Needs of the Navajo Indians.”¹⁹⁸ By 1949 when

¹⁹⁷ “A Comparative Study of the Shift in Six Selected Villages From Economic Self-Sufficiency to Dependence on the Larger Unit,” Cornell University Southwest Project, N.D., Box 6, Folder 16, Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

¹⁹⁸ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 276-7.

Elmer Foutz and Tom Henderson uttered the words in the above epitaphs, however, the FIP had failed almost as acutely as had livestock reduction to implement an effective economic development strategy for the Navajo. Yields from the ten acre plots allocated to Navajo families had been chronically low since 1942.¹⁹⁹ Although close to 200 families operated FIP farms in 1949, over fifty percent of the farms netted less than \$500 that year.²⁰⁰ Since FIP farms provided only minimal subsistence income, farmers were driven to supplement their farm income with wage work. By 1951, wage work away from home comprised the majority of income for the average Navajo family living and working in the FIP.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 285.

²⁰⁰ Eric B. Henderson and Jerrold E. Levy, *Survey of Navajo Community Studies 1936-1974*, (Department of Anthropology: University of Arizona, 1975), 67, 69. The survey is a study conducted as part of the Lake Powell Research Project (LPRP), a consortium of university groups funded by the Division of Advanced Environmental Research and Technology in Research Applied to National Needs in the National Science Foundation. The LPRP sought to “bring a wide range of expertise in natural and social sciences to bear on the general problem of the effects and ramifications of water resource management in the Lake Powell region” by focusing on income and wealth generated by resource development; implications for federal Indian policies; and factors influencing Navajo economic development, among others (ii). The survey compiled summaries of major studies that had been conducted in dozens of Navajo communities during the past thirty-eight years in order to document the various cultural, demographic, social, and political changes that had accompanied the “processes of change from a rural traditional life to a modernized wage economy” beginning in the 1930s (ix). Like many studies and reports funded by major foundations and governmental entities, the Survey of Navajo Community Studies focused on the persistent problem of Navajo poverty, economic destitution, and development.

²⁰¹ Tom Sasaki, *Fruitland, New Mexico: A Navajo Community in Transition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 48, quoted in Henderson and Levy, *Survey of Navajo Community Studies*, 68.

That same year, the Navajo Hopi Rehabilitation Act was being considered by Congress. Crafted in response to a blizzard in the winter of 1949 that devastated over 1,000 Navajo families and captivated the American public with images of Navajo suffering, poverty, and starvation, the Act sought to extend the general theme of Navajo economic rehabilitation that had dominated federal policy pertaining to the Navajo over the previous fifteen years by authorizing \$90,000,000 to fund

facilities, employment, and services essential in combating hunger, disease, poverty, and demoralization among the members of the Navajo and Hopi Tribes, to make available the resources of their reservations for use in promoting a self-supporting economy and self-reliant communities, and to lay a stable foundation on which these Indians can engage in diversified economic activities and ultimately attain standards of living comparable with those enjoyed by other citizens.²⁰²

As this description attests, in the years leading up to the Act, Navajo people were commonly depicted as wretches in need of economic support, intervention, and rehabilitation of the kind the Act was designed to address. Popular narratives attributed their poor living conditions to their underdeveloped cultural, and thus, economic status. For policy makers, Indian agents, academics, and reporters

²⁰² This excerpt is from the Act itself. "S. 2734 ("An Act, October 19, 1949")," Series 3, Part 2, Box 26, Folder 38, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT. President Harry S. Truman reiterated this rationale in an April 19, 1950 Statement issued by the White House upon signing the bill into law. In the statement, he claimed, "I have today signed S. 2734, a bill authorizing a long-range economic rehabilitation program for the Navajo and Hopi Indian Tribes. The passage of this Act is an important milestone in our Government's administration of Indian affairs. It represents a carefully developed plan for dealing with the unsolved economic problems which have delayed the social advancement of this large segment of our Indian citizens. For these Indian groups it also represents a significant forward step in self-government—a principle to which the American people are deeply devoted." Part 3, Series 2, Box 26, Folder 38, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

alike, the solution to both Navajo poverty thus lay in a new wave of post-stock reduction rehabilitation initiatives that would set the Navajo on a renewed path of self-determination, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency.

The economic calculus underwriting these popular mid-century perspectives on the Navajo condition permeates the numerous reports that meticulously documented the relative progress and stagnation of development projects like the FIP both on the reservation and off-reservation in locations like border towns and relocation centers like the Colorado River Indian resettlement program where the development of Navajo economic self-sufficiency was also a primary concern (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).²⁰³ Economic logics are important in the context of this chapter's focus on rape because rape and other forms of misogyny and gender violence against Navajo women are narrated in the anthropological and historical archive only in relation to economic development. The three epitaphs that open this chapter are evidence of this trend. Although articulated by three different interlocutors—the first is a trained anthropologist who published two books on Navajo culture and alcoholism, the second is a well-known Fruitland-based trader whose descendants continue to operate a lucrative trading post in the Farmington area, and the third is a Navajo FIP resident—all three epitaphs relay accounts of rape and misogyny in the context of alcohol abuse or, in the case of Elmer Foutz's comments, in the context of Collier's influence on Navajo political and economic reorganization. At first glance,

²⁰³ For a representative review of these reports prior to 1974, see Henderson and Levy, *Survey of Navajo Community Studies*.

references to rape occurring in the presence of excessive alcohol consumption seem to have nothing to do with economics. However, these anecdotes were collected by two anthropologists who held instrumental positions in two of the most prominent economic development experiments at that time: the FIP and the Navajo Cornell Field Health Research Project (NCFHRP), which established a clinic in Many Farms, Arizona in July 1955 to harness growing attention to tuberculosis from doctors and researchers for more comprehensive healthcare on the reservation. Both the FIP and the NCFHRP were “demonstration programs” that entailed close collaboration between federal and tribal entities, and researchers and doctors affiliated with Cornell University. Demonstration programs became popular in the 1930s when Collier and his cadre of Indian agents began to establish designated conservation districts and sheep demonstration areas where Navajo herders could engage in hands-on training in the new livestock handling techniques introduced by government programs to facilitate stock reduction.²⁰⁴ The FIP and NCFHRP were conceived in similar fashion as demonstration programs where experimental techniques in farming and health, respectively, could be studied and tested in order to determine the best course of action to elevate Navajo life to the standard of living identified by

²⁰⁴ For a diverse representation of how demonstration programs functioned within the field of Indian administration more broadly, see the publication of papers that came out of the Second Inter-American Conference on Indian Life, which convened in Cuzco, Peru from June 24-July 4, 1949. Part 3, Series 4, Box 48, Folder 28, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Table 14.3: Livestock Ownership in Fruitland

Number of Sheep	Families			
	1948-1949		1950-1951	
	Number	Percent Owning Sheep	Number	Percent Owning Sheep
0	109	57	132	66
1-50	20	10	48	24
51-100	45	24	13	6
100 or more	17	9	8	4
Total	191	100	201	100

Source: Data from Sasaki (1960:33) and Shukry (1954:102)

Table 14.4: Distribution of Farm Sizes and Estimated Farm Income in Fruitland

Number of Acres	Number of Family Units		Estimated Mean Income ^a
	1948	1950/51	1950/51
1-5	6	1	\$ 304
6-10	93	81	571
11-15	50	59	810
16-20	29	34	1,107
21-25	7	17	1,420
over 25	3	9	1,774
Total	188 ^b	201	
Mean			\$ 856

^a agricultural service estimates gave an average of \$60.80 income from one acre

^b three Navajos held joint assignments

Source: Data from Sasaki (1960:44) and Shukry (1954:94)

Figure 4.1 These two tables depict income that Navajo families living in Fruitland, New Mexico received from livestock and farming over a three year period between 1948-1951.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ These tables document capital in the form of livestock ownership and income derived from farming in the demonstration farming project in Fruitland, New Mexico, 1948-1956. The tables are only two of dozens that are included in the *Survey of Navajo*

Congress as a benchmark of self-determination in the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act of 1949. Co-sponsored by the Division of Indian Health of the U.S. Public Health Service, Cornell University Medical College, and the Navajo Tribal Council Health and Welfare Committee headed by famed Klagetoh councilwoman Annie Wauneka, the NCFHRP sought "to define the proper concerns of a health program among a people such as the Navajo" and "to attempt to devise practicable means for the delivery of the necessary health services in a form acceptable to the people."²⁰⁶ The NCFHRP expanded the approach that Wauneka had perfected through her work to reduce Navajo cases of tuberculosis and other contagious diseases since the beginning of her tenure as chair of the Health and Welfare Committee in 1951. As Carolyn Niethammer notes in her 2001 biography of Wauneka, *I'll Go and Do More: Annie Dodge Wauneka, Navajo Leader and Activist*, studies and clinical procedures developed through

Community Studies 1936-1974, a survey produced by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Arizona in 1975 to document the variables involved in "change from a rural [Navajo] traditional life to a modernized wage work economy" (ix). This survey, like hundreds that have been conducted in the tradition of experimental liberalism, was part of a collaborative research project called the Lake Powell Research Project funded by the Division of Advanced Environmental Research and Technology in RANN (Research Applied to National Needs) in the National Science Foundation. The purpose of the research project was to "make timely research results readily accessible to user groups" for matters of policy making (ii). Eric B. Henderson and Jerrold E. Levy, *Survey of Navajo Community Studies 1936-1974* (Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona, March 1975).

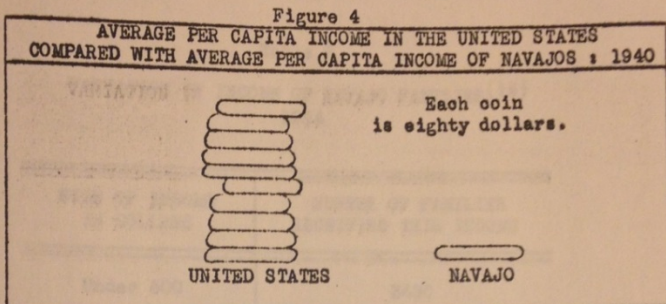
²⁰⁶ This excerpt is from the 1957 Navajo Yearbook that accompanied the Navajo Cornell Field Health Research Project. From a Blog accompanying the Samuel W. J. Wood Library Archives, York-Presbyterian/Weill-Cornell Medicine, New York, NY. Accessed May 2, 2016. <http://weill.cornell.edu/archives/blog/2011/06/the-navajo-cornell-field-health-project.html>.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

I. "AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF INDIANS ARE POOR, EVEN EXTREMELY POOR..."(10)

These are the words of the Meriam Report of 1928. This has been quoted often, plans have come and gone, but the words remain true. They describe the Navajo situation accurately.

The income of Navajos today is far below what the United States considers "subsistence level". Average Navajo income in 1940 (the last pre-war year) was about \$82 a person, compared with a national average almost ten times that high.(11)



Thus the average income for a family of five in 1940 would have been \$410. This figure includes the values of stock and crops raised for home consumption.

By 1944 Navajo income had more than doubled; it was almost \$200 per person, or \$998 for a family of five. There was a very significant shift in sources of income during that time.

TABLE I

AVERAGE NAVAJO INCOME
PER FAMILY OF FIVE MEMBERS : 1940, 1944⁽¹²⁾

Sources of Income	Dollars Earned	
	1940	1944
Wages (biggest ↑)	120	478
Stockraising & Farming	240	258
Arts & Crafts	35	26
Allotments (servicemen)	0	200
Miscellaneous (biggest ↑)	15	36
TOTAL	410	998

post-war wages - allotments

Figure 4.2 These graphs and table are from a well-known 1946 state and university sponsored report called *Report on The Navajo*. They depict economic indicators of Navajo development like income.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ These tables and charts are from a 1946 report prepared by Elizabeth P. Clark entitled *Report on The Navajo*. In the introduction to the report, Clark states that is

the NCFHRP sought to understand “how modern medicine could be presented in an acceptable form across cultural and linguistic barriers without compromising essential medical standards,” an approach that mirrored the method of translating institutional medicine into Navajo linguistic and cultural frameworks that had become the hallmark of Wauneka’s strong advocacy for Navajo welfare.²⁰⁸ Wauneka, with her commanding presence and tenacious drive for improving Navajo health, had considerable influence over the development of the NCFHRP. With this, she brought her unwavering support for the liberal paradigms of political self-determination and economic self-sufficiency that her father, Chee Dodge, had championed during his tenure as the tribal council’s first chairman in the 1920s and 1930s. In a speech entitled “The Navajo and His Future” that she delivered on Aug 10, 1951 at a roundtable conference at El Morro Theatre in Gallup, New Mexico, Wauneka outlined the terms of this approach:

intended “for persons directly concerned with the welfare of Navajo people” (a). In the report, which is funded by the Home Missions Council of North America in cooperation with the Association on American Indian Affairs, the Indian Rights Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs, Clark focuses on economic factors, education, health, welfare and law in order to provide a “summary presentation of the facts and figures of present conditions” for Navajos (a). She claims that the report is intended for use by policy makers in their efforts to address the “urgency of the Navajo problem” (a). Like the tables in Figure 4.1, these tables and graphs are concerned with economic indicators of Navajo development (and underdevelopment) like income. These types of reports are exemplary of the experiments that merged academic research with state-sponsored Indian administration in the name of fostering liberal economic development, rehabilitation, and self-determination for tribes like the Navajo during the era. Elizabeth P. Clark, *Report on The Navajo* (1946). No city or publisher given.

²⁰⁸ Carolyn Niethammer, *I’ll Go and Do More: Annie Dodge Wauneka, Navajo Leader and Activist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 107.

The last great Navajo leader, Chee Dodge...knew that only through education would his tribe be a productive people, only through education would his people be able to acquire the standards of living that are enjoyed by other Americans and thereby take their place as equal American citizens. I am here for the same purpose, to stress the need for more and bigger schools; the essential needs in hospitals and sanitoriums; more water development by drilling deep wells; the establishment of Shiprock-San Juan irrigation project; Recently the Indians were stirred to a new hope. A long range rehabilitation program...was promised our people. However, Congress has deeply cut the proposed expenditures because of the war emergency. But Congress seems to forget that the Navajos also have an emergency, and that the treaty of 1868 is still unfulfilled.²⁰⁹

Wauneka, who credited her famous father with inspiring her to become a political figure, was deeply committed to continuing his work to make the Navajo people “productive” through the development of institutions of progress like education, public health, and water management. Although she fell in line with other contemporaries who viewed these steps as a prerequisite for achieving a standard of living on par with other Americans (see Chapter Two), she took a distinct position on self-determination, arguing that federal superintendence minimized true self-determination and that federally-sponsored demonstration programs like the NCFHRP ought to lead to full Navajo control over all matters of administration, economic policy, and governance.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Box 2, Folder 16, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

²¹⁰ Her comment about the 1868 treaty speaks to this view, as do other comments she made during the same speech. To conclude the speech, she proclaimed, “We don’t want the Indian Service to be pestering us forever...the Navajos must put forth all their efforts to rid Window Rock of incompetent and useless officials and get Navajos into as many jobs there as possible. Otherwise we will be like monkeys in a cage for the rest of the Americans to look at.” Box 2, Folder 16, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Despite her disapproval of federal superintendence, Wauneka nevertheless championed a form of Navajo self-determination predicated on liberal notions of development. This is an important point in the context of my argument about the economic rhetoric surrounding rape because despite Wauneka's esteemed position as only the second woman ever to serve on the Navajo tribal council, even a cursory review of newspaper and magazine stories about her career reveals that her status as a female public figure was acceptable, legible, and laudable only because she embraced and advanced experimental liberal ideas about Navajo productivity, economic progress, and biopolitical intervention. Journalists and political leaders were particularly captivated by her early work to eradicate tuberculosis in the 1950s and her later campaigns in the 1980s to address alcoholism. Articles that focused on her many accomplishments in these areas frequently framed her work in terms of the improvement of Navajo life, oftentimes citing her as the single most important figure in the history of Navajo modernization. As one reporter wrote in a November 1, 1970 article on Wauneka that appeared in *Empire Magazine*, "White doctors and health officials freely credit Annie with spearheading the greatest improvement in general conditions among the tribe in nearly a century."²¹¹ In a story about Wauneka's legacy that appeared in *The Arizona Republic* following her death in 1997, former Navajo Nation President Albert Hale

²¹¹ Paul Friggens, "Annie Wauneka: Great Lady of the Navajo," *Empire Magazine*, November 1, 1970. Box 2, Folder 13, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

“praised Wauneka” as “one of the great Navajo leaders” who led the transition of the Navajo Nation from “farming and shepherding to the modern mixed economy of today.”²¹² Another article that appeared in the June 10, 1970 issue of the *Navajo Times* listed

just a few of the deeds that have helped to generate renown recognition. Through the efforts of Dr. Wauneka, tuberculosis which was at one time in just about every Navajo home has just about been eradicated on the reservation. She has also much work in the area of environmental health (living standards), in the area of improved housing from the round house to the square house with more windows, improved water wells, better food and eating habits.²¹³

Collectively, these accounts portray Wauneka’s historical legacy in terms of a leader who ushered her people into an era of modernity through focusing on technologies of improvement in the areas of health, education, welfare, housing, and labor. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Wauneka saw alcohol as a distinct threat to Navajo health and improvement that also demanded its own set of programs and studies on par with those she had developed to combat tuberculosis.²¹⁴

²¹² Mark Shaffer, “Navajo Activist Against TB Dies: ‘Legendary’ Annie Wauneka, 89,” *The Arizona Republic*, N.D., Box 2, Folder 16, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

²¹³ A.L. Roland, “Annie Wauneka, A True Humanitarian,” *Navajo Times*, June 10, 1976, Box 2, Folder 12, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

²¹⁴ William Hart, ‘Legendary mother’ still helping Navajos,” *Arizona Republic Correspondent*, June 19, 1988, Box 2, Folder 12, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Jerrold Levy would go on in the 1990s to co-author an expansive, twenty-five-year study published by Yale University Press on Navajo alcohol use among men. See Stephen J. Kunitz, Jerrold E. Levy, and Tracy J. Andrews, *Drinking Careers: A Twenty-Five-Year Study of Three Navajo Populations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

As I note in the previous chapter, the rhetoric of improvement through which Wauneka and others viewed her career as a distinguished public figure relies on a distinctly biopolitical framework that centers the capacitation and improvement of Navajo life according to theories of human capital, which, as I point out in Chapter Two, transferred political activity to the site of life itself in order to maximize the productivity of bodies. Like her contemporaries from Cornell University who helped to shape the FIP and the NCHRP, Wauneka was primarily concerned with aligning Navajo life with notions of economization. Her focus on eradicating biological diseases—literally the very matter of embodied Navajo life—in the name of economic notions like “productivity,” “improvement,” and “quality of life” speaks powerfully to this fact. Her role as a Diné woman who was also a political leader in the Navajo public sphere, which was characterized by a form of Navajo nationalism that Jennifer Nez Denetdale points out “made Navajo men and federal officials the primary actors in the interpretations of Navajo progress,” thus ought to be read in relation to the paradigm of experimental liberalism that dominated the configurations of Navajo life that served as the literal and figural material for postwar articulations of social, political, and economic progress and self-sufficiency.²¹⁵ I argue that it was her expertise and staunch advocacy for biopolitical experiments like health policies, studies, and training that made her intelligible not only as a valid female leader in the masculine public sphere of Navajo politics, but, also, as an enterprising

²¹⁵ Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses,” 14, 18.

economic woman who herself conformed to the expectations of biopolitical subjecthood that reproduced experimental liberalism. Indeed, as Wauneka herself would boast, “I’m forever disappointed with something,” implying that her drive to “go and do more” (as the title of her biography by Carolyn Niethammer proclaims) required a commitment to the same ideas about progress, betterment, and rehabilitation that federal law makers, Indian agents, and anthropologists had been espousing since Collier’s first experiments reached the reservation in 1934.²¹⁶

By all accounts, Wauneka surpassed her male (and female) counterparts in fostering unparalleled productivity, progress, and improvement for Navajo people.²¹⁷ And while all Navajos were expected to perform and promote the logics of economization underwriting experimental liberalism, the case of Annie Wauneka implies that women and others deemed “feminine” could only achieve legibility within liberal regimes of recognition that bolstered the logic of economization if they were superlatively productive of its ends. Indeed, it seems that, as a woman, Wauneka was granted access to the Navajo public sphere precisely because she embodied liberal subjecthood so flawlessly. It is important to point out that she had meticulously cultivated her performance of liberal

²¹⁶ William Hart, “‘Legendary Mother’ Still Helping Navajos.”

²¹⁷ An April 11, 1984 article about Wauneka that appeared in the *Navajo Times* reported that “The tuberculosis death rate and number of cases reported was cut nearly in half between 1953 and 1960s” because of Wauneka’s work. Patrice Locke, “Zah Applauds Wauneka, The ‘Young Lady’ Leader,” *Navajo Times*, April 11, 1984, Box 2, Folder 3, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Navajo womanhood through years of emulating her father, Chee Dodge, who had perfected his own form of masculine leadership and subjectivity in tandem with the transformations in Navajo social, political, and economic life that accompanied the introduction of experimental liberalism in the 1930s. As the standing chairman of the tribal council during this period, Dodge played a pivotal role in normalizing the mandates of experimental liberalism in Navajo governance and everyday social formations.²¹⁸ In this sense, Wauneka's legibility

²¹⁸ Beyond his capacity as a leading political figure during this time, Dodge was also a consummate entrepreneur who embraced the spirit of *economic man* by spearheading economic development experiments as a government official *and* by creating new markets in Navajo jewelry, high-end livestock sales, and other profitable opportunities opened up by the construction of railroads through Navajo territory. Indeed, Dodge was quite possibly the first Navajo entrepreneur. As Richard Van Valkenburg noted in an article on Dodge that appeared in the June 1943 edition of *Arizona Highways*, "With the coming of the Atlantic and Pacific R.R....Navajo blankets and silver started to develop into a new income source. Recognizing the possibilities for his tribesman, Chee took great interest. Sponsoring the greatest of all Navajo silversmiths, Atsidih Sanih, Chee had the old silversmith make him the first turquoise set Navajo ring ever wrought from silver." Box 2, Folder 26, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Dodge and his daughter were also notorious spendthrifts who reveled in high-quality consumer goods like new vehicles, thoroughbred horses, and diamond jewelry. Dodge was reportedly one of the first Navajos to ever own a wagon and, later on, a vehicle. And, like his daughter who was awarded the U.S. President Medal of Freedom in 1963 "for performance of a meritorious act or service in the interests of the security of the United States," Dodge was also recognized for his loyalty to the U.S. government. In a letter dated April 19, 1884, Navajo agent Denis Riordan stated: "Chee's loyalty remains ever steadfast to Washington Sita'ih, the Eternal Chief, who sits in a hogan under a white dome that shines like the sacred white shell in the land east of the sunrise." N.A., "White House Release on Presidential Medal of Freedom Awards—1963," July 4, 1963, Box 2, Folder 25, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. In the previous paragraph of the letter, Riordan notes that "...Chee was a great one for fine clothes—the best in horses, and everything. You knew he was something when you looked at him!" Box 2, Folder 26, Carolyn Niethammer Collection, Arizona State University Libraries Labriola Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Riordan's letter signaled a profound shift in Navajo history. It conferred the status of "head chief of the Navajo tribe" to Dodge, thereby unilaterally discharging Manuelito from the position and ushering in a new era of Navajo political, economic and social

as a Navajo leader and as a woman was also a direct extension of her father's leading role in defining modern Navajo masculinity. The compound history of masculinity, capitalism, and liberalism that defined her father's life thus also conditioned Wauneka's womanhood.

I discuss these aspects of Wauneka's biography in order to suggest that an analysis of her prolific political career reveals the profound entanglements between gender and the logics of economization that were taking root in Navajo society during this period of intense biopolitical investment in Navajo political and economic growth and self-determination. Moreover, men like Jerrold Levy and Tom Sasaki, the Cornell anthropologist who prompted and recorded Steve Henderson's anecdote about gang rape that opens this chapter, with whom Wauneka collaborated held views on Navajo people that were are entirely consistent with Wauneka's own views on the promise of economic development. And, as I note earlier in this section, both men held prominent positions in the Cornell-sponsored research and staffing that bolstered the biopolitical experiments in capacitation taking place in the FIP and the NCHRP, which

formation overdetermined by the values of American liberalism (Ibid.) Like his daughter, Dodge's ability to seamlessly combine, on the one hand, an accumulation of political capital and, on the other, the accumulation of monetary capital, garnered him the attention, power and admiration of white Indian agents like Riordan. Decades later, the accomplishments of Dodge's daughter, Wauneka, would be lauded in similar fashion by using the parallel terminology of productivity, progress, ingenuity, and fidelity to the liberal values underwriting American exceptionalism. And, the impact of these two people on Navajo history cannot be understated. Indeed, over the cumulative span of 100-plus years, Dodge and Wauneka literally *carved* out an entire epoch of Navajo history by implementing biopolitical experiments like stock reduction and healthcare that were designed to promote the masculinity, capitalism, and liberalism fundamental to the discourse of *economic man*.

Wauneka spearheaded. Sasaki, a Cornell University anthropology doctoral candidate, had been in Fruitland on and off since the summer of 1948 conducting dissertation research on the Cornell University Southwest Project. The Cornell Southwest Project (CSP), as it was more commonly known, was one of several field laboratories set up in “underdeveloped” communities across the globe to research changes in human relations accompanying the introduction of economic development technologies like irrigation.²¹⁹ Like its partner projects in places like Viru, Peru, Madahpour, India, and Tadagale, Myanmar, the Cornell Southwest Project sought to understand the impact of shifts “from a local subsistence economy to dependence” in environments where post-war paradigms of development were implemented by the US state through various social, economic, cultural and political projects, often called “test sites” and “experiments.”²²⁰ State-sponsored agriculture projects like the Fruitland farming and irrigation initiative were painstakingly designed to study and foster the sociocultural conditions needed for incorporating underdeveloped peoples into the capitalist market economy. The stated intention of such projects was to uplift the underdeveloped like Fruitland’s Navajo population by increasing their level and quality of agricultural production for the market, thereby advancing and securing their self-sufficiency.

²¹⁹ Box 6, Folder 16, Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Levy and Sasaki produced significant studies from their contributions to the biopolitical experiments at the FIP and NHCRP. As I note above, Levy co-authored an expansive, twenty-five-year study published by Yale University Press (1994) on Navajo alcohol use and bureaucratic healthcare, and Sasaki finished his dissertation and eventually published a book with Cornell University Press (1960) that painstakingly chronicled the economic details of everyday Navajo life in the FIP.²²¹ Sasaki's colleague and fellow Cornell anthropology PhD student, Layla Shukry, also produced a dissertation and widely cited article on Navajo women from her participation in the CSP at the FIP.²²² Importantly, all three studies linked alcohol abuse and other forms of social violence like rape, domestic disputes, and the neglect of children and disabled relatives, to the general condition of depravity and poverty, which they viewed as an empirical measure of the relative economic underdevelopment/development of Navajo people. Shukry's analysis especially exemplifies this tendency. As she argues in her 1957 article, "The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society,"

drastic changes introduced into the traditional Navaho economic pattern within the last twenty-odd years have had direct effects on women's economic position and on the value of their work, and are, we suggest, important among the forces that are redefining the role of Navaho women today.²²³

²²¹ See Kunitz, Levy, and Andrews, *Drinking Careers*. Also see Sasaki, *Fruitland, New Mexico: A Navajo Community in Transition*.

²²² See Layla Shukry, "The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society," *American Anthropologist* 59.1 (February 1957): 101-111.

²²³ Shukry, "The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society," 103.

Drawing from Sasaki's dissertation research, she goes on to blame social violence—including gender violence—on the changes in economic value and status that Navajo women have experienced as a result of the shift from subsistence to wage economies in Fruitland:

The increasing amount of disposable income and the increasing desire for purchased goods means increasing occasions for family conflict over how wages will be used. For example: "M. B. was reported to the police by his wife who is having a difficult time because M. B. does not bring home his checks" (Field Notes). Drunkenness, wife-beating, infidelity, and jealousy are marked causes of discord in the Fruitland area. Drunkenness is reported to be the most common cause of friction, and it is often a contributing factor in other conflicts...²²⁴

Like Levy and Sasaki who code alcoholism and other forms of social violence as issues of economic calculus, and thus as social problems that require economic solutions, Shukry falls in line with Wauneka by capturing gender, and the status of Navajo women, specifically, within the framework of economization.

In this sense, rape, like the gendered performance of empowered female entrepreneurship that Wauneka personifies, is an important form of labor that literally produces and reproduces liberal modes of power that find expression through experimentation with Navajo life. Moreover, the incidence of rape of Navajo women and other forms of gender and sexual violence is intelligible only through the economic (and biopolitical) terms of value, productivity, and yield. Although written and oral evidence about rape is virtually non-existent, the biopolitics of gender that structure studies like Levy's, Sasaki's, and Shukry's—and the actual Navajo histories and social relations that they document—suggest

²²⁴ Shukry, "The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society," 107.

that the violation of Navajo women's bodies is itself a productive act that operates through experimentation with the very matter of a Navajo woman's life—her body—in order to open up new sources of value that maximize the economic potential of women's bodies on all fronts. Elmer Foutz's comments about Window Rock, the newly established capital of centralized Navajo governance, as “John Collier's whorehouse” speak powerfully to the correlation between the opening up of Navajo women's life to the logic of economization underwriting experimental liberalism, and the actual, historical and material increase in incidents of rape and other forms of gender and sexual violence. In the next section, I address the specific ways in which experimental liberalism has inspired an entire body of historical and anthropological literature on Navajo women that, because of its reliance on the liberal frameworks of economic determinism and cultural preservation, fails to address and apprehend the key material, social, and historical function of sexual and gender violence in the history of Navajo women.

Section 4.3: The Economics of ‘Culture’: A Biopolitical Critique of Historical and Anthropological Literature on Navajo Women

As I note above, in the years leading up to the 1949 Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act, Navajo people were commonly depicted as wretches in need of economic support, intervention, and rehabilitation of the kind the Act was designed to address. Popular narratives attributed their poor living conditions to their underdeveloped cultural, and thus, economic status. In his writings about the Act, Collier exercised his characteristic vehemence by pointing out that the

failures of federal-Indian relations rested not in the inferior status of tribal peoples whose backwardness was in need of rescue and reform, but, rather, in the US state's lack of preparation (and willingness) to deal with sophisticated tribal cultures that operated according to completely different sets of values. Collier's approach to the culture-development equation challenged these types of prevailing assumptions by offering an alternative model for self-sufficiency that would "perform modern accomplishments through [Indians'] values rather than our own."²²⁵ His approach countered what historian Colleen O'Neill calls a "modernization tale that assumes that as soon as indigenous peoples encounter the capitalist market, their cultural traditions erode and subsistence economies decay" (13).²²⁶ Unlike many of his contemporaries, Collier did not see Navajo culture through these evolutionary terms. Rather, he cautioned policy makers that their success with fostering Indian self-sufficiency depended upon forming development agendas that respected, incorporated and kept intact existing cultural traits in tribes. During an April 9, 1948 lecture at the City College of New York, Collier charged that

the crisis of the Navajo Indians is not economic but cultural...the Navajos are not suffering from starvation or a sudden increase in disease and death, as is popularly believed. It is a "psychological and cultural" crisis

²²⁵ Although it is not entirely clear that Collier himself wrote this note, it is among dozens that he did write in the late 1940s, and therefore it can be surmised that he did, in fact, author it. John Collier, "Historical Review of the Navajo Rehabilitation Pro.," N.D., Part 3, Series 2, Box 27, Folder 41, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

²²⁶ Colleen O'Neill. *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 13.

resulting from the government's faulty policy of administering the Navajo program through officials who know nothing of Navajo culture or habits. The Navajos furnish the most conspicuous and most difficult problem in United States Indian Affairs...on past and present lines of administrative practice, it will never be solved.²²⁷

Collier's proclamation that "the crisis of Navajo Indians is not economic but cultural" is important in the context of my critique of agency in this section.

Whereby the Cornell Southwest Project sought to understand and foster the sociocultural conditions needed for incorporating underdeveloped peoples into the capitalist market economy by adopting the modernization tale of tribal cultural decline, Collier sought to do the same by instead adopting a tale of cultural rehabilitation. While this fundamental difference existed between these two approaches, both nevertheless championed a liberal model for development. Indeed, their only disagreement was on the role of "Indian culture" in economic development, not on the merits or morality of economization itself.

Anthropology, whose disciplinary identity is fashioned through its claim to knowing 'culture,' was (and continues to be) inextricably bound to the expansion of liberal modes of power like those underwriting both Collier's and the CSWP's preoccupations with Navajo culture. Many of the twentieth century's most influential anthropologists of Navajo life, including Collier, John Aberle, Ruth Underhill, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Alexander and Dorothea Leighton, played key roles in assisting the US state to usher in the era of Navajo self-determination through implementing liberal development schemes. Although concerns with

²²⁷ Part 3, Series 2, Box 26, Folder 38, John Collier Papers, Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Navajo culture would continue to preoccupy a new generation of anthropologists like Louis Lamphere, James Faris, Klara Kelley, Charlotte Frisbie, Joanne McCloskey and Kathy McCloskey, all of whom began to produce new studies in the late 1970s, these studies differed from earlier ones in that they had little if any formal connection to federal Indian administration. Despite this fact, however, both these studies, as well as historical studies by historians like Richard White, David Brugge, Peter Iverson, Eria Marie Bsumek, and Marsha Weisiger, have continued to frame Navajo social and political formations through the lens of economically-influenced culture shift. For example, in his masterful 2002 history, *Diné: A History of the Navajos*, prominent historian Peter Iverson notes that his approach to Navajo history is one that “portrays Navajos as agents of their own destiny” who “have found ways to adapt, adjust, and continue.”²²⁸ He goes on to highlight four key themes of Navajo agency that have driven Navajo history. These themes include “defense and survival,” “adaptation and incorporation,” “expansion and prosperity,” and “identity and continuation.”²²⁹ The general historical concern with agency is apparent in Iverson’s approach to writing Navajo history. However, the definition of agency he deploys is framed by ethnohistorical theories of adaptation, adjustment, incorporation, and continuity. This is an important point because one need only conduct a cursory review of well-received literature on Navajos to confirm that a consistent and diverse

²²⁸ Iverson, *Diné*, 2.

²²⁹ Iverson, *Diné*, 2-3.

investment in ethnohistorical frameworks has shaped much of the historical literature within Navajo studies.

Ethnohistories emerged in the 1950s as a response to the racist narratives of Indian victimization and savagery that characterized earlier schools of American Indian historiography. This new wave of historians also responded to the postwar conditions of Indian life in the United States by developing an interest in Native cultures and Indigenous responses to modern colonial institutions like reservations, boarding schools and relocation. As tribes began to push back against the destruction of federal Indian policy in the early part of the 1960s, the civil rights movement was also gaining prominence in other ethnically marginalized communities. Cited widely by prominent historians as the pivotal shift from declension narratives to themes of cultural and ethnic renewal in American Indian historiography, the Red Power movement brought changes to racial and cultural perceptions of Native Americans in the broader history of the American experience.²³⁰ These shifts were also influential in the intellectual community; important southwest historians like Edward Spicer, Elizabeth A.H. Johns, and Jack Forbes took a fresh interest in the Indian experience with colonization that had not been previously considered important.²³¹

²³⁰ See R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895-1995," *The American Historical Review* 100.3 (June 1995): 717-40; Ned Blackhawk, "Look How Far We've Come: How American Indian History Changed the Study of American History in the 1990s," *OAH Magazine of History* (November 2005): 13-17.

²³¹ See Elizabeth A.H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College

As the trend in Indian-centered histories continued throughout the 1970s, Navajo historiography progressed from the images of savagery and primitivism pervading previous schools to more critical paradigms of cultural interaction, agency and survival. Coevally, methodologies were changing to include anthropological sources in historical writing. The new hybrid methodology that emerged, ethnohistory, gained currency among the new wave of historians interested in Indian history.²³² Indeed, perhaps the most significant moment in the entire history of American Indian historiography was the formal linking of history and ethnography that followed the founding in 1954 of the American Society for Ethnohistory, which focused on bringing the methods of ethnographic fieldwork and the documentary evidentiary bases of American Indian history into explicit interdisciplinary dialogue.²³³ As one of the first Southwest-focused ethnohistories, anthropologist Edward H. Spicer's authoritative *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest* (1962) was explicitly interested in how Indians in the southwest had responded to the onslaught of cultural, political and social change brought by Spanish colonization. In the book's introduction, Spicer states:

Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975); Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962); and Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho and Spaniard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960).

²³² R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices," 725.

²³³ James Axtell. "Ethnohistory: An Historian's Viewpoint," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*, James Axtell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

the transformation of Indian life was not...a simple process. It did not consist of an even and progressive replacement of Indian with European customs and ways of thought. On the contrary, as in the wake of other conquests, there were many different trends and counter-trends with respect to the acceptance and rejection of what the conquerors offered as a new and superior way of life.²³⁴

Spicer's emphasis on the complexity of cultural interaction between Indians and Spaniards complicated previous histories that cast Navajo and other Indigenous peoples in the region as savages. He instead emphasized the agency Indians wielded in negotiating the campaigns of civilization and conversion brought by Spanish and American colonizers. Widely cited as one of the best histories ever written about Native peoples in the Southwest, *Cycles of Conquest* exemplifies the ethnohistorical tradition that has dominated Navajo historiography and anthropology ever since.

Although published forty years after Spicer's epic tale of Indian agency in the face of colonial onslaught, Iverson's *Diné: A History of the Navajos* relies on many of the same notions of agency, adaptation, and survival that pervade ethnohistorical approaches to American Indian and Southwest history like Spicer's. What this has meant for the field of Navajo studies is that historians practicing this popular trend have come to naturalize the ethnohistorical approach to the study of Navajo life, one that has become preoccupied almost exclusively with proving that Navajo people possess historical agency. These histories accomplish this feat by documenting the many forms in which Navajo people demonstrate agency, or what prominent historian Gary Anderson calls

²³⁴ Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest*, 1.

“choice,” by participating in actions of survival, resistance, adaptation, and incorporation.²³⁵

In terms of my current argument regarding culture, economization, rape, and Navajo studies scholarship on Navajo women, the problem with the monopoly that ethnohistory has had in Navajo studies over the last forty years is that ethnohistorical preoccupations with agency have created the conditions for anthropologists and historians to continue Collier’s work by framing twentieth-century Navajo history as a struggle to retain and reclaim agency against the destructive effects of economic development. Almost uniformly interested in revitalizing, honoring, or otherwise proving that Navajo culture is influential and strong *despite* the onset of capitalism, Navajo studies literature fits neatly into the turn to agency that has characterized ethnohistories and new social histories since the 1950s. With rare exception, these scholars equate agency with culture, and interpret agency through “cultural” practices like weaving, speaking the Navajo language, and practicing kinship principles. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Navajo culture has so thoroughly captivated Navajo Studies scholars; in many ways, it has become *the* method and object of study in the various disciplines that feed Navajo Studies, including history, education, literature, political science, and public policy.²³⁶

²³⁵ Gary Clayton Anderson. *The Indian Southwest, 1580-1830: Ethnogenesis and Reinvention* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

²³⁶ Although an exhaustive list of these kinds of studies would be far too long to include in a footnote, here is a selective list of studies that exemplify this approach to Navajo studies: Shawn Secatero, *Beneath our Sacred Minds, Hands, and Hearts*;

Indeed, in virtually every academic study of Navajo experience and history that has been produced over the last 80 years, “Navajo culture” forms the leitmotif for describing a whole range of actions, subjects and interventions. Just as it became a master trope for liberal development, self-sufficiency and self-determination, Navajo culture also came to stand in for agency, and, in many ways, became synonymous with it. In her 2005 book, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Colleen O’Neill critiques the modernist blueprint of development and dependency frameworks that have long driven American Indian historiography, especially southwest Indian historiography. Arguing that “the discourse of dependency and the discourse of development [are] two sides of the same coin,” she goes on to note that both frameworks render culture as “part of the unchanging past” of liberal progress narrative of capitalist development.²³⁷ To counter this tendency, O’Neill chooses to put Navajo culture back into the tale of capitalism, asserting that Navajos demonstrated remarkable agency by adapting capitalism to their own cultural

Stories of Persistence and Success Among American Indian Graduate Students (PhD Diss., University of New Mexico, 2009); O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way*; Robert Yazzie, “Healing as Justice: The Navajo Response to Crime,” in *Justice as Healing, Indigenous Ways: Writings on Community Peacemaking and Restorative Justice from the Native Law Centre*, ed. Wanda McCaslin (Minneapolis: Living Justice Press, 2005); Larry Emerson, *Hozho Nahazdlii’: Towards a Practice of Diné Decolonization*, PhD Diss., San Diego State University, 2003; James C. Faris, *The Nightway: A History and a History of Documentation of a Navajo Ceremonial* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Charlotte Frisbie, *Navajo Medicine Bundles or Jish: Acquisition, Transmission, and Disposition in the Past and Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Collier, *On the Gleaming Way*; Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*; Gladys Reichard, *Spider Woman, A Story of Navajo Weavers and Chanters* (1934); and several writings by Leland Wyman, Berard Haile and David Brugge.

²³⁷ O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way*, 148, 150.

identity, thereby maintaining (and even strengthening) Navajo culture without rejecting or seeing themselves as victims of its effects. She sums up the book by urging historians to “[create] new theoretical models to help make sense out of the multiple histories that are bound to emerge once we remove the paradigmatic blinders” of tropes like development and dependency.²³⁸

While O’Neill’s intervention into the “paradigmatic blinders” of dependency and development in Navajo historiography is important and timely, she nevertheless continues to rely upon the equally paradigmatic category of “Navajo culture” to describe and delineate Navajo agency. And while she does touch upon the daily violences that condition Navajo life, her focus on the ingenuities of Navajo culture leads her to de-center capitalism, treating it as a sort of backdrop to the otherwise authentic historical drama of Navajo life played out through cultural reinvention. With its focus on agency and culture, the historical and anthropological literature on Navajo women falls into the same trap. These studies typically measure and define Navajo women’s agency through the amount of cultural and economic power that women have been able to retain or reclaim in the presumed shift from subsistence to wage economies that occurred between the 1940s and the 1960s. Two recent studies come to mind as illustrative of this tendency. In *Living Through the Generations: Continuity and Change in Navajo Women’s Lives*, Joanne McCloskey opens the book by drawing on Peter Iverson, stating:

²³⁸ O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way*, 155.

As Peter Iverson (2002) emphasizes for all Navajos, the response to harmful policies and actions of outsiders from the time of early contact to the present has been to incorporate new elements in innovative, productive ways. Navajo women repeatedly demonstrate this pattern by building on strengths drawn from Navajo culture and society and creating new cultural strategies. In spite of federal policies that often targeted Navajo men and ignored women's egalitarian position in Navajo society and their contribution to the family economy, Navajo women seized opportunities in education, employment in the cash economy, and entrepreneurship in the informal economy to contribute to the support of their families.²³⁹

She goes on to argue that the purpose of her intergenerational study is to

highlight the strengths of Native American women who daily confront the aftermath of imposed change and the loss of traditional lifestyles...In such situations, these women respond with individual agency and cultural strategies to merge elements of mainstream culture and valued cultural traditions.²⁴⁰

These two quotations from the book's introduction combine ethnohistorical concepts of agency with ideas about the empowering nature of Navajo culture to narrate the ways in which Navajo women have historically seized upon multiple opportunities to fashion new forms of status and belonging in a rapidly changing world where the traditional (cultural) power held by women is increasingly diminished as capitalist economic development becomes more normalized in Navajo life.

Another study by prominent feminist anthropologist Louise Lamphere advances a similar framework for understand Navajo women's history and subjectivity. In *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family*,

²³⁹ Joanne McCloskey, *Living Through the Generations: Continuity and Change in Navajo Women's Lives* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 5.

²⁴⁰ McCloskey, *Living Through the Generations*, 6.

Lamphere collaborates with three Diné women to document the way in which Navajo women have negotiated economic modernization. In the book's introduction, she argues that

Just as 'ádítsiin are used to stir hot water and ground corn together to make a smooth batter, Navajo women put together elements of Navajo culture and the larger U.S. society in a way that makes it impossible to see the distinct and separate elements. In using these two metaphors I am trying to avoid the usual analysis of change in Native American culture that stresses one of two models [assimilation or two-worlds]...I want to suggest a much more dynamic, less dualistic view of the intersection of Navajo culture with the larger American political economy and culture.²⁴¹

Using a Diné cultural metaphor to ground the dynamic methodology of cultural blending that she sees at work in these women's everyday lives, Lamphere, like McCloskey, sets out to demonstrate that Navajo women, despite the U.S.-driven changes occurring in their lives, possess significant amounts of agency in maintaining cultural traditions and capitalizing upon outside influences.

In her biography of Kay Bennett, the first Navajo woman to ever run for Navajo Nation tribal chairperson, Maureen Reed goes one step further than McCloskey and Lamphere to suggest that, rather than diminishing Navajo women's customary status and power, economic modernization, in fact, strengthened the status of Navajo women who used culture strategically to excel in the economic world. She links this rise in status to Bennett's ability beginning in the 1960s to succeed economically by taking advantage of educational opportunities and wage work. And while Reed claims that this relative increase in

²⁴¹ Louis Lamphere, Eva Price, Carole Cadman, and Valerie Darwin. *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 18.

status did not translate to the political sphere, she nevertheless draws from Mary Shepardson to posit a developmentalist narrative whereby

The overarching theme of Navajo women's history parallels that of the Navajos in general: while the reduction period disrupted preexisting patterns of economy and social structure, it ultimately resulted in a more cohesive Navajo Nation and a cemented position of high status for Navajo women. These innovative women...applied traditional components of Navajo society...to a contemporary wage-based economy, and emerged in a position of strength.²⁴²

While she privileges economic participation in her definition of Navajo women's agency in a way that differs from the evidence of agency that McCloskey and Lamphere find in forms of labor like weaving that facilitate cultural persistence, Reed replicates McCloskey's and Lamphere's assumptions that culture, gender, and agency are intelligible through, and representative of, the larger structure of economic development that dominated Navajo life during these periods of history.²⁴³ With their focus on agency, culture, and political economy, these

²⁴² Maureen E. Reed, *A Woman's Place: Women Writing New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 199. See also Mary Shepardson, "The Status of Navajo Women," *American Indian Quarterly* 6.1./6.2 (Spring/Summer 1982): 149-169.

²⁴³ There are a number of other studies on Navajo and other Native women that also employ this framework for narrating Navajo women's history. Some use dependency theory to frame their analyses, while others like Kathy M'Closkey, Patricia Albers, and Bea Medicine use Marxist feminism to frame women's changed status and agency relative to economic changes introduced through the increased incorporation of Native people into capitalist markets and social relations. See Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Erika Marie Bsumek, *Indian-Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868-1940* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2008); Kathy M'Closkey, *Swept Under the Rug: A Hidden History of Navajo Weaving* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); Amy Jo Schulz, "I Raised my Children to Speak Navajo...My Grandkids are all English Speaking People:" *Identity, Resistance, and Social Transformation Among Navajo Women* (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 1994); Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Lanham and London:

studies all reproduce the basic epistemic function of Navajo studies within the discursive and material regimes of experimental liberalism in that they naturalize economization as the primary factor in determining Navajo life.

This brief review of the ethnohistorical literature on Navajo life and women is an important exercise for developing historical methods and theories that account for violence like rape. As I note earlier, discourses of gender and the attending apprehension of rape and other forms of gender violence are only intelligible in relation to (biopolitical) economic logics of productivity. Because of their focus on agency, culture, and economic modernization as the primary categories for interpreting and understanding Navajo women's histories, almost all existing studies on Navajo women continue to replicate this biopolitical equation between gender and economization that has long driven liberal experiments and studies like the FIP and the NHCRP. Moreover, their preoccupation with agency and culture prevents them from apprehending or addressing the empirically high rates of social violence—like rape—that Navajo women experience as part of their daily reality. Indeed, I contend that, precisely

University Press of America, 1983); Mary Shepardson, "The Status of Navajo Women," *American Indian Quarterly* 6.1/6.2 (Spring/Summer 1982): 149-169; and Layla Shukry, "The Role of Women in a Changing Navaho Society," *American Anthropologist* 59.1 (February 1957): 101-111. There are a few notable exceptions to this general trend in the literature on Navajo women. See Denetdale, "Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses; Benally, ed., *Bitter Water*; and Gladys Reichard, *Dezbah: Woman of the Desert* (Glorieta: Rio Grande Press, 1971). For more information about dependency theory and how it has been naturalized in Navajo studies as a framework for narrating Navajo history as overdetermined by economic considerations, see White, *The Roots of Dependency* and Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

because it was developed to assist, clarify and enable liberal ideologies of economic expansion, productivity, and growth—not to historicize, analyze or critique them—the concept of “Navajo culture” does not prove the presence of Navajo agency, nor should it overdetermine our histories. Rather than demonstrating Navajo agency, the replication of culture in southwest Indian historiography—and most persistently in Navajo historiography—seems to be evidence of, to borrow O’Neill’s term, the field’s “paradigmatic blinders” regarding how its efforts continue to feed the larger designs of capitalist expansion and liberal experimentation introduced by John Collier in the 1930s. In light of this, I argue that “culture” and its conceptual cousin, agency, are thus highly questionable, if not downright ahistorical, methods of Navajo history. If neither can be divorced from their origins and function as liberal tropes, the question for practitioners of Navajo history then becomes, How do we construct material histories of violence without relying on culture and agency? I think the answer to this question lies in recognizing that culture and agency serve an ideological, rather than historical, function in Navajo (and southwest Indian) historiographies.

The distinction between ideology and history is one of the fundamental contributions of Marxism to writing history. Whereas Marx was intent on exposing the hidden material violence inherent to capitalism, Marxism has instead been employed in Navajo historiography to facilitate, naturalize, and, in some cases, neutralize capitalism as a force of our history. Indeed, scholars have relied upon totalizing frameworks like individual agency versus structural power, resistance versus victimization, and iterations of core/periphery theory like world systems

and dependency theory, to interpret Navajo history. While these frameworks are all patently Marxist, historians of Navajo experience using these frameworks—with rare exception—have routed these systems through the very paradigms of Navajo culture and agency created in the self-determination era to expedite capitalist influence in Indigenous life.²⁴⁴

With this chapter, I am interested in redirecting the application of Marxist theories in the field of Navajo history (and southwest Indian and American Indian history more broadly) toward more faithfully historical accounts of material violence. This call for revision comes at a time when Indigenous feminism, with its sharp and frank analysis of how gender and sexual violence structures colonial and capitalist systems, is making similar inroads into established fields like American Indian history and anthropology.²⁴⁵ As both Marxism and Indigenous feminism show us, violence is not a mere byproduct of capitalist and colonial consolidation; it is inherent to these systems. Violence profoundly conditions Indigeneity, as well as the basic elements of human agency, subjectivity, and common sense that illuminate its many dimensions. As such, we might follow the lead of these critiques to consider violence as a fundamental

²⁴⁴ The works of Richard White, Andrew Needham, and Colleen O'Neill, which I reference throughout this dissertation, exemplify this approach.

²⁴⁵ The diverse works of Joanne Barker, Jodi Byrd, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Dian Million, and Audra Simpson—all of whom I cite liberally throughout this dissertation—provide direction for how to engage with, and intervene into, normative discourses of culture, history, identity, and power. While not explicitly feminist, the landmark 2011 collection *Native Historians Write Back* also influences my interventions into the related fields of Marxist history, American Indian history, Southwest/Borderlands history, and Navajo history. See *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*, Eds. James Riding In and Susan Miller (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

mode of exchange in liberal societies, and thus one of the principal lenses through which to understand the historical dimensions of Native subjectivity and agency.

Section 4.4: Conclusion

I would like to conclude by returning briefly to that spring day in 1949 when Tom Sasaki exited his rental home in Fruitland, New Mexico to conduct interviews and observations amongst the community's Navajo residents. On that day, Sasaki was in search of Navajo culture. As he went from house to house and field to field, chatting with Navajo men and women about their everyday lives, he came upon Ken Brown, a friendly local Navajo farmer who liked to gossip. In his field notes, Sasaki recalled how

Brown caught me up on some of the local gossip...said that Hosteen Yazzie allows everyone in the neighborhood to sleep with his wife. The Navajos ply him and his wife with liquor and then they proceed to sleep with her. Yazzie apparently does not mind, as long as he gets his liquor.²⁴⁶

Less than a month later, Sasaki would come across Steve Henderson, another local Navajo resident and farmer with a reputation for drinking. In his field notes, Sasaki recalled a story that Henderson relayed to him about the Navajo wife of another Navajo farmer, Bob Simpson:

that girl...used be around here all the time. She is from Shiprock, but she hangs around. Tom Moffit, and Wallace Duncan got her drunk one night up at the squaw dance about four miles from here. That was before these boys were married. They did something to her, both of them. Then went to call an old man...They told this old man...that there was something pretty

²⁴⁶ Box 7, Folder 265, Papers of Dorothea C. Leighton and Alexander H. Leighton, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

good just over the hill, and they took him to where this girl was. The girl said that he didn't want that old man to lay on her but the two boys just hold her down, and he did it. When he got up he said, "well my grandsons, I want to sure thank you for bringing me to something good like this....That man died just two months afterwards, and I guess everybody figured that that experience is the thing that killed him. Everybody around here knows about it. That girl is just no good, she is always causing everybody trouble."²⁴⁷

While stories of extreme misogyny and gang rape appear over a dozen times in Sasaki's field notes, narrated by multiple men, including Navajo informants, local traders, Indian agents, and fellow researchers, they were never tagged by Sasaki for inclusion in official reports generated by the Cornell Southwest Project to comment on the impact of liberal economic development experiments in the community. While Sasaki annotated and highlighted conversations on commonplace topics like work, family, drinking, recreation, eating, religion, or even enjoying a new pick-up truck or a trip to the movies in the nearby border town of Farmington, the vignettes about this type of violence are glaringly absent of his mark ups. They seem to be included in his ethnographic log only to uphold the anthropologist's faithful obligation to record the details of each day's activities.

While these absences almost certainly reflect the intersection of racist and sexist attitudes toward Navajo women, I see something additional and insidious operating here. Even though misogyny and extreme forms of gender and sexual violence appear as frequently as other mundane topics of conversation in Sasaki's field notes, thus proving that such violence structured everyday life in

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

this community as much as any other factor, they are not seen by Sasaki as constitutive of, or perhaps even relevant to, Navajo agency because they fall outside of the purview of “Navajo culture” that Sasaki was meant to study. And in the case of the studies on Navajo women I review above, rape is not seen as relevant to Navajo women’s agency because these studies, too, frame agency as a byproduct of the battle between culture and capitalism that Collier himself obsessed so fervently about.

The reluctance of historians of Navajo experience to acknowledge the *structural character of violence* in post-livestock era Navajo history stems from this legacy in Navajo policy and intellectual practice of focusing on culture to measure both agency and development. Instead of repeating this ideological closed loop, I look to Dian Million’s concept of felt theory to map a revised theory of Diné history that accounts for “the real multilayered facets of histories and concerns by insisting on the inclusion of [Indigenous women’s] lived experiences” in historical accounts.²⁴⁸ As a method of history that centers the structural nature of gender and sexual violence against Native women--instead of ignoring, downplaying, or eschewing it—felt theory points us in the right direction for developing even more likeminded materialist methods of history that not only expose violence, but also do justice to the complex character of actual histories of capitalism, liberalism, and settler colonialism.

²⁴⁸ Dian Million, “Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and Theory,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 24.2 (Fall 2009): 53-76, 54.

Chapter Five: Beyond Culture: A Critical Diné Studies Critique of Resource Colonization

Section 5.1: Introduction

In Chapter Three, I examine the historical emergence of extractive liberalism and the Diné refusals that arose to critique and challenge the necropolitics of extractive ideologies and practices. In the previous chapter, I critique the reliance on notions of culture within the experimental liberal scholarship on Navajo women, one that silences, and therefore ignores, the actually existing high rates of violence against Navajo women. In this concluding chapter, I bring these two previous chapters together to consider a path forward for Critical Diné Studies. I draw from Indigenous feminist critiques about the politics of culture and tradition to critique the redemptive and largely apolitical and ahistorical function that Navajo culture—and notions of sacredness, in particular—has assumed within the discourse of resource colonization that has emerged as a commonplace phrase within various registers of Diné refusal. As I hope to show, the concept of resource colonization relies on theories of dependency and underdevelopment to assume a one-way extractive relationship whereby Navajo life serves as a resource colony that exists only to be exploited for the needs and whims of non-Navajo economic development. While I do not challenge the applicability of dependency and development theory to help explain the cultural, social, political and economic dynamics of extractive liberalism, especially as extractive liberalism has gained traction through the straightforward expropriation of Diné life, I do question particular notions of Navajo culture and

tradition that have been deployed to organize and lend legibility to the discourse of resource colonization. Such notions exhibit an almost transcendent (and often utopian) ontology steeped in ideas about returning to the land, engaging in resilient behaviors, and protecting sacred sites

Although in full alignment with Diné worldviews and cultural values, these notions, when invoked within the context of *political* struggles over life and death, are political by default. However, rather than seeing culture as a part of the malleable and politically charged discourses that arise out of specific historical struggles over power and meaning, certain tendencies within the diverse milieu of Diné refusals have cast, and continue to cast, such notions as transcendent ontologies that function as stable sites of resolution, refuge and redemption that allow us to turn away—indeed, refuse—the violence of resource colonization.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Here, I am referencing the same group that I discuss at the opening of this dissertation: Nihígaal bee liná (Journey For Our Existence), a group of young Diné who set out in January of 2015 to walk to and between the four sacred mountains that circumscribe customary Diné homelands. Two of the walk's lead organizers visited my home the week prior to the onset of their journey to request assistance with supplies for their quest. When I inquired about the political message of the walk, I was told by one of the organizers that the walk had no political message—it was simply a personal spiritual journey for those involved. As the group's Facebook page states, "We are young Diné walking for our existence. We want to restore Hozhó and K'é." The explicitly cultural language of this mission statement shows that the group envisioned itself as an envoy for Diné culture and spirituality. As they traversed the terrain between each mountain, they held several teach-ins and events in Diné communities across the Navajo Nation to address the violent effects of resource colonization, a phrase that the group also used with fluency in their media. Yet, they did not see themselves as political, despite the fact that their walk was mobilized specifically in response to the necropolitics of extractive liberalism. While I do not doubt the sincerity or spiritual potency of their efforts, I have chosen to open (and close) my dissertation with this group in order to make a larger point about the benefits of Critical Diné Studies; namely, to demonstrate how a biopolitical framework can open up analytical—and political—possibilities where such possibilities are being actively disarticulated, as in the case of Nihígaal bee liná. Accessed September 16, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/walkforexistence/?fref=ts>.

These slippages are pervasive in many contemporary Diné refusals (especially those that tackle environmental issues related to land and water), and they run the risk of essentializing, and thus depoliticizing, what are otherwise complex relations of power defined by political contestation and historical movement. Although not all contemporary forms of Diné refusal engage in this approach to Navajo culture, the concept's general ubiquity within Diné resistance movements, as well as within other Navajo political formations more aligned with normative Navajo nationalism, points to the need to treat it critically.²⁵⁰

Although I hope that my treatment throughout this dissertation of the political and intellectual traditions occasioned by Diné refusals demonstrates a profound sense of respect and affinity with these traditions, I use this concluding chapter to briefly problematize its use of culture. As a suggestive rejoinder (rather than prescriptive polemic), I argue for the development of a critical Diné intellectual tradition that might ground the project of Critical Diné Studies, one that does not rely on culture as a given framework of analysis. Rather, such a tradition would take its cue from Indigenous feminist critiques of culture, authenticity, and tradition to critique notions of culture that, as Audra Simpson argues, potentially depoliticize and ahistoricize the contestations over power that actually take place.²⁵¹ As First Nations and Métis feminist Verna St. Denis

²⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion of the politics of culture and tradition within the context of Navajo nationalism, see Denetdale, "Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses" and Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries."

²⁵¹ See Footnote 24.

reminds us, Native people “live for the most part in a western capitalistic and patriarchal context; it is that social, economic and political context that irrevocably shapes our lives. Denying this or minimizing these conditions will not change it.”²⁵² Advocates of Diné refusal who apprehend and interpret this context only through the lens of culture potentially risk denying and minimizing these hard facts and keeping the violence intact rather than organizing to end it.

Section 5.2: Resource Colonization and Culture

While it is not entirely clear where the phrase ‘resource colonization’ originates, I open Chapter Three of this dissertation with a quotation from John Redhouse that encompasses his own use of the phrase beginning in the 1970s:

Oh my god, we were a colony, an exploited energy and water resource colony of the master race. The colonialism was by design. The exploitation was part of a grand plan...We the indigenous people of this land were being screwed...²⁵³

In this excerpt, Redhouse cites the introduction of extractive liberalism as the source of a new era of “resource colonization” that emerged within the context of unbridled energy resource development in Diné Bikeyah beginning in the 1960s. For Redhouse, resource colonization was a premeditated form of colonialism that operated through political economic means to extract and exploit raw life and

²⁵² Verna St. Denis, “Feminism is For Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, ed. Joyce Green (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2007): 33-51, 47.

²⁵³ Redhouse, *Getting It Out Of My System*, 82.

power from Diné people, lands and waters in order to serve the needs of what he called the “master race.”²⁵⁴

Historian Andrew Needham has pointed out that during the early 1970s, young Navajo activists (his term) like Redhouse began using terms like “colonialism,” “exploitation,” and “ruin” to describe and condemn the violence of resource energy development.²⁵⁵ Needham discusses this political rhetoric within the context of various political contestations that arose as a result of the rapid development of Phoenix as a major metropolitan center in the American Southwest. According to Needham, the Navajo Nation was a “distant, yet materially vital” source of raw energy—most notably in the form of coal and water—for Phoenix’s growth.²⁵⁶ As Phoenix grew, Navajo nationalism became increasingly defined by its utility and ability to provide the raw energy needed to fuel the demands of urban growth in the region, especially the growth of Phoenix. Needham demonstrates how Phoenix’s boom transformed the Navajo Nation into a “hinterland” space on the “periphery” of the network of resources that were mined, mobilized, and transported to feed Phoenix’s growing appetite for

²⁵⁴ Beyond the Navajo context, I have found one other scholar who uses the term ‘resource colonization’ to describe the “racism” that grassroots Chippewa confront in their efforts to resist treaty violations, mining, and hostility directed at traditional spearfishers. See Al Gedicks, “Racism and Resource Colonization,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 5.1 (March 1994): 55-76.

²⁵⁵ Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and The Making of The Modern Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 217.

²⁵⁶ Needham, *Power Lines*, 5.

electricity throughout the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵⁷ With Phoenix at the core of development and the Navajo Nation at the periphery, serving as a veritable resource colony for Phoenix's newfound growth, Needham documents how the Navajo Nation entered a state of permanent "underdevelopment" characterized by "poverty, outmigration, and damaging ecological formations," a reality that stood in stark contrast to the liberal images of growth, vitality, and promise that flooded popular media in real estate ads and cover stories portraying Phoenix as a land of prosperity and promise filled with luxurious pools, happy (white) families, and technological novelties (see Figure 5.1).²⁵⁸

Needham details how the introduction of underdevelopment and its attending forms of social violence into Navajo life gave rise to a new "organic anticolonial intelligentsia" comprised of young Navajo activists like Redhouse who used their university educations to challenge the relations of expropriation and extraction that underwrote the conditions of underdevelopment that Navajo people were experiencing, conditions that were caused by the migration of capital to the Southwest to take advantage of new markets and opportunities for profit and accumulation in the development of cities like Phoenix.²⁵⁹ Needham makes keen observations about the role of Navajo culture and tradition in the discourses of colonialism and destruction that were advanced by this newly

²⁵⁷ Needham, *Power Lines*, 2.

²⁵⁸ Needham, *Power Lines*, 7.

²⁵⁹ Needham, *Power Lines*, 224.



Figure 5.1 This photo appeared in the September 30, 1961 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* as part of an article entitled, "The New Millionaires of Phoenix: Penniless And Fiercely Ambitious Young Men Swarm Into This Sun-baked City With Just One Aim – Money."²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ With a pool-side scene in the background and the narrative of happiness, sex, and prosperity displayed in the foreground by the three stylishly dressed figures walking

formed organic anticolonial intelligentsia. Likening these to the discourses of life and sacredness that white environmental groups like Sierra Club used in their campaigns to save the Colorado River from further hydroelectric development along the Grand Canyon in the same period, he points out that young Navajo activists engaged in a form of Navajo “nationalism as cultural protection” that “warned that the colonial power of outsiders to determine the future of Navajo land threatened the spiritual and cultural relationship between Navajos and their land.”²⁶¹ Fashioned in opposition to the type of pro-development Navajo nationalism that tribal chairmen like Raymond Nakai and Peter MacDonald espoused (what Needham calls Navajo “nationalism as state building”) the anticolonial nationalism of cultural protection used the language of culture, tradition, spirituality, and sacredness to condemn tribal leaders and outside entities who promoted energy resource developments.²⁶² Advocates of culture like the matriarch resisters from Big Mountain I discuss in Chapter Three argued that development was not only hostile to Diné culture, but also represented its wholesale demise.²⁶³ For them, the preservation of Navajo cultural and spiritual

and smiling towards the camera, this photo epitomizes the liberal image of growth that Phoenix represented within the American popular imaginary at this time. Photo obtained with permission from the University of Arizona Special Collections. Box 13, Folder 1, Hazel Warren Papers, University of Arizona Libraries Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

²⁶¹ Needham, *Power Lines*, 226.

²⁶² Needham, *Power Lines*, 229.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

identity, and the protection of sacred sites, required the total rejection of development.

It is a useful exercise to place Redhouse and Needham in conversation in order to understand why and how the discourse of Navajo culture came to dominate the landscape of Diné political formations during this period. Indeed, as Needham notes, there was a “relative imbalance of power between the residents of Phoenix and the Navajo Reservation” during this period, a state of relations that harkens back to previous periods of Navajo history when the multiple waves of state-enforced livestock reduction forced Navajo subsistence economies into exploitative wage-based economies, which in turn made Navajos fully dependent upon the outside, dominant economy.²⁶⁴ As Richard White points out in *The Roots of Dependency*, Navajo dependency emerged because the core—in this case, capitalist economic development policy enforced upon tribes by the federal government starting in the 1930s—established conditions for the permanent underdevelopment, and thus dependency, of the kind that Needham pinpoints as central to later migrations of capital toward urban growth in the region starting in the 1960s. As White argues,

by 1945 the government had transformed the Navajo economy. The Diné no longer relied on subsistence agriculture and livestock raising for the bulk of their income. They were no longer self-supporting people. Their reliance on wage labor and welfare increased throughout the 1950s. The Navajos had become dependent.²⁶⁵ (310).

²⁶⁴ Needham, *Power Lines*, 9.

²⁶⁵ White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 310.

White, like Needham, relies on a structural Marxist framework to interpret and narrate Navajo history in the post-livestock reduction era. Such a framework sees history—especially in capitalist societies—as a dynamic relationship between an economic, metropolitan, and imperial core (in this case Phoenix and the larger U.S. state), and its underdeveloped, marginalized, and colonized periphery (in this case, the Navajo Nation). Locating the historical agency of marginalized and dependent nations like the Navajo is of central concern for historians who employ dependency theory and related frameworks of core-periphery theory, primarily because such frameworks measure agency according to the level of self-sufficiency and independence (as opposed to dependence) that marginalized populations are able to exercise even in the face of domination by powerful outside forces operating at the core. While I do not necessarily contest this framework—indeed, both historians provide compelling and convincing evidence that the related processes of dependency and underdevelopment certainly do plague post-livestock reduction era Navajo life—I do question the definitions of agency that have emerged in these works as a result of their concern with the relative dependence/independence and development/underdevelopment of Navajo people.

Certain historians like Colleen O’Neill, who I critique in Chapter Four, engage critically with dependency and development theory in an effort to reclaim Navajo agency—and thus independence and self-sufficiency—through culture and attending notions of spirituality, sacredness and tradition. For O’Neill, the fact that Navajo people reinvented notions and practices of Navajo culture alongside

the strategies they used to negotiate their incorporation into capitalist marketplaces is proof that, contrary to the theses of dependency and development theorists alike, Navajo victimization and marginalization was neither inevitable nor complete. Instead, she argues that Navajo people retained self-sufficiency, independence, and unique forms of control through cultural reinvention.²⁶⁶ Although these normative historical concerns with agency and culture result from intellectual and political assumptions shaped by the historiographical shifts within Southwestern and New Indian History over the last few decades—a basis of engagement that differs entirely from the material locus of violence and biopolitics that gave rise to critiques of resource colonization and concerns with culture that advocates of Diné refusal like Redhouse have advanced—the larger point is that both bodies of work have used discourses of Navajo culture to frame their dissatisfaction with the devastating effects of dependency and development on Diné life.

Section 5.3: Navajo Culture in Contemporary Diné Refusals

As I note in the introduction to this chapter, resource colonization continues to function as a powerful discourse in contemporary Diné refusals (see Figure 5.2). I argue that this is because the era of extractive liberalism is a condition of the present that continues to shape Diné life. As Needham points out, by the late 1970s, and despite the upsurge of Diné activism, “the unequal

²⁶⁶ See Chapter Six, “Rethinking Modernity and The Discourse of Development in American Indian History: A Navajo Example,” in O’Neill, *Working The Navajo Way*, 142-59.

geography of the modern Southwest had taken the form of capital fixed in space. It could not be reversed, it could only be regulated."²⁶⁷ Needham's assertion that inequality had by the end of the 1970s been irrevocably fixed in space resonates with my own hypothesis that the persistence and popularity of the discourse of resource colonization, and its attending notions of culture and sacredness, within contemporary anticolonial Indigenous movements proves that Navajo people still live under—and are still at war with—extractive liberalism. This is apparent in the language and visual narrative presented in Figure 5.2, a poster designed recently by Klee Benally, a well-known advocate of Diné refusal with the same Black Mesa lineage as the matriarch resisters I discuss in Chapter Four. With images of the very power lines that Needham historicizes in his book on the growth of Phoenix overlapping an insignia that clearly reads Peabody Coal Company, Benally evokes the relations of exploitation, expropriation, and colonization that have defined Diné life in the modern era. The poster lists twenty separate examples of resource colonization that have taken place since the inception of modern Navajo governance in the mid-1920s. As a commentary on history and power, this long list of examples implies that twentieth and twenty-first century Navajo history is not only replete with the consequences of resource colonization, but is, in fact, overdetermined by it. And the struggle against it continues.

²⁶⁷ Needham, *Power Lines*, 245.

The poster also invokes the language of sacredness in its section entitled “Desecration of Sacred Places.” In his historical account of the political struggles that arose because of Phoenix’s boom in the 1970s, Needham addresses the ways in which white environmentalists in the 1970s developed notions of pure and “sacred” nature to critique and combat the vulgarities of metropolitan development.²⁶⁸ As I note above, notions of the “sacred” have been politicized by advocates of Diné refusal to serve a similar function within the oppositional politics that have refused the death represented by energy resource development and urbanization in the region. Benally’s use of the term—which he does with frequency in his other media, as well—reflects these political usages of the idea of sacredness to contest the violence of economic development schemes plotted through the expropriation of resources.²⁶⁹ While I would certainly argue that Benally fits into the problematic school of Diné refusals that treats Navajo culture as an ahistorical, pure, and prior form of being in the world, it is also important to point out that he consistently espouses strident anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics.²⁷⁰ The definition of resource colonization that he advances visually in this poster, then, does not seem to disarticulate Navajo culture from politics. Rather, it stages a strong intervention into the field of struggle that characterizes the politics of resource colonization. I therefore find the historical, political, and

²⁶⁸ Needham, *Power Lines*, 200.

²⁶⁹ For a sampling of Benally’s writings and visual art, go to www.indigenouaction.org and www.kleebenally.com, accessed August 26, 2016.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

intellectual message in this poster compelling for developing a Critical Diné Studies approach that does not naturalize notions of culture or sacredness.

Section 5.4: Conclusion

As Joanne Barker has argued, the pursuit for pure “origin” “unsettles nothing” because it “denies” the historical, social and political realities of power.²⁷¹ Rather than liberating us from the ahistorical confines that the “authentic Native” ascribes to Native people, transcendent, metaphysical, or essentialized appeals to culture and spirituality often replicate the very structures of violence and power they seek to overcome.²⁷² And in political formations where this authentic Native operates as the “sole condition” by which power and history can be determined, possibilities for material change become the subject of personal transformation and mystical healing—concepts that sound dangerously like Collier’s own liberal musings on Navajo culture—rather than the province of real, collective material struggle.²⁷³ Like all refusals, Critical Diné Studies refuses the false promise of personal transformation and mystical healing. So, too, does it refuse the false promise of liberalism. Instead, it descends into the solemn and dynamic materialism of violent histories defined not by faith in culture or economic development, but by politics, action, and the manifold struggles over life and death that define our time.

²⁷¹ Barker, *Native Acts*, 221.

²⁷² Barker, *Native Acts*, 221, 223.

²⁷³ Barker, *Native Acts*, 222.

DINÉ BIKÉYAH

Resource Colonization

In 1923, the **Navajo Tribal Council** was created in order to legitimize resource extraction by the US government. According to a report filed by the US Commission on Civil Rights, the tribal council was "created in part so that oil companies would have some legitimate representatives of the Navajos through whom they could lease reservation lands on which oil had been discovered."

PL93-531 "The Relocation Act"
 Since 1974 more than 14,000 Diné have been forcibly removed from our ancestral homelands. A fabricated "land conflict" with the Hopi tribe was created by mining interests to access coal beneath Black Mesa. Today families continue to refuse to be forced from their homes.

Peabody Energy
 Peabody is the world's largest coal company. Peabody operates the Kayenta Mine which ships about 8 million tons of coal each year to the Navajo Generating Station by way of the Black Mesa and Lake Powell railroad. In 2010 the Kayenta Mine was named as one of the most dangerous mines in the US. Peabody operations at Black Mesa have resulted in depletion of N- aquifer.

Navajo Generating Station (NGS)
 NGS is a coal-fired power plant located near Page, AZ that has been in operation since 1974. The plant releases more than 19 million tons of carbon dioxide per year. NGS is one of the top ten sources of nitrogen oxide emissions in the country. This plant provides electrical power to Arizona, Nevada, and California. It also provides the power for pumping Colorado River water for the **Central Arizona Project**, supplying about 1.5 million acre feet of water annually to central and southern Arizona.

The Salt River Project (SRP)
 SRP is an electrical utility for the Phoenix area and serves as the primary water provider for much of central Arizona. SRP owns or operates, in part several power generating stations including Navajo Generating Station (21.7% owner) and Four Corners Power Plant (10% owner).

BHP Billiton is the world's largest mining company in the world and has been accused of environmental vandalism, displacing indigenous people, and unfair union controls. BHP owns the **Navajo Mine**, a 51 year old mine that feeds the Four Corners Power Plant. The Navajo Mine site holds 37 years of unlined, untreated toxic coal ash, amounting to millions of tons that threaten Chaco Wash and the San Juan River.

Four Corners Power Plant (FCPP)
 FCPP has been in operation since 1963, and is one of the largest and oldest coal-fired generating stations in the US. Arizona Public Service Company is the primary owner of FCPP, which serves about 300,000 homes in New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas. Every year, the power plant releases more than 16,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide. The power plant is the largest source of nitrogen oxide gases in the US. On site are toxic wet coal ash embankments that sit near the Chaco Wash, a tributary to the San Juan River.

Senate Bill 2109
 The "Navajo-Hopi Little Colorado River Water Rights Settlement Act of 2012" was introduced by US Senators Kyl and McCain in 2012. S.2109 asks the Navajo and Hopi peoples to waive their priority Water Rights to the surface waters of the Little Colorado River and N and C aquifers "from time immemorial and thereafter, forever" in return for federal appropriations to supply drinking water to a handful of reservation communities.

Uranium Mining & Water Contamination
 There are over 500 abandoned uranium mines and well water is undrinkable in at least 22 communities. The EPA states, "Approximately 30 percent of the Navajo population does not have access to a public drinking water system and may be using unregulated water sources with uranium contamination."
 In 1979 a dirt dam breached on the Navajo Nation at a uranium processing plant releasing more than 1,100 tons of radioactive waste and nearly 100 million gallons of contaminated fluid into the Rio Puerco (which flows into the Little Colorado River). This was the single largest nuclear accident in US history. In 2005 the Diné Nation government banned uranium mining and processing within its borders due to uranium's harmful legacy of severe health impacts and poisoning of the environment.

DESECRATION OF SACRED PLACES
Tsoodzil (Mt. Taylor) is facing threat of uranium mining by companies such as Roca Honda Resources.
Dook'o'oolid (San Francisco Peaks) is being desecrated by Arizona Snowbowl's expansion and treated sewage snowmaking.
Dibé Ntsaa (Mount Hesperus) is threatened by Wildcat Mine which is planning to mine gold, silver, and tellurium.
Dzil ná'oodilil (Huerfano Mesa) faces oil and gas drilling including fracking.
Ch'óo'í'í (Governador Knob) faces oil and gas drilling including fracking.
Diné'tah: Holy Lands, location of Diné emergence into this world and where, today, multitudes of oil and gas wells extract fossil fuels from the land.
Dzil yjilin (Black Mesa) has been desecrated by Peabody since 1960s. Wells and springs have run dry due to mining related pumping of the N Aquifer.
Ch'óóshgai (**Chuska Mountains**) survived more than a century of unsustainable forestry practices, and near deforestation that resulted in the disappearing of springs, medicinal herbs and erosion. It is still in need of reforestation.
Tsé'naa Na'ni'áhi (Rainbow Bridge) Prayer offering sites have been covered by the waters of Lake Powell.
Bidaa (Grand Canyon Confluence) is threatened by the Grand Canyon Escalade which plans on building a large scale resort where the Little Colorado & Colorado rivers meet.
 The Colorado River and San Juan River have faced toxic contamination and over use.

Navajo Agricultural Products Industries (NAPI) currently purchases corn from **Monsanto**, which is the largest purveyor of genetically modified organisms in the world.
Raytheon Missile Systems (toxic waste/cluster bombs/etc) has a factory on their farm. *This is not a comprehensive list.

TAKE ACTION!
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Figure 5.2 Poster designed by Klee Benally for Indigenous Action Media²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ This artwork was obtained from *Indigenous Action Media*. It was downloaded and reproduced for free and without prior permission from the artist pursuant to the anti-copyright stipulation displayed at the bottom of the poster. www.indigenouaction.org, accessed August 19, 2016.

In closing, I want to clarify that my comments here are not meant to be exhaustive or conclusive but, rather, suggestive. They urge those who operate within the multiple registers of Diné refusal to think more critically about how, and to what ends, they are deploying notions of culture, tradition, and spirituality, and for what political aim. As I note in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I am not arguing that culture and attending notions of the sacred ought to be cast out from Diné political articulations, or from the political and intellectual traditions that give form to such articulations. Nor am I arguing for a secular approach to understanding Diné politics that challenges the validity or power of Diné epistemologies as these are articulated within the Navajo language or in ceremonial and everyday contexts guided by philosophical paradigms like hózhó that continue to shape Diné life on a broad scale. Rather, I am simply arguing that such notions ought to be treated with a critical eye that matches the complexity with which they are deployed within contested fields of power and struggle. Finally, I urge advocates of Diné refusal to question and clarify the relationship between Diné epistemologies and political formations, rather than relying uncritically upon notions of the sacred that tend to collapse politics into a culture-based solution premised on returning to unattainable forms of authenticity that never existed. Our collective future depends on it.

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