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BECOMING TWO-SPIRIT: DIFFERENCE AND DESIRE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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BECOMING TWO-SPIRIT: DIFFERENCE AND DESIRE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

Acknowledgements

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Chapter One

Introduction

Two-Spirit people and their role within the contemporary Indian community has been under contestation for many years. The "old ones" remember the days when gender different men and women were respected for their special talents, power and medicine. However, Indian adaptations to Euro-American social and ideological pressures eventually put an end to the historic acceptance and recognition of Native American gender diversity in tribal communities. Except for a few unique instances, there are no longer publicly recognized roles in Indian communities for people who cross sex and gender boundaries. Through the construction of Two-Spirit identity, gay and lesbian Native Americans are attempting to connect with historic Native North American sex and gender diversity while remaining committed to contemporary Indian identity. Simultaneously they are attempting to regain the acceptance of sex and gender diversity in Indian communities.[1]

From contact until the mid-1990s gender diversity in Native North America was referred to by the term "berdache." Anthropological studies uncritically adopted the colonial term "berdache" to explain men assuming the gender characteristics of women and engaging in same sex relations. Definitions of the "berdache" generally included: a male individual who does not fulfill community expectations of modes of production associated with their bodily sex, has sexual relations and domestic partnerships with the same sex, and takes on the gender status of a more feminine

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[1] I use the term Native American, American Indian and Indian interchangeably. Anyone who has spent time with Native Americans realizes the preference often given for the more informal term Indian versus the seemingly politically correct Native American.

role.[2] The term "berdache" is associated with a particular historical moment in Native history and anthropological study overshadowed by Western conceptions of sex and gender. Two-Spirit identity represents a continuation of the "berdache tradition," but constructed in indigenous terms rather than that of Western ideology. It is in the historically recognized social and ceremonial roles of the "berdache tradition" and not in the term "berdache" where Two-Spirit people draw a connection. "Two-Spirit" allows contemporary gay and lesbian Native Americans to identify with their culture and their heritage on their own conditions and has come to represent the history of gender diversity in Native North America.[3] In its most general sense, Two-Spirit is a self named term and identity referring to contemporary gay and lesbian American Indians. However, in recent years, Two-Spirit has come to represent a distinct Indian identity with its own set of ideological assumptions. More than a term, Two-Spirit as an identity attempts to connect with the historical acceptance of sex and gender difference among tribal societies in an effort to reincorporate their uniqueness into contemporary Native communities.

The focus on women in Anthropology with second wave feminism brought to the fore critical assessments of the social construction inherent in gender and sexuality categories (Stolcke 1993: 19). This scrutiny is reflected in the approaches taken toward gender diversity in Native North America by previous anthropological studies. Although examinations of gender are important to this research, in order to more completely examine the current subject positions of contemporary Two-Spirit

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[2] "Berdache" is used by Williams (1986) and Lang (1998) to describe women transcending community expectations of their bodily sex.

people, I focus on the dialectical relationship between power and difference. Gender is just one of the many aspects of difference that become subject to interpretation dominant and subordinate ideologies. Therefore, gender, in this study, becomes a component crosscutting differences of race, hybridity, desire, masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. Two-Spirit identity becomes subject to differential access to social belonging based on accepted and condemned differences among various manifestations of Indian communities. Differences become subject to the power held by individuals who control community access and recognition. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the emergence of Two-Spirit as an Native identity imbued with the same issues involved in identifying with any tribal or generic Indian identity.

Anthropology and Images of Gender Diversity in North America

Anthropological images of North American gender diversity closely trail the development of theoretical approaches to sex and gender in the social sciences. Early anthropological studies focused on psychoanalytic interpretations of the "berdache" as a representation of psychological deviance in Indian society (Angelino and Shedd 1955, Devereux 1937, Kroeber 1940, Benedict 1934). In these early studies men who took on the "berdache" role were seen as transvestites who crossed gender boundaries and were "tolerated" and "institutionalized" by Indian society. These psychosexual interpretations focused on individual motivations as well as the examination of the ways in which socialization played a role in the individual's "deviance." With a shift from psychological approaches to sex/gender "variation" in the anthropology of

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[3] Academics often use "berdache" to signify gender diversity as it is represented at contact and into the early 20th century. Two-Spirit is a term signifying the contemporary, but is being increasingly used to

women and increased awareness of gay rights, ideas about the berdache changed to an emphasis on the social incorporation of gender diversity and same sex relations (Allen 1981, Blackwood 1984, Whitehead 1993, Williams 1986). Most important about the transition away from psychological studies is the de-emphasis on sexual practice and a greater emphasis on gender and social roles. By focusing on gender and social roles the "transvestitic" aspects of the historic "berdache" were emphasized as an institutionalized form of "gender bending." Increased research efforts were made to more completely represent the historical "berdache" in terms of the role individuals played in society by recognizing political, familial, community and religious responsibility (Callender and Kochems 1983, Williams 1986, Roscoe 1991). Important about these studies is the shift they made from looking at the "berdache" as merely a form of gender crossing, but as Callender and Kochems state: "... it was a movement toward a somewhat intermediate status that combined social attributes of males and females" or an "alternate status" (1983: 443). In reaction to the somewhat utopian image that previous studies had presented of the "berdache tradition," researchers began to look toward sexual/gender diversity in Native America as less of a model of tolerance but rather as an adaptation of the available identities to individuals (Lang 1998), and as a way in which power was exacted on men by other men as a means of social control and prestige (Trexler 1995). Most recent is the third sex, third gender material which emphasizes further the potential alternative status of the historic "berdache" as it is represented by a third sex and third gender - not a variation on male or female, but rather a gender category unto itself (Herdt 1993, Roscoe 1993, 1998).

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describe the whole of Native American gender diversity; pre-contact, historic and present day.

The 1990s brought an emphasis on the contemporary lives of gay and lesbian

Indians through the establishment of social and political organizations and changes in

terminology. Instead of referring to themselves with the considerably offensive term

"berdache" Native gays and lesbians began incorporating the term Two-Spirit as a

means to link with the past and create awareness of their contemporary situation.

Within the last few years, Two-Spirit people have published further insights into the

contemporary situation of gay and lesbian Natives. The volumes *Living the Spirit* and

Two-Spirit People, present Two-Spirit points of view through short stories, oral

histories, poems and articles.

Of "berdache" and Two-Spirit, and Two-Spirit Ancestors

The term "berdache" specifies a 500 year written record documenting gender

diversity in Native North America according to the perceptions and assumptions of

European explorers and early anthropologists. "Berdache" is no longer acceptable to

gay and lesbian Native Americans due to its association with the homophobic and

ethnocentric attitudes of the colonial encounter and early anthropological writings

(Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997, Lang 1997, 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999).

"Berdache" comes from the French adaptation of the Arabic word *bardaj*, meaning

"kept boy" or "male prostitute" (Angelino and Shedd 1955: 121, Lang 1998: 6,

Williams 1986: 9-10). Notions of the term and concept of "berdache" in early

academia are explicitly tied to indices of the passively homosexual male, who is

subdued by a more powerful male, and remains under command by forced sodomy.

Early explorers and clergymen used the term berdache to define Indian men who

were carrying out the social roles of women, dressing as women and having domestic

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and sexual partnerships with other men. Accordingly, as defined by early explorers and anthropologists, "berdache" was a term that relied on Euro-American gender constructions of hermaphrodites and transvestite males as deviant bodies and genders.

Recent studies attempt to reconcile colonial and early anthropological image of the "berdache" tradition with present day concepts of gender diversity (Epple 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999, Goulet 1996). As Thomas and Jacobs point out, Two-Spirit is a way of conceptualizing a cultural phenomenon meant to bridge Native ideas of sex and gender diversity with the influence of popular Western notions of sexual identities (1999: 92). Two-Spirit identity becomes a way to retain one's identity as Native and at the same time identify with one's sexuality without invoking the popular (largely white) gay community. Therefore, Two-Spirit has emerged as a term absent of colonial and ethnocentric trappings inherent in the term "berdache" as well as an identity attempting to reconcile modern sexual identity with historic indigenous gender diversity.

Some scholars are uncomfortable with the Western influenced notions behind the terms Two-Spirit, "berdache" and gay as they may be applied to highly specific instances of gender diversity among particular tribal communities, such as the Navajo and the Athapaskans. According to Epple: "The synthesis of nadleehi [Navajo] and others into a single category ["berdache," gay, Two-Spirit] has often ignored the variability across Native American cultures and left unexamined the relevance of gender and sexuality" (1998: 268). Therefore, Epple sees the terms "berdache," Two-Spirit and gay as misrepresenting notions about non-Western gender diversity in specific contemporary tribal traditions. Goulet resounds this argument with his

discussion of the Dene Tha's conception of sexual/social identity as flexible through time(1996). He argues: "... anthropological discussions of gender variance among Native Americans ought to follow more closely the manner in which Native Americans themselves construct and combine their sexual and gender identities through their social and linguistic practices. Otherwise, anthropologists may "discover" berdaches where there are none" (1996: 698). The issue becomes one of anthropological displacement of mixed/diverse gender status on individuals who may exist in a culture where such identities are more fluid or the "transcendence" of the categories male and female is seen as less awe-inspiring. Goulet (1996) and Epple (1998) propose a shift back to culturally relative terms and a culturally specific contextualization of any discussion concerning unambiguous forms of gender identity instead of terms they view as not obliging context-dependent identities.

Arguments against universal fixed categories such as gay, Two-Spirit, and "berdache" are understandable, however as Thomas and Jacobs point out: "This interesting synchrony [of Two-Spirit] helps to solve some self-identity problems that Native Americans and First Nations two-spirit people have faced, thus allowing those who live in both urban and rural areas, but not necessarily on reservations, the opportunity to use only one unambiguous term ... for their gender identity" (1999: 92). Most of the Two-Spirit peoples in this study would agree with the latter statement. One individual pointed out to me that Two-Spirit allowed the most freedom of any other term they might potentially use. Many contemporary gay and lesbian Indians are so distanced from historical gender diversity in their own tribe, they do not feel attached to the indigenous term once used by their community. As

one Tewa man told me, "If I use the term *kwido*[4] to a Two-Spirit person, they probably have no idea what I mean. But if I use Two-Spirit then they know I am gay and Indigenous." It is the universality or pan-Indian aspect as well as the positive or "pride" connotation of Two-Spirit that makes it popular. As we will see later, many people have began to use "Two-Spirit" as a way to distinguish themselves. Also, Two-Spirit "society" has emerged as a way to distinguish city or regional organizations of gay and lesbian Indians such as Phoenix Two-Spirit Society or using "Two-Spirit" society as a similar reference one might make to "gay society."

When posed with the question of an alternative to discussing the social history of gender diversity known in the historic literature in terms of "berdache," most of the people I spoke with preferred the concept of the "Two-Spirit ancestors." Two-Spirit ancestors are individuals that were named "berdache" by early explorers and anthropologists, but also those who were known by community specific terms lost from disuse and intolerance. The famous Zuni *lhamana* We'wha and the widely respected Navajo *nadleehi* Hosteen Klah were often brought up as a Two-Spirit ancestor rather than a "berdache."

In this study, I use the term "berdache" only when discussing research that uses that term. Because the term Two-Spirit was not in use when many of the founding works on Indian gender diversity were written, it is only fair not to critique those authors' use of the term. As Walter Williams points out, many studies, such as his own, are unfairly criticized for using the term "berdache," considering Two-Spirit was not widely used until the 1990s.[5] Using the term "berdache" in reference to

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[4] Kwido is the Tewa word for individuals who are of both man and woman.
[5] Personal communication at American Anthropological Association panel, November 2000.

previous studies makes a clear temporal distinction between studies that emphasize

contemporary relations and those that draw mainly on ethnohistorical representations.

Since many ethnohistorical works on gender diversity are mired in historical

documentations, a clear distinction between what is considered the voice of

colonialism on the "berdache" and the voice of Two-Spirit people, in which the

present work is based, should be separate. When referencing the representations of

socio-historical gender diversity, unless I am describing the research of another

individual who uses the term "berdache," I will use the term Two-Spirit history, Two-

Spirit tradition or Two-Spirit ancestors instead of "berdache" or "berdache tradition."

Although "berdache" is tied to a specific historical moment, it is a moment

determined and marked by Euro-American colonialism and Enlightenment academe.

The community of Two-Spirit people as well as Two-Spirit and non-Two-Spirit

academics determined that if the term "berdache" were used in describing earlier

studies or historical references it should be placed in quotations to signal its

provisional eminence as an analytical term.[6] In agreement with this decision, I place

quotations around "berdache," use Two-Spirit whenever appropriate, and refer to

specific community terms such as *winkte*[7] when necessary.

Institutionalized Homosexuality and Social Roles

With roots in the feminist and gender theory movement in the social sciences,

scholarly work from the 1980s on Native American gender diversity had as its goal to

illustrate the constructedness of gender and sex roles by exemplifying a cultural

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[6] As Lang (1999: xiv) and Thomas and Jacobs (1994) discuss, two conferences were held in 1993 and 1994 to reconsider the representation and terminology where North American gender diversity was concerned. It was at this meeting that gay and lesbian Native Americans settled on the term Two-Spirit as an appropriate replacement for "berdache."

example challenging Western ideals about same sex relations. Many scholars sought to use historic Native American "tolerance" of same sex relations to bolster critiques of intolerance in Euro-American society. In doing so, scholars such as Walter Williams (1986) and Whitehead (1993) attempted to equate contemporary Western notions of homosexuality and historic Native same sex practices and "alternative" gender roles. Early interpretations emphasized social roles over sexual practice in their interpretations which relied heavily on notions about an institutionalized role for the "berdache."

A founding work in the study of North American gender diversity is Harriet Whitehead's widely read article, "The Bow and the Burden Strap" (1993). Whitehead relies heavily on the theme of institutionalized homosexuality in non-Western cultures as a critique of Western sex/gender inequalities. Whitehead sees the "North American berdache" as a form of "Gender-cross[ing] ... where anatomic males dressing as women and assum[e] the tasks of women ..." (1993: 502). Therefore, Whitehead interprets the "'berdache tradition" as a form of institutionalized transvestitism or transsexualism where "... males [would] assum[e] aspects of the status of women" and that their status was less about sexual object choice than it was about gendered modes of production (1993: 503). Whitehead further argues that the "berdache" represented another form of male dominated social control in Native North America. According to Whitehead, the "berdache," being unable to succeed on the "battlefront," exchanges the possibility of the highest status within the community for the second most prestigious status of "ultra-successful female" (1993: 521). The ultra successful female was defined by "the forms of

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[7] Winkte is the term for a third gender male among the Lakota.

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material prosperity and cultural respect that accrued to the assiduous practitioner of female crafts" (Whitehead 1993: 521). Therefore, she concludes that men were allowed flexibility in access to social prestige that women were not, and inevitably the respect given to the "berdache" reflected their being anatomically male.

Walter Williams also focuses on "berdachism" as an institutionalized role and presents evidence of Indian culture "accomodat[ing] gender variation and sexual variation beyond man/woman opposites, without being threatened by it" (1986: 5). Williams presents us with numerous accounts of the historic male "berdache" as religiously powerful, a political mediator, respected by communities and as excelling in the handiwork of both men and women. Problematic about Williams' interpretations is his connection between historic Native gender roles and contemporary Western gay culture. In example, Williams compares the gender "crossing" of the "berdache" to contemporary notions of the drag queen (1986: 125-7). In doing so, Williams relies heavily on sexual dimorphic interpretations of individual characteristics. As many scholars have shown, the characteristics of gender diversity in Native communities relied on the mixing of gender traits than simply trading one for the other (Roscoe 1991, 1993, Lang 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999).

Williams has been criticized in numerous publications for drawing links between modern ideas about same sex relations, gay popular culture, and the "berdache tradition" (Lang 1998, Weston 1993, Roscoe 1993, 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999). Although these critiques are valid, more problematic is that Williams' presentation of information on contemporary gay and lesbian Indians does not

address the *discontinuity in North American Indian society's acceptance of same sex relations and gender difference*. As a result, the subtextual perception of equating contemporary Western notions of homosexuality and the "berdache" past are presented as a continuous stream. Williams inevitably prioritizes an ideal of what gender diversity in Indian societies should look like; that of the gender ambivalent or cross-dressing individual who holds a high status in their community where their "generosity and spirituality, not homosexual behavior, are what underlie the social prestige of the "berdache" (Williams 1986: 127) Williams acknowledges sexuality as a recognized quality for the "berdache," but emphasizes that sexuality is considered secondary to the various social and religious roles "berdaches" serve. However a vital point is missing in Williams', and others', presentations: same sex relations and community perceptions about gay culture are the reasons that many contemporary gay and lesbian American Indians are not revered and accepted by their communities.

Whitehead (1993) and Williams (1986) err in placing the "traditional berdache" within the Western dimorphic notion of crossing gender lines through transvestitism and/or transsexualism. That is, historic gender diversity is interpreted through a Western defined notion of gender and sexuality, where "berdache" are equated with modern forms of gender play. As many other scholars also point out, their use of the sex/gender and male/female binary eschews the relationship between the individual identifying as "berdache" and the cultural construction of that role. Ethnohistorical studies have shown that gender diversity traditions were involved in broader sets of cultural ideas than simply finding a place for individuals who desire

sexual relations with the same bodily sex or who avoided the masculine pursuits of

battle (Roscoe 1993, 1998, Lang 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999).

Traditional Status not "alternative roles"

The notion of "traditional status" for the "berdache" has been examined by

numerous scholars, but according to Sabine Lang's *Men as Women, Women as Men*

none have presented a comprehensive picture of the "berdache" without the influence

of modern sex/gender ideas(1998). Also, no studies have extensively examined the

role of men-women (a woman who is a "berdache," and to some extent fills the

masculine role) (1998: 11).[8] To accurately describe the "berdache tradition." Lang

proposes three components of gender the subjective feelings of masculine, feminine,

or ambivalent as *gender identity*; 2) the social expression of gender identity as *gender*

role; and 3) *gender status* as the social position of the gendered person (1998· 47): 1).

Lang's "componential organization" of gender produces the conclusion: "Although

the categories of woman-man and man-woman were culturally established role

alternatives wherever gender role change was institutionalized in Native American

cultures, it seems that their roles did not constitute "alternative roles" in the sense that

they contained elements that were not already part of the culturally defined woman's

and man's roles" (1998: 47, 352). Therefore, the traditional status of the "berdache"

was one where individuals may take on the clothing of another gender as part of a

gender identity, e.g., a man wearing women's clothes, but their gender role might

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[8] Lang (1999: xvi) uses woman-man to describe men who cross gender lines for preference of
women's gender roles, and man-woman for the same in women. As she states (1999: xvi): "... within
the context of construction of multiple genders, the sex of birth is invariably less important than the
gender chose by a person who decides to take up the culturally defined role of the 'other' sex." This is
contrary to Roscoe's (1991) use of the term man-woman, which places an emphasis on the Zuni
concept of *lhamana*.

include an aspect not clearly identified with their gender identity, such as a man-woman hunting. Lang brings up a valid point proposing that "gender mixing" did not turn "gender polarity" on its head, because gender mixing took place within the established cultural characteristics available to individuals. Lang's subtext interrogates gender role change as a form of institutionalized homosexuality, and as a social deconstruction of gender binaries: "thus it is the total componential organization and manifestation of the role and not merely the choice of sexual partners, that determines the gender status of a person and that person's place in the culture" (1998: 352).

Lang's theoretical assumptions allow for more room in which to conceptualize the female "berdache" or "men-women," which has arguably been conceived of in the same "terms" as the woman-man in other literature. Lang states (1998: 261):

> Men-Women should be understood as females to whom a Native American culture either explicitly attached such a gender status that differed from the gender status of a woman or as females in some isolated cases for whom such a status and/or term has not been explicitly mentioned in the literature yet who exclusively performed men's work, in connection with the two most frequent other components of gender role change, cross-dressing and/or same-sex sexual relationships, and who were treated as quasi-men by the other members of a culture.

Therefore, men-women could be those women who performed masculine tasks but were not thought of as gender crossing, women who desired independence from men and performed both male and female tasks, females who crossed the male/female gender boundary to earn acclaim in male prestige areas such as warfare and hunting, or females who were selected as children to fulfill the function of a "missing son" (Lang 1998: 306-7). The subtleties of gender role modification become more flexible

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for women in Lang's model of gradations in gender components. According to Lang (1998: 344-7) it appears that Indian cultures were more eager to assign "berdache" status to a male showing feminine characteristics than to a woman showing masculine characteristics.

Lang's (1998) gender component analysis excels in reexamining the traditional status of gender changes without the influence of contemporary and Western ideas about homosexuality and gender; conversely, her assessment becomes apolitical and temporally static. Women potentially had more flexibility in their gender status, however a reluctance to bestow the powerful recognition of "berdache" status on women could be more about gender stratification than flexibility. While her examination removes the influences of Western ideals of homosexuality from the "berdache tradition," we are still no closer to a better understanding of the present situation of gay and lesbian Indians who draw a link to what she terms the "berdache past."

Reacting: "Kept boy revisited"

Some scholars feel that the scholarly and popular emphasis on the ways in which same sex relations and gender diversity were incorporated into historic Native societies portrays a quixotic image of "tolerance." Socio-historical images of the "berdache" tradition are critically re-examined in an attempt to show a less celebratory portrait of the "berdache tradition" by Richard Trexler (1995) and Gutierrez (1989). Reconsidering a romanticized vision of the "berdache tradition" is worthy, however Trexler compares two explicitly different cultural behaviors –

dominated sexual passives with the socially and politically important women-men among Native North Americans. [9]

Richard Trexler's *Sex and Conquest* attempts to bring together issues of power surrounding the social construction of the "berdache institution" during the contact era using mostly evidence from Mesoamerica (1995). Trexler argues that certain power relations created the "berdache institution" rather than any utopian tolerance of a "biologically determined" homosexuality or notions of an institutionalized gender role (1995: 176). Trexler cites colonial era documents to illustrate that political and familial political goals and pressures were to have led to "transvesting" young boys at an early age by parents. Young prepubescent boys or captured soldiers were emasculated as passive partners in sexual encounters with more powerful males and would become property (Trexler 1995: 82-101). Trexler therefore argues that having a male as a submissive partner or a collection of males in a harem (as in the Incan empire) would represent a "big man's" supremacy by controlling the more powerful of the sexes (1995: 103). He states: "Thus the association between forced sexuality and the construction of social and political identities is evident in the distant past ... " (1995: 176).

Two assumptions in Trexler's work are troubling: 1) that there is a correlation between what is considered the "berdache tradition" in terms of Native North American gender diversity and the forced passive sexual punishment and dominance

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[9] Will Roscoe (1998: 196) points out that the work of Trexler (1995) and Gutierrez (1989) uses the same "syntactic devices" as the writings of denunciation by early explorers and priests: "passive constructions, in which "berdaches" are the objects of actions by unspecified others; transitive constructions, in which other act upon the "berdache"; and reflexive constructions, in which the "berdache" renders himself an object." For an extensive critique of Gutierrez's (1989) and Trexler's (1995) supporting evidence see Roscoe (1998: 189-200).

described in his book; and 2) how the aforementioned assumption confuses Native American gender diversity with a cultural phenomenon explained in terms of emasculation and transvesting. Using the historically accepted roles of gender diversity in Native America - domestic, religious, and military - Trexler sets out to show that these roles were the result of "... older males compet[ing] for and manifest[ing] their power by homosexually dominating younger ones" (1995: 24). He further connects homosexual domination to the "transvesting" of these younger men. The tendency to punish/control younger males and captured soldiers through anal sodomy and forcing them to wear women's clothing may have contributed to the "older" or more powerful males" domination, but this form of emasculation has little to do with the tradition of gender diversity in North America. It has been shown that the form of adornment taken in the "berdache tradition" is more complex than merely "a man in a dress" (Lang 1998, Roscoe 1991, 1993, 1998, Williams 1986).

Trexler's definition of the "berdache" may be more along the lines of what early explorers intended when encountering gender diversity in North America, however, his work inevitably draws links between individuals mislabeled as "kept boys" and those who actually were "kept boys." Although Trexler claims: "What we have not found is that all those participating as passives in homosexual acts were "berdaches" (1995: 176). His work explicitly implicates a Western hetero-ization of the historical material to equate two different social entities, the dominated/punished receptor and the alternatively gendered, in order to argue his point that same sex behavior is equally derivative of the social as it is genetic. However, his point is undermined by the comparison of something voluntary to something forced.

Mixed/Third Gender

The most recent approach to gender diversity in the anthropological literature relies heavily on the notion of contradiction with Western models of sexuality and "homosexuality" in an attempt to further the questioning of gender/sex dimorphism and essentialism. Of recent theoretical popularity is the Third Sex/Third Gender literature as it is extensively represented by Herdt's edited volume (1993), Roscoe's (1993) article "How to become a berdache" and his books *The Zuni Man-Woman* (1991) and *Changing Ones* (1998). Ideas about the primacy of biology and gender as the reiteration of biology and heterosexual practice are challenged by the recent cultural examples presented by Roscoe's (1991. 1993. 1998) study of Native America and Nanda (1993) on the Hijras of India. Documentations of the transcendence of sexual dimorphism are highly critical of the 'conflation' of the categories male and female, masculine and feminine, as well as the sex/gender binary in cross-cultural context. Multiple sex/gender studies, such as Roscoe's (1991, 1993, 1998) and Nanda's (1990,1993), emphasize the ways in which certain individuals in non-Western cultures transcend sexual dimorphism through distinctive community recognized categories of persons and cultural ideals.

Although third sex/gender categories are contextualized by sexual practice. Herdt (1993: 46) and Roscoe (1991) are careful not to equate same sex relations to a multiple gender category. Herdt states: "Thus I urge ... that we not confuse desire for the same sex with a third sex per se, that gender reversed roles are not the sole basis for recruitment into a third gender role, at least not in all social traditions and that sexual orientation and identity are not the keys to conceptualizing a third sex and

gender across time and space" (1993: 47). Roscoe reiterates: "More than a 'preference' or 'orientation', "berdache" personality entailed a complete constellation of skills, attitudes, and behaviors" (1991: 168).

Roscoe makes the following argument for third gender categories and tolerance in Indian society: "While traditional roles for men and women were well defined, the Zunis viewed gender as an acquired rather than an inborn trait Biological sex did not dictate the roles individuals assumed" (1991: 22). Furthermore, gender identity among the Zuni was acquired by "ritual experiences and encounters with gender-specific symbols" (Roscoe 1991: 144). Using the Zuni lhamana We'wha as an example, Roscoe illustrates that Zuni individuals are considered raw or ungendered until they are "cooked" by specific rituals through which they receive their gender identity. The Zuni *lhamana* would undergo the first male initiation, even if they were already recognized as expressing *lhamana* tendencies, but would not undergo the second male ritual of "warfare and hunting." Also, because We'wha did not possess the biological functions of women, he could not undergo the rituals of women. By not experiencing menarche and giving birth, We'wha did not experience the taboos against women, but at the same time being associated with the feminine allowed We'wha to observe female domestic rites. In Zuni society multiple gender characteristics allowed free movement between gendered social worlds. Zuni "berdaches" were "cooked" in different ways than men and women and therefore constituted a third gender status. Roscoe argues "... the problem of the transsexual or gender-crossing model" is clarified by the use of "alternate gender categories" (1991: 146).

Multiple gender categories of persons in Native America are further developed in Roscoe's *Changing Ones*, where he proposes "sex as a category of bodies and gender as a category of persons" (1998: 127). Sex involves being categorized as being a particular kind of "human" based on distinctions between bodies within a social group. Gender is a distinction between different kinds of persons within a group. Gender becomes a "multidimensional" category of persons where "acquired" and "ascribed" traits prevail over "sex assignment." Therefore, multiple genders does not require multiple physical sexes, physical differences remain unfixed and become "less important than individual and social factors" (Roscoe 1998: 127). Recognizing multiple genders then allows for a "multidimensional" examination of "berdache" roles where gender and other cultural institutions, kinship and religion are two examples given, crosscut to more completely define the person. For multiple genders to exist within a society, the minimal conditions needed are a division of labor structured by gender roles, a belief system where gender is not established by physical sex, and "historical developments that create opportunities for individuals to construct and practice such roles and identities" (Roscoe 1998: 136).

Roscoe's use of the third gender gives us an alternative to Western sexual dimorphism in conceptualizing historic gender roles (1991, 1993, 1998). More importantly the notion of a third gender allows us to examine same sex relations and gender crossing/mixing without relying on modern Western notions of homosexuality. However, the notion of a third sex or a third gender is almost excusively limited to historic Native communities and the few contermporary

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communities that maintain some semblance of third gender socialization.[10]

Therefore, as we will see in the following chapters most contemporary Two-Spirit people think of themselves in terms of male or female, or along gradations of masculine and feminine. Furthermore, we also must consider that many contemporary Two-Spirit people view their sexual practice in terms of "homosexuality" and are on the whole recognized as "homosexual" by their peers, communities, parents and partners. Accordingly, Roscoe's notion of the third gender status is difficult to support in contemporary Two-Spirit gender identity, and yet is readily applicable when examining the historical.

Reconsidering the historical "Gender Diversity Project"

Analysis of sex and gender difference in Native America is seated firmly in a preference for the romantically historical. Arguments have focused on: 1) a "berdache" not based on 'erotic orientation" but rather on "occupational pursuits and dress/demeanor [as] the important determinants of an individual's social classification and sexual object choice [as] its trailing rather than its leading edge" (Whitehead 1993: 498), 2) same sex relations and gender variability as the determining factor (Roscoe 1993, 1998, Williams 1986), 3) "berdache" tradition as sexual servitude and domination (Trexler 1995) or 4) traditional interpretations of gender components (Lang 1998). The latter discussion by the gender diversity project in studies of Native North America exemplifies the goal of presenting alternatives to Western ideas of sex/gender dimorphism and compulsory heterosexuality. Resulting from the gender diversity project is the inevitable

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[10] Epple (1998), Goulet (1996) and Thomas (1997) present examples among the Navajo and the Athapaskans where multiple genders remain in use. Williams presents evidence of intact third gender

subtextual comparison of utopian acceptance of the past to the present. Weston

points out that "intellectual projects" on the institutionalization of variability in sexual

practice and gender variation had as their goal to document and assess the degree of

tolerance for homosexuality among "other" societies, and the correlation of social

organization with same-sex relations and cross-cultural "typologies" of

homosexuality (1993: 342). Accordingly, by emphasizing historical manifestations

of gender/sex difference acceptance, scholars mentioned here have eschewed the

contemporary relationship between social belonging, acceptance and desire in Native

society.

When academia speaks of North American gender diversity in the contact and

colonial period it usually invokes a body of recent Anthropological literature

celebrating a tradition of idealized tolerance expressed in early Native American

communities. This is not to say that gender differences were not historically highly

regarded and valued in Indian cultures. Rather, scholars hold up discourses of gender

diversity occupied with the past as a critical comparison to the present without

engaging contemporary issues. Recent studies rely heavily on interpretations and re-

interpretations of previous studies and historical observations of gender diversity in

North America. They devote minimal attention to the current position of

contemporary gay and lesbian Indians or those identifying as Two-Spirit (Epple 1998,

Goulet 1996, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1991,1993,1998, Trexler 1995).

Despite a socio-historical tolerance, Lang points out: "The situation of

women-men, men-women, gays, and lesbians is difficult in many Indian communities

on and off the reservations, and in most places institutionalized gender role change

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among the Lakota (1986).

has ceased to exist" (1998: 322). Two-Spirit links with their socio-cultural past are important, but I argue that Anthropological discourses on the "berdache tradition" create images of a past that are in some ways irreconcilable with the current social and political struggles of contemporary Two-Spirit peoples. Previous research lacks attention to the everyday lives of gay and lesbian Indians who grapple with sexism, racism, and internal conflicts over their identity within in their own community as well as within larger non-Indian society. Two-Spirit people recognize a connection between themselves and their Two-Spirit ancestors. However, they are unabashedly vocal about the lack of acceptance they feel from their family, tribal communities and Indian society in general. Therefore, a considerable gap in the literature exists where contemporary Two-Spirit people are concerned. I will emphasize the complex ways in which these individuals are positioned in Indian communities, mainstream society and larger gay community, as well as the various ways they construct their identity as Two-Spirit. Secondarily, this study may shed alternative light on the "berdache" past.

Theoretical Framework

Although previous research on gender diversity in North America has followed trends in sex/gender research, we have yet to address the ways in which restraint and regulation of identity incite individuals to create variations on accepted cultural practices in terms of individual behavior and social organization. Therefore the examination of the dialectic between power and difference occupies us here more than the "where," "when" and "what kind" questions of gender. The topic of Two-Spirit society is explicitly connected to questions of sex, gender and desire, but also

articulates with other discourses of difference, such as race, culture, and politics. We are concerned with the ways in which differences intersect with the various axis of power through dominant ideas about identity as well as resistance to the confines of dominant ideas.

Foucault provides us with a notion of how power generates the normalizing discourses that dominate individuals through individual relations to dominant ideas. Butler gives us an idea of how individuals can disrupt domination through variation. However, we are missing a conception of that *thing* that *incites* individuals to resistance. By combining self-knowledge in Foucault with critical understanding in Gramsci, the subject becomes not only self-aware/knowing but also political. If we consider Butler's notion that variation on regulatory norms is at once resistance, resignification and political action, then the subject positioned by discourse becomes agentive. Critical self-knowledge (a combination of Gramsci's and Foucault's version of self awareness), is not only an awareness of one's position in the social structure, but also can be that concept which explains what incites political action in the form of variation.

Self-fashioning

I begin with Foucault's notion of Care of the Self or Self-fashioning in order to recognize how identity is regulated by dominant ideas on sex, gender, desire. class, culture and race while simultaneously generating cultural production and innovation. Self-fashioning is the act of creating ideas about oneself, or objectifying oneself, through a steady comparison with accepted socio-cultural representations and regulations (Foucault 1986: 62-3). Self-knowledge is a means by which individuals

govern themselves as a subject in relation to dominant ideas. It is through the structuring of one's identity (self-fashioning) by reflection on dominant expectations where sexuality, race, and gender are problematized in the individual. Therefore, subjectivity is an attitude taken toward oneself in perceived relation to dominant expectations of individuals who identify as Indian or wish to be recognized as Indian by tribal, ceremonial, and generic Indian communities as well as larger non-Indian society. Subjectivity (in Foucault's ideas) is achieved not by introspection but by reflecting upon one's own behavior in relation to dominant attitudes. Therefore, individuals are rendered objectified by their lack of adherence to community expectations. Communities, and individuals in positions of prestige, control access to identity which results in a set of regulations designed to legitimize particular signs and symbols.

Inevitably, any recognition of oneself as obtaining a particular sexual, gender, or racial identity involves some form of "coming to know oneself" in relation to dominant ideas. According to Foucault, the construction/constraint of one's identity is made possible through *technologies of the self*.

Individuals are manipulated by discourse and are manipulating discourses through "technologies." Discourses are attitudes signified through signs, symbols and markings manipulated and displayed by individuals. Technologies are behaviors inculcated with meaning designed to signify a particular social relationship through which discourse is generated and used. The bearing down of domination and individual reactions to that domination produces popular discourses about what it means to be a particular type of person. Sign systems provide the symbols and

meanings through which discourses of normalization are understood, as well as reified and produced. Discourses of normalization are those signs, symbols and markings that seek to homogenize individuals into acceptable categories of behavior and appearance. Accordingly, these discourses are operationalized in the alienation and acceptance of individuals according to their adherence to dominant standards. Individuals are then objectified in relation to these productive sign systems, thereby applying regulatory power to the production and operation of signs and their meanings. Emerging from productive, regulatory and power-laden sign systems are a set of relations to the self. Relations to the self are influenced and created by one's perceived relationship to symbols and meanings in the social world. The result is a series of acts by which individuals seek to attain a self-perfection in relation to their perceived similarities and differences in attitudes and behaviors among and concealed in signs.

The self-perfection that Foucault is theorizing is the result of reflexive action where individuals determine their perfection in hierarchical relation to symbols and meanings in the social world by comparing themselves to accepted meanings. When Two-Spirit people encounter the heterosexist, homophobic and racist attitudes of people within and outside of the Indian community, they are developing their position within the social structure in relation to signs and meanings associated with the dominant ideas on legitimate identities. Therefore, the set of relations to the self, to the Two-Spirit self, are created and influenced by dominant ideas on sex, gender and desire as well as the racial politics of being Indian. What it means to be Indian is mired in power-laden signs, by which individuals are included, excluded, surveilled

and dominated within and by the social field. The drawback to Foucault is that power is everywhere and always equally-vested between the dominant and the dominated. Therefore, Two-Spirit action has the potential to become mired in the relationship to the dominant discourse, hopelessly relegating individuals to a self-fashioning determined by "acceptable behavior in relations with [to] others" (Foucault 1988: 22). Therefore, individual action outside of the dominant discourse is limited and, at points of the application of power, impossible. Despite its problems, self-knowledge goes far in explaining the potential ways that individual identity is a reflection on perceptions of where one fits into dominant ideas. It also gives insight into the ways that identity is regulated by the inherent power of signs and symbols.

Self-Knowledge to Performance

Two-Spirit subjectivity can be rectified by investigating the device absent in Foucault: the subversion of ideal types of identities by individuals through the use of dominant ideology. According to Judith Butler normalizing discourses are manifested in ideal types of identities, which are naturalized through their "repetitive realization" in everyday activities (1990, 1992,1993). Ideal types of identities are constituted by individual "performance" of community sanctioned and approved behaviors and displays of symbols. Butler defines normalizing discourse as signs, symbols, and material realities used to reinforce dominant standards on identity. Dominant standards are made to appear as "real" or "natural" through the repetitive use of accepted signs and symbols. The repetitive realization of identity leads to the essentializaton and naturalization of a "set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a

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natural sort of being" (Butler 1990: 44). Therefore, dominant ideas about gender (and

other identities) produce cultural arrangements "... [that] take the place of "the real"

and consolidate and augment their hegemony through that felicitous self-

naturalization" (Butler 1990: 43). Accordingly, the only culturally "intelligible" or

"real" genders and identities are those that are perceived as the "natural" ones. Butler

states (1990: 23):

> "Intelligible" genders are those which in some sense institute and
> maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender,
> sexual practice, and desire. In other words, the spectres of
> discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to
> existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited
> and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or
> expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally
> constituted genders, and the "expression" or "effect" of both in the
> manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.

Gender as well as racial, class, sexual and cultural identities are the result of a

series of repetitive acts or "performances" within the field of acceptable/intelligible

signs. Therefore, individual acts fabricate the suggestion of an "internal core or

substance" through signifying what is thought to be essential or real in body and

behavior. "Fabrications" of "real" identities are reified in the field of social relations

through individual and collective actions (Butler 1990: 172-3). The performance of

identities is "localized within the self of the actor" whereby the role of signs and

symbols in domination are "effectively displaced from view" (Butler 1990: 174).

Therefore, the appearance of an internal essence of identity is the "performative

accomplishment" of disciplinary practices, which in turn limit the availability of

identities and "natural" states of being (Butler 1990: 179).

Two-Spirit identities are not recognized identities, but the "impossibility of an identity" among the ideal types of "Indian" endorsed by dominant society (Butler 1990: 30). Therefore, desiring the same sex, and having an alternate view of one's gender is a discontinuity and is unacceptable as a state of being in mainstream Indian social ideas (Butler 1990: 30). Therefore, Two-Spirit identity is not an intelligible identity to dominant Indian society because Two-Spirit sex, gender and desire does not fit into the acceptable performance of Indian identity. It is here, in part, where sex, gender and desire articulate with race, culture and socio-cultural history to become unnatural or less than ideal in dominant societies' perception of Two-Spirit identity.

According to Butler, the only way to expose the fabrication of the limits on identity is through "subversive acts" whereby individuals use the repetition of identity performance as a means to create variation on ideal types (1990, 1993). Therefore, being recognized as obtaining the "ideal type" of identity demands the repetition of signifying actions that are a "a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (Butler 1990: 178). Public and private repetition and reenactment of behaviors and attitudes is the mechanism by which the set of meanings are legitimized. Therefore, the potential for alteration of gender and other identities is in the "arbitrary relation" between repetitive acts and signs associated with the ideal. The failure to repeat an action sanctioned as ideal by dominant expectations through deforming or disjuncturing it, exposes the tenuous nature of identity, while at the same time challenging expectations on accepted cultural

behavior (1990: 180). The failure to repeat, and thus the challenge to dominant ideals, lies in altering the performance of dominant discourse.

The "impossibility" of a Two-Spirit identity within the dominant perceptions of the ideal discourse becomes a possibility through the "failure" (refusal) to repeat actions exactly as they are regulated by dominant society. Therefore, agency resides in the potential of variation on community expectations, e.g., a Two-Spirit man wearing turtle shells at a stomp dance.[11] Regulations "governing signification," while limiting, also "enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility." The restrictions of "being" a particular gender/identity produces a series of resistant acts, in the form of failures to meet dominant ideals, that are incoherent to the dominant social field. At the same time the failures challenge and potentially alter the restrictions that generated them. Restrictions on identities occur through a variety of symbolic means by which individuals are compelled to fulfill various identities. The "redeployment and reconfiguration" of identities is a complicated action whereby individuals not only alter identities but what sex, desire, race, gender and class mean in the dominant social field (Butler 1990: 185). What emerges is a subjectivity shaped by the multiplicity of signs and symbols encountered, internalized and resisted.

Foucault gives us a better idea of the ways in which individuals come to a state of domination or of "knowing themselves" through reflecting and adjusting attitudes based on the dominant ideas. However, Foucault does not provide a site of resistance from which a subject may know her/himself in a critical way. Through

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[11] Southeastern style, Creek and Cherokee, stomp dances are conducted according to strict "gender" roles where men lead the songs and woman "shake shells" tied to their calves.

Butler, we have seen the location for the possibility of resistance through subversive

acts; a site where subjects may be critically agentive. However, we have yet to ask

what is the *thing* that *incites* agency within the field of social relations? Why is the

incitement to alter accepted cultural practices productive? How does culturally

productive resistance alter dominant discourse?

Critical Self-Knowledge

To consider the questions raised above, we can turn to the work of Gramsci

The goal is to modify Gramsci's most valuable ideas - common sense, critical

understanding, and critical self-consciousness - from their class-determined analysis,

while giving the subject of Foucauldian and Butlerian approaches an accounted for

rather than hypothetical agency. Foucault tells us that individuals will come to know

who they are in relation to dominant ideologies supported by systems of domination

(1978, 1986, 1988, 1990). Butler shows us that the dominant ideologies Foucault

talks about rely on repetitive use within the social field. She further shows us that it

is within this repetition where the potential for resistance resides (1990, 1992).

Therefore, individuals come to "know themselves" through repeated comparisons

with the attributes reinforced by dominant ideology. Within these repeated

comparisons lies opportunities for variation on dominantly reinforced behaviors and

ideas. The question that goes unanswered in Foucault's examination of domination

and Butler's examination of agency is, from where do individuals obtain the *desire* to

reevaluate their position in the social structure, and take critical action accordingly?

Gramsci, as do Butler and Foucault, recognizes that domination is reliant on

ideological assumptions (1971). As we will see below, this similarity allows us to

observe how symbolic content is used in domination, but also how it is used to resist

in tangible ways. By adding Gramsci's ideas about resistance, we can then examine

how individuals are dominated by ideology, where openings for resistance occur, and

what leads to the critical redeployment of cultural ideas by subordinates.

Gramsci would call the signs and symbols used to regulate identity *common

sense*. Common sense is the uncritically accepted ideas and assumptions held by a

particular society. However, common sense is not something fixed or "immobile,"

rather, common sense is fluid and continuous in its absorption of ideas entering

"everyday life" (Gramsci 1971: 323-6). Critical action against common sense does

not transform common sense by brute force, but rather through the ongoing "war of

position" based in common sense. Gramsci states: "... it is not a question of

introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life,

but of renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity" (1971: 330-1).

Therefore the dominant discourse about the ideal or the "common sense" of ideal

Indianness is challenged by Two-Spirit people, not by inventing a new form of

Indianness, but rather by using existing signs from the social field in distinct and

novel ways as a critique of limitations on performance. A "critical understanding of

self" is instituted through the social struggle between "hegemonies"[12] in the form of

ideas/discourses that operate to structure the political, practical and theoretical aspects

of individual awareness. Critical understanding becomes a means to action, whereby

consciousness of belonging to an individual and collective "political consciousness"

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[12] Hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, is not only the control of the means of physical production as in Marx, but also the controlling of the means of symbolic production, which according to Gramsci is equally important in dominating the lower classes. The dominant class's control over the means of

or "hegemony" is realized in the practice and ideas associated with a particular social grouping (Gramsci 1971: 333 – 5).

Critical self-knowledge is the dialectical relationship between the construction of self-knowledge, as it is influenced by the dominant ideology, and the critical assessment of a dominant ideology's relation to oneself. Critical self-knowledge is the process by which individuals construct a self-knowledge not by mere reflection. but by a critical awareness of the ways dominant ideology positions them. Individuals construct a self-knowledge, not by mere reflexivity against dominant discourses or ideal types, but by and through a critical awareness of how they are positioned by regulations on identity. Resistance in the form of variation is then initiated by individual and collective critical awareness. Inevitably, cultural symbols are modified to this variation, e.g., a Two-Spirit straight dancer with a small rainbow pride flag on his dance stick at a powwow competition dance. In this action, counter ideology becomes a "material" influence in "... an intellectual unity and an ethic in conformity with a conception of reality that has gone beyond common sense and has become, if only within narrow limits, a critical conception" (Gramsci 1971: 333-4). Therefore, the action of incorporating subversive cultural symbols (gay pride symbols) into the symbolic representations of dominant ideal types (masculine and heterosexual Indian straight dancers) constitutes individual action in response to awareness of one's position in relation to the ideal.

Critical self-knowledge is in and of itself historically contingent, in that the "... unity of theory [ideas] and practice [action] is not just a matter of mechanical fact, but

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production is reproduced in the form of ideas. by its control over culture, religion. education, and language.

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a part of the historical process ..." (Gramsci 1971: 333). Therefore, the process of obtaining "critical self-consciousness" is one in which individual acts of accepting domination and resisting domination have within them the social historical content of a particular society. Social history informs the ways in which ideas and action are unified into the formation of Two-Spirit society and the available discourses for subversion Accordingly, it is not merely the present social atmosphere that shapes the construction of self-knowledge, but also the history of the restrictions on specific kinds of individual identities. Critical self-knowledge is then informed by historical understandings of not only a perceived atmosphere of acceptance but also the history of intolerance

Power and Difference

In this dissertation, I attempt to move beyond the approach of verifying the acceptance of gender and sexuality diversity among "other" cultures as a critique on Western modern conceptions of gender binaries. Instead I will focus on the ways in which subjects are objectified among the contemporary realities and influences of Western gender, sexuality and racial discourses. As Henrietta Moore points out: "We have to begin to recognize how persons are constituted in and through difference. Multiple forms of difference – race, class, gender, sexuality – intersect within individuals, and identity is therefore premised on difference" (1993: 204). In the same vein, the theoretical framework outlined above gives us the ability to have a broader examination of power and difference than previous works focusing solely on gender and sexuality issues. In that, we can examine not only how individuals are regulated and dominated by community expectations of what "real" Indians are, but

we can also recognize how individuals *come to* their subversion of dominant ideology

through a critical recognition of structural inequality (Gramsci 1971, Scott 1985,

1990). Foucault (1978) and Butler (1990) argue that no sex category exists prior to

being fashioned within the discourse that determines its attributes I would argue that

there is no identity that exists prior to being fashioned within dominant ideas on what

constitutes a legitimate expression of identity. Identity - sex, gender, racial, class –

emerges, then, as an effect of dominant ideology. Therefore, it is in, by, and through

dominant ideas that individuals come to "know themselves," as well as how they

come to the performative actions required to be Indian according to Native and non-

Indian society, e.g., an Indian male as phenotypically "traditional" looking, tribal

member, specific blood quantum, heterosexual and masculine.

Where is Indian Country?

Indian Country as a concept or a place can be traced to the 1840s when the

people of the North America saw the US as specifically a "white man's country" and

the natives saw the newly established Indian Territory as "red man's country" (Ronda

1999: 754). However, with the increased urbanization of the Indian population and

the US government's project of relocation and allotment in the first 60 years of the

20th century, Indian Country became less identified with Indian Territory or

reservation lands (Burt 1986, Jackson 1998, Lobo 1998). For much of the 20th

century Indian Country was the rural space occupied by allotment and reservation

Indian communities, often associated with poverty. However, within the last 50 years

Indian Country as a geographic and conceptual space has become associated with

urban communities as well as geographic areas that are seen as "home" on reservation

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and in rural communities (Lobo 1998: 96). However, the present situation of Native communities calls for recognition of Indian Country as a space, not specifically urban or rural, but a space of social and political interaction and identity formation. I use *Indian Country* to represent an urban- rural continuum and an inter-continental transnational space where Native peoples come to be present to one another. Spaces where Indian people come together in a socially interacting way become Indian Country despite geo-political location. Whether it is a gymnasium at a local high school, a lodge in someone's back yard, or a carload of people on a highway, that space becomes what Appadurai would call an "ethnoscape" and an "ideoscape" (1990: 7-11). Ethnoscapes and ideoscapes represent: "imagined worlds ... the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (Appadurai 1990: 7). The imagined worlds of the ethnoscape and ideoscape that is Indian Country are the landscapes formed by people who conduct their lives among the seemingly stable communities of identity. However, as such communities appear stable, disjunctures within them emphasize the deterritorialization of nationalist (tribal) identities where "heritage politics" often is perceived as uniformly constituted among and between individuals. It is in the space called Indian Country where group hegemony over difference is regulated as well as resisted (Appardurai 1990). Furthermore, Indian Country as an ethno-ideological space is a product of the disjuncture between what is seen as Indian society and that of white society, where sameness and difference are performed and reified in everyday activity.

Setting and Methods

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Growing up in central Oklahoma gave me an opportunity to interact in and around the Native community, while at the same time limiting the observations I may have made had I been dropped in the middle of an exotic field site. My continual awareness of and fluctuating participation in the Native community gave a strong footing in the etiquette required to work in Indian communities while generating a naiveté about the little-known aspects of Native society. Not until I began my studies in anthropology in college had I ever heard of gender diversity in Native America. Having begun a project with Native youth gang members, I became interested in the subgroups of Indian society and how they are accepted and alienated by both mainstream American and Indian society. Subgroups such as gang kids, AIM members and Two-Spirit peoples are not publicly recognized aspects of mainstream Native society, yet at the same time they have become topics of stern condemnation among certain communities.

In an effort to disguise the identities of participants in this study I employ the use of pseudonyms for individuals and the names of the cities where the two social groups were based. As we will see throughout this study, people expressed various levels of concern about "being found out" and prevented from participating in their communities. Some individuals so feared being associated with Two-Spirit society they would not allow me to record my conversations with them. Accordingly, some individuals are represented by two different names. Using pseudonyms for the two research cities is a further effort at disguising individual identities. On the whole, people from both groups requested that I use the names of the cities as well as their real names.

Setting

Gay and Lesbian Native Americans have formed social groupings all over North America as a way to reconcile the isolation they feel from being denied a comfortable position in mainstream Native society and tribal communities, as well as to deal with being Native and gay in American society. Most of the social groupings take the form of Two-Spirit societies,[13] which are often associated with metropolitan areas and medium-sized cities. Since Randy Burns began the San Francisco -based Gay American Indians, numerous similar groups have formed and continue to form, many of which are associated with and funded by HIV/AIDS prevention money. Major cities like Minneapolis, Washington, D.C., Seattle, and Phoenix have had semi-organized Two-Spirit societies for at least 10 years. With the internet and the increased attention to gay and lesbians of color, contact between societies is increasing. Most of the bigger societies have yearly retreats in their home state, where they invite Two-Spirit peoples from all over the US to come and participate in ceremony, drag shows, give-aways and to some extent "find a husband." Some of these retreats are solely for ceremonial purposes where sex and alcohol is strictly prohibited, while others serve as private pow-wows where individuals can feel safe about expressing their sexual orientation and gender identity. For the last 10 years there has been an International Two-Spirit gathering that alternates between Canada and the US on a yearly basis. As we will see in the following chapters, Two-Spirit societies function as a place where Gay and Lesbian Natives can participate in their culture with people who share similar values, and as a result practice their Native

identity. We will also see that Two-Spirit people deal with the same biases, problems and issues that plague the Native community in general.

The Two-Spirit society that I spent the most time with is in a Central Western US city I will call Eagleton. Eagleton has less than 350,000 people and is mostly made up of energy and technology industries. Eagleton has a large Native population consisting mainly of peoples from Southeastern and Plains tribes. The Two-Spirit Society of Eagleton originated about 10 years ago as an HIV/AIDS prevention group funded by the Indian Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control. The Eagleton Two-Spirits use the Indian clinic through which they receive their grants as a bi-monthly meeting place and the center for their activities. There are two Two-Spirit men who are on full time staff at the clinic for HIV counseling and testing and coordinate the Eagleton society as part of their job. The Eagleton society members are all over 25, with most being 40 or older. With the exception of a few individuals on permanent disability, all are employed in full time professional type jobs ranging from technology and advertising to secretarial. At the time of this study membership of the Eagleton group is exclusively male, however group members were discussing the importance of incorporating Two-Spirit women into group activities. The funding for group uses is exclusively for outreach to Native men who have sex with men, therefore a publicly recognized outreach to women is difficult. The Eagleton society has 13 core members, who regularly attend the bi-monthly meetings and outings, with a total of nearly 25 people who fluctuate in their participation.

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[13] I use the terms "Two-Spirit Society (ies)," for continuity sake, to refer to social groupings that may vary in their titles from group to group. Also, I will use the term "Two-Spirit Society" to refer to Native Gay and Lesbian Society much in the same way that some one would refer to Gay Society

The second group is in the Western part of the US in a city I will call Modelo. Modelo has roughly 500,000 people, which has a large Native population. Most of the members of the Modelo Two-Spirit society are from Western, High Plains and Puebloan tribes. The Modelo group is independent of any agency or clinic, although the leaders of their group get grants for HIV prevention to fund outings, sweats and retreats. The members of the Modelo group range in age from twenty-two to early fifties, and is an even mix of men and women. Since the Modelo group is larger, the occupational and economic aspects of the group are more varied than that of the Eagleton group, however most are working professionals, some with college degrees, and some are college students. The core Modelo group is made up of 25 people with a fluctuating membership exceeding 50 people, both men and women.

The Eagleton and Modelo groups are closely associated with one another and there is a certain amount of mobility between the two groups. A few key members of the Eagleton and Modelo groups are close friends and maintain weekly contact, which intensifies the relationship between the two groups. The most active of the Two-Spirit societies are generally those who sponsor retreats, stay in close contact with one another for support, advice and to keep up to date on HIV/AIDS issues. Modelo is approximately 10 hours by car from Eagleton, so participation in each others' events is relatively frequent. Members of the Modelo group will come to Eagleton for pow-wows, the annual pride picnic and special ceremonial events, and it is common for Eagleton members to visit Modelo. Members of both groups will meet at large national pow wows where they camp together, as well.

In the Field

My ethnographic methods are influenced and informed by symbolic

interactionist and semiotic approaches to social research. Therefore, my study relies

on human lived experience, observed and recollected, to support the argument for

filling the gap on contemporary Two-Spirit peoples. As we see with the work of

Morris Foster on the Comanche, human life is for the most part community life,

through which individuals obtain an intersubjective perspective/reality (1991)

Humans obtain meaning from the communities in which they locate and participate.

Also, communities are created and maintained through the social occurrence of

shared signs, both intersubjective and public. Accordingly, we can assume that

community life is not only intersubjective, but "multiperspectival, reflective, activity-

based, negotiable, relational, and processual" (Prus 1996: 10-16). The latter

characteristics of community life are based on intersubjective interpretation at the

intersection of race, sex, desire, class, gender and social position as they reside in the

act of signification. As James Boon points out: "Social meaning is significance

registered in both feeling and intellection that intensifies the differentiation of

populations into clans, classes, ... 'individuals' ... Social differentiation and

integration are heightened in the very processes by which humans symbolize

themselves and their contexts and motivate collective activities through time and

space" (1982: 122). By examining power and difference in discourse laden human

action, community interaction, and "disparate experiences," we can investigate the

reality of social life by which individuals create, maintain, and alter identity (Hymes

1996: 9).

In light of the above methodological perspectives, I collected data through observation, participant-observation, and interviews. All three of these methods overlapped in order to contextualize the situations and actions I was observing and the things that were being said by Two-Spirit peoples. The most intensive research period was over a year and a half. During the research period I attended the bi-monthly meetings of the Eagleton group, went to in-state and out of state pow-wows, ceremonial dances, ceremonial retreats, sweats, feeds, outings, bars and generally hung out with people from both groups. I attended retreats given by both the Eagleton and Modelo groups, as well as traveled to Modelo on numerous occasions with members of the Eagleton group. My participation in events was generally accepted, however my identity as straight created controversy at times over my participation in explicitly "Two-Spirit" ceremonies and activities. I conducted roughly 20 hours of multiple intensive tape recorded interviews with people who identify as Two-Spirit from both groups. I conducted additional non-recorded interviews with individuals as well as generated field notes from ad hoc conversations. It is the participation, observation and documentation of the life-worlds of Two-Spirit people, which leads to the explanations and conclusions presented here.

Two-Spirit women are explicitly absent from this study, despite there being a large number involved in Two-Spirit societies. Access to Two-Spirit women was a major problem in conducting this research. The funding for the Eagleton group was explicitly designated by the clinic and funding agencies for men who have sex with men (MSMs), therefore women were absent from meetings and most events.

Although the Modelo group had a significant number of women participants, some were upfront about their reluctance to speak with me because I am a male Furthermore, many of the women's activities did not welcome men. My research generated a small amount of data on Two-Spirit women, but not enough to accurately address issues specific to them as a group of individuals with particular points of view.

Ethnography and Identity

Just as the Two-Spirit people participating in this study are situated by race and sexuality, so to was the ethnographer. By virtue of being a male researching with mostly gay men, many people are baffled when they discover that a straight man is researching this topic. Because of the overwhelming number of gay and lesbian researchers studying gender and sexual identity, the assumption among academics I encounter at meetings, as well as Two-Spirit people that I meet, is that I am a gay man researching a personally important project based in the social politics of gay identity. When I began this research I was unaware of the role that my own sexual orientation would play in the project. One of the first times I visited a restaurant with the men from the Eagleton group my sexuality took center stage. Five of the "guys" and myself were all sitting in a large booth in a local diner that they frequented after weekly meetings. The waitress, who was around my age, knew the men I was with and began joking around with them. To my surprise, Alex pointed at me and stated loudly enough for surrounding booths to hear, "This is our straight friend, Brian." The look of surprise on my face caused Alex to reply, "Well she needed to know that you weren't a queen, just in case you were looking." This was the beginning of a

continuous interest on the part of the Two-Spirit men's groups with my sexuality. Other people thought that I was researching with Two-Spirit people as a way to discover something about my own sexuality. That is, by associating myself with gays and lesbians, I was going to discover that I was truly gay and that it was alright. One person went as far as telling me about a study where a psychologist describes the coming out stage according to levels. One of the earliest phases of coming out was hanging out with both gay and straight people, as a way to get comfortable with your own identity. Obviously he saw my participation in the group as a reflection of a stage of the coming out process. Due to the public advocacy nature of certain members of both groups, as well as openly gay social attitudes, people outside of the Two-Spirit community positioned me as gay when I was with Two-Spirit people. On a few occasions I became subject to the homophobic attitudes of the Native community as well as society in general. As much as this enraged me, I was often reminded by Two-Spirit people that "this was not my life" and when I left them, I was "just another straight guy." In many ways they were correct and justified in their assessment. I escape not only the stigma of being gay, but also the anxiety accompanying concerns about "being found out" and the potential social consequences.

Many times I am asked, if I am not gay then why am I interested in gay issues? On several occasions I have been put on the spot in individual and group discussions as to "why are you doing this?" My stock response is to create an awareness of the diversity in Native society, to show how Two-Spirit people have maintained their Native identity despite being alienated, and to promote

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understanding. For some people this does not justify my interest. At times I am readily positioned by gays, Two-Spirit and non, as a representative of the dominant "straight" society, and yet other times they "forget that I'm straight."

Another question I am asked by both Two-Spirit and non-Two-Spirit people is if I am Indian. That is a difficult question for mixed heritage individuals to answer. Most people who's families have been in Indian Country for two or more generations can identify in some way with being Indian. Having grown up with the notion that I was Cherokee on my father's side played a major role in my identity as a child and adolescent. After I started middle school I was discouraged to assert any identity as Native due to stigmatization by teachers and students. During my time as an anthropology graduate student I never mentioned the fact that I might have Native ancestry for the same reasons that Indian identity is contested in Indian and American society: "looking Indian" and participating in an Indian community. It was not until Ben prodded me to look up family names on the government rolls that I discovered my paternal grandfather's grandfather on the Cherokee Rolls, as well as another relative from my paternal grandmother's side on the Chickasaw rolls. Discovering documentation of Indian ancestry and the assertion of that fact within Indian contexts provided me access to particular events and ceremonies that other researchers probably would not have had. While at the same time, I became subject to the same ridicule and suspicion as certain group members over issues of blood quantum, nationalism and phenotype.

Chapter Sketches

In the following chapters I will show that Native community expectations of men, as they articulate with the expectations and biases of the larger socio-politico-economic landscape, are generating counter-hegemonic attempts at identity formation among Native American gay and Two-Spirit men. It is at the articulation of Western discourse on "homosexuality" and Native discourse construction where Two-Spirit identity is formed. Furthermore, the relationship between race, gender, desire and sexuality produces a critical self-knowledge at the intersection of culture and group interests. Two-Spirit identity becomes a site of resistance to masculinised and heterosexist larger community ideas, while it is at the same time internally contested in the Two-Spirit community. As Two-Spirit individuals are practicing variation on American Indian identity, they are mobilizing racial, sexual and gender identities within the Native American, Two-Spirit, and "white" gay communities. By situating the examination of the Eagleton and Modelo Two-Spirit men's groups in terms of racial, gender, class and political markers it becomes obvious that identifying oneself as Two-Spirit is engaged in a wider set of power relations that incorporate Western discourse on sexuality and Native identity.

Most of what we know about contemporary Two-Spirit people is limited to short sketches in ethnohistorical studies of the "berdache tradition." Information on political organizations such as Gay American Indians of San Francisco and personal narratives from Two-Spirit people overshadow an examination of lived experience. In Chapter Two, "Two-Spirit," I focus on the development of Two-Spirit as an identity and a social group. Chapter Two illustrates the ways in which Two-Spirit

people create a set of social relations that distinguish themselves from the larger gay community, and focus on the Indigenous aspects of their identity. In order to situate my portrait of the lives of Two-Spirit people, specifically men, Chapter Two, gives us a historical background of the development of Two-Spirit societies in general as well as a focus on the Modelo and Eagleton groups.

In an effort to separate themselves from the larger gay community Two-Spirit people have created an identity that relies heavily on Indian community ideology. An integral part of becoming Two-Spirit is the perfection of one's Indian identity, as well as the realization of Two-Spiritness. Here I argue perfecting Indianness is at once a form of agency, while it is an attempt to reconcile oneself with ideal types embodied in dominant representations of Indian identity. Chapter Three, "Gays and Indians," examines the ways in which Two-Spirit people attempt to construct their identity according to dominant ideals in an effort to make their identity intelligible to Indian communities.

Furthermore, I argue that it is by and through dominant ideas about sexuality and gender roles where Two-Spirit *desires* encounter structural inequities in access to particular symbols and rewards of prestige among the Indian community. Chapter Four, "Two-Spirit and Indian Community Relations," examines the problem of perceived and rendered hostility toward Two-Spirit attempts at community recognition. Two-Spirit needs of reincorporation into public roles in Native communities are complicated by community perceptions of their sexual orientation and gender identity. As a result, Two-Spirit desires for community participation and

recognition collide with dominant perceptions of their sexual desire to frustrate the intelligibility of a Two-Spirit identity in public Indian space.

Part of the realization of Two-Spirit identity resides in the notion of "mending of the hoop."[14] Two-Spirit people see the problems in Native society as a disjuncture or missing piece in the medicine wheel. Chapter Five, "Completing the Hoop" examines of Two-Spirit people's efforts at resignifying dominant Indian ideology as a means of gaining acceptance. In seeking acceptance, Two-Spirit people critically engage dominant representations of Indian identity and available social roles. They also attempt to gain acceptance of their identity by "making themselves useful" to communities through the work of HIV/AIDS awareness and a caring for children. I argue that the challenges to dominant ideology have the potential to alter community ideals about what qualifies as an Indian identity as well as instituting new social roles for Two-Spirit people.

In Chapter Six, I provide some concluding remarks and focus on the ways my examinations of power and difference can be expanded to include other ways Two-Spirit and Indian people experience structural inequality.

Chapter Two

Two-Spirit: From Gay to Indian

There are several gaps in the academic literature concerning the lived experience of contemporary Two-Spirit people. The academic literature has generalized the term and concept Two-Spirit without addressing its potential as a set of subjective experiences -not gay, not Indian, but specifically Two-Spirit. As Weston asks, "At what point does "berdache" stop being an instance of gendered ambiguity, or a variant of masculinity or femininity, and start becoming a gender in its own right?" (1993: 354). I would echo Weston with a second, more updated question, "At what point does Two-Spirit stop being another way of saying gay Indian, and become recognized as an identity in its own right?"

In this chapter, I detail the development of Two-Spirit society/societies as it transitioned from a subgroup and gay-associated identity to one that specifically emphasizes a connection with Indian identity. We will see throughout this study that Two-Spirit is not solely an adaptation to the homophobia in non-Native and Native society, but an active and on-going building of community and identity. In this chapter I will set the stage to help answer this question: as much as Two-Spirit identity is the merging of two distinct cultural influences, gay and Indian, how does it also represents a unique reordering of discourses on history, desire, race, gender, and sexuality?

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[14] Paula Gunn Allen (1981) uses the phrase "mending the hoop" to critique the treatment of women in contemporary Native American society. Two-Spirit people used phrases such as "mending the hoop", "completing the circle," and "repairing the medecine wheel" in similar ways.

Two-Spirits Rising

In discussing Two-Spirit people we must recognize that identifying oneself as part of an indigenous community and as gender/sex different is not something wholly new. Rather the incorporation of individuals who desire the same sex into public social roles is a quality that originated in Native societies who approached difference in a specific way. Eventually gender/sex difference became something condemned in Indian communities, not spoken of and forced underground as a result of colonialism and modernity. Modern Indians who manifested sexuality and gender difference found partial acceptance in mostly urban gay communities and social movements, but are now seeking (re)incorporation into Indian society through the emphasis of Native community identities. Two-Spirit identity is the result of an emphasis on Indianness and for many people is becoming a social and cultural identifier equivalent to that of Indian or Native American.

Scholars are generally reluctant to put the identifier "Two-Spirit" on equal footing with specific historic and "traditional" tribal social designations for gender diversity. That is, many scholars only recognize Two-Spirit as a contemporary generic term for "gay" and "Indian." They do not consider the possibility that Two-Spirit has become an identifier with similar feelings and allegiances as one might have toward their tribal identities or a generic Native identity. Accordingly, they dissolve Two-Spirit subjective experience into a specifically "gay" experience, which is exactly the way most Two-Spirit people do not see themselves (Epple 1998, Goulet 1996, Thomas and Jacobs 1999). As a result, scholars do not recognize the ways in

which Two-Spirit is a crucial aspect of the ways in which individuals perceive their Native identity.

Despite their unwavering support for the term Two-Spirit as a self-description for gay and lesbian Indians, Thomas and Jacobs state:

> The word Two-Spirit will not work in all areas. It is suited more to Natives who live in large multiethnic urban environments; those who live in rural or reservation areas have their own terms to identify non-heterosexual people in their communities. *Two-Spirit is a cultural and social Native term, not a religious one.*" (1999: 92) [Emphasis mine]

Thomas and Jacobs assume that the only individuals who would identify as Two-Spirit would be those individuals geographically separated in urban areas from their "traditional communities." They further unrealistically rely on the idea that gay and lesbian Natives on reservations and in rural areas would participate in communities that maintain intact alternative gender roles. Scholars do not consider that the majority of reservation and rural communities no longer maintain public roles for alternate genders/sexualities and are on the hole relatively homophobic. As a result, they do not consider that identifying as Two-Spirit is an attempt to connect with a historical gender diversity no longer present in the majority of Native communities across North America. Accordingly, they create a hierarchy that places Two-Spirit at the bottom with intact community recognized gender diversity at the top.

Other scholars attempt to dismiss any multi-tribal identity for gay and lesbian Indians who have access to "traditional" gender roles. Goulet attempts to discredit the conception of Two-Spirit as it may be applied to Northern Athapaskans (1996). In using Two-Spirit, "... they [anthropologists] fail to consider indigenous constructions of personhood and gender" (Goulet 1996: 683). In response I would

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ask the question, "If Two-Spirit people are not indigenous, then what are they?"

Carolyn Epple resounds Goulet's position to say: "... the term Two-Spirit is not

applicable to many nadleehi and, I suggest, lacks significance for other native

peoples; its usefulness as a generic term may be limited" (1998: 275). Although I

agree that imposing the conception of Two-Spirit on all forms of contemporary

gender diversity in Native America could misrepresent specific contemporary roles in

tribal traditions, I find the reluctance on the part of scholars to acknowledge Two-

Spirit people equally as legitimate as tribally specific terms limiting in its application.

Inevitably, individuals who have not grown up in intact gender diverse traditions are

portrayed by scholars as less religiously and socially important (consequently "less

Indian"), thereby running counter to how most Two-Spirit people see themselves.

Anthropology has yet to consider through significant analysis the ways in

which, and why, Two-Spirit is coming to be a social, racial and cultural identity

equally as important to individuals as their tribal cultural traditions in terms of

influence and social participation. Furthermore, scholars have yet to examine the

cultural space that Two-Spirit people are creating for themselves whereby they shape

and practice traditional Indian ways: the religion, crafts, powwow and social

arrangements. Therefore, by presenting Two-Spirit as merely a moniker, scholars

have yet to consider the ways in which the term Two-Spirit has come to embody an

identity with its own set of regulations, requirements and expectations.

In the sections below, I will present the history of Two-Spirit society and

identity as it was inspired among early gay liberation movements and developed into

a social identity. Also, I will discuss the ways in which Two-Spirit has come to be an

identity with its own set of ideas and social relations independent, yet intersecting gay and Native society.

Indians and the Early Gay Movement

Original organizations established around the identities gay and Native were largely in reaction to what Epstein describes as an "ethnic self-characterization" appeal by the largely white gay community to civil rights status beginning in the 1970s (1987: 20). As many gay and lesbian Natives had moved to major cities seeking more tolerance than they experienced on reservations, and with the fever pitch of the post-Stonewall gay movement[15], the social atmosphere of the 70s was prime for the development of publicly active gay and lesbian organizations. Among the goals of gay activism is what Altman points out as gay and lesbian attempts obtaining civil rights as a minority (1979). At the heart of liberationist claims, gay activists were pushing the notion of sexual orientation, characterized as a "fixed condition" at birth, which inevitably would bolster civil rights claims (d'Emilio 1992: 3). While gay activists were seeking rights based on minority status, the gay civil rights movement was ignoring issues of concern for community members of color.

Despite the claim of "diversity" American Indians, and other minorities saw themselves as explicitly left out of the move toward gay rights, creating a perceptible difference between gay and lesbians of color and the larger gay community. Kath Weston points out:

> [An] approach to resolving dilemmas of identity and representation involved organizing to carve out a niche 'within' gay community ... Groups for gay Asians, working-class lesbians, or gay men over 40 attempted to meld sexuality with aspects of gender, race, age and class

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[15] The riot at the Stonewall Inn, a gay social club in New York City, in *** is considered the event that began the modern gay liberation movement.

that were missing from the generic gay subject ... Based upon their participation in the sexual imaginary, they rejected the tacit equation of gays with all that is wealthy, white, male, masculine or even exclusively homosexual in choice of partners. But the very movement to relocate these 'others' inside the imagined community broke apart the unitary gay subject and with it the spatial metaphor of a community capable of inclusion or exclusion (1998: 54-5).

It is in reaction to the racism of the "white gay movement" where early gay and lesbian Native organizations represented a specific form of "identity deployment" as a calculated political and social action (Bernstein 1997). Identity deployment relied on the shared Indian symbols and basic Indian community values as a public statement about not only being gay, but also being Indian. By emphasizing the differences between themselves and the gay community, gay and lesbian Native organizations drew attention to their specific needs. Gay and lesbian Indians recognized themselves as a double minority and saw their political activism as a way to become recognized in the gay community, as well as fighting the homophobia they experienced at Indian service organizations and communities (Roscoe 1998, Williams 1987).

As a result, in 1975 Gay American Indians, often recognized as the "first gay Indian organization" in the US, was established in San Francisco as an answer to the lack of support for people of color in the gay and lesbian liberation struggle. Randy Burns, a Pauite, and Barbara Cameron, a Lakota, formed the organization through grassroots efforts by bringing together gay and lesbian Natives in the Bay Area to share a unified identity as gay and indigenous. Randy Burns talks about the beginning of GAI:

At the same time, we face oppression as gay people, too, sometimes within our own Indian communities. In 1975 when we were

organizing GAI, the local American Indian center refused to post our flyers because they might "offend" people. When we participated in an American Indian Day held at a local university, we were told to take down our booth: "We don't want any trouble," they said. Back then, we expected to receive negative remarks, from not only the non-Indian community but from our Indian counterparts, as well (1988: 3).

Burns' efforts at organizing young gay and lesbian Natives represents the foundation of contemporary Two-Spirit society. More importantly the hostility Burns encountered both among Indians and non-Indians led to the pattern of creating gay and lesbian Native organizations independent of the generic Native and gay communities. As we will see, this isolation is something that the individuals in this study attempted to overcome.[16]

With the influx of more young gay Indians into San Francisco's highly visible gay community, activity among GAI grew and by 1980 had 150 members and by 1988 had 1000 members (Roscoe 1998: 98, Burns 1988: 4). Early on GAI attempted to fulfill the role of existing Bay Area Indian social and service networks from which gay and lesbian Natives had previously been alienated. As Walter Williams states: "GAI members helped them get referrals for housing and jobs or student loans, and provided social opportunities in a mutual support group" (1986: 211). In 1984 GAI formed the Gay American Indian Project to collect the life histories and experiences of gay and lesbian Indians and published a book, *Living the Spirit*, with Will Roscoe in 1988. *Living the Spirit* represented the first publication written for and by the gay and lesbian Indian community.

With the emphasis on AIDS prevention in the late 1980s and early 1990s, GAI began to focus its efforts on the "double oppression" experienced by gay and lesbian

Indians. Burns states: "As gay people, our health needs are not taken seriously by the government. As Indians, we often find that AIDS programs overlook important cultural differences and fail to reach many Indian people" (1988: 4). With the establishment of the Indian AIDS Project and the American Indian AIDS Institute in the late 1980s and early 1990s, GAI was responsible for beginning the first education and training in HIV/AIDS prevention in the Bay Area indigenous community The institutionalized homophobia and limited resources within the Indian Health Service led to many Native gays not receiving the treatments they needed to manage their HIV/AIDS or other ailments. With GAI's efforts, the Indian Center of All Nations (ICAN) was established in 1992 with the goal of providing services once denied to openly gay and lesbian Native Americans. The goal of ICAN was to provide medical and social services to people of all nations, and as spelled out in its bi-laws, "all genders – that of "Two-Spirits' as well as women and men" (Roscoe 1998: 99-101).

With similar goals, American Indian Gays and Lesbians (AIGL) of Minneapolis was established in 1987 as a social group to connect local gay Natives with traditional values. AIGL also answered the call of the AIDS crisis by helping to establish the Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force and the National Indian AIDS Media Consortium. Other groups organized in major cities across North America: Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations in Toronto, We'wha and BarCheeAmpe in New York City, Nichiwakan in Winnepeg, Tahoma Two-Spirits of Seattle, Vancouver Two-Spirits, Nations of the Four Directions in San Diego (Roscoe 1998: 103-4). All of these organizations had as their focus the social and personal

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[16] The ways Two-Spirit people attempt to reconcile themselves in both Native and gay communities is addressed in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

connection of gay and lesbian Natives with traditional ways as well as the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection among American Indians. It is from these early organizations' efforts and inspiration that the national network of Two-Spirit societies was eventually founded.

Social Movement to Social Group

As the 1990s approached, the swell of activism that prompted more awareness and funding for HIV/AIDS was redirecting itself by a combination of burnout and the provision of services and prevention. Emerging in the Native gay and lesbian community was a greater emphasis on the indigenous gay experience versus that of popular gay society. Undeniably, the indigenous gay experience was one that intersected with racial politics in America, and that inevitably dealt with issues of individual racial identity. Armed with the knowledge that historically gay and lesbian Indians were respected in their communities, indigenous gays began to emphasize their cultural heritage through the establishment of Two-Spirit as a named personhood and as a socially observable fact. Although early gay and lesbian Native organizations such as GAI were providing some of the same support group services as Two-Spirit societies, Two-Spirit became a social identity with which large numbers of individuals across North America could identify. As a result of the movement away from specifically gay community-oriented and large-scale organizations, Two-Spirit societies began to emerge in the early 1990s. The move toward Two-Spirit societies and the use of the term Two-Spirit instead of the now gay community-appropriated "berdache," signaled a transformation in the ways in which Native gays and lesbians saw themselves (Roscoe 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999).

This transition also began a separation from the gay community that many Two-Spirit

persons saw as necessary for the political and social maturity of indigenous gay

communities.

By the early 1990s the street activism of the gay community inspired by the

AIDS epidemic fizzled out and militant gay awareness organizations such as ACT UP

imploded. As Jeffrey Edwards points out, the mass political action of the gay

community of the late 1980s was eventually overwhelmed by "racial reactions"

(2000: 487). It is no coincidence that the beginning of the 1990s saw a surge in

isolationist interest groups of gay women and men of color who saw themselves as

underrepresented in gay activist goals. Edwards further states: "Others, including

most women and people of color, argued that treatment activism included challenging

the racism and sexism of the medical research establishment ... To them 'fighting

AIDS' also meant securing access to basic health care, treatment for drug addiction ...

[as well as] culturally specific AIDS education, and the condoms and clean needles

required to reduce the risks of HIV transmission" (2000: 495). The emphasis of

support groups built around Two-Spiritness is in part the Indian answer for providing

culturally specific service and culturally specific experiences of gayness. As Albert

McLeod assessed in his report from the 11th Annual International Two-Spirit

Gathering:

> The presences of a broader indigenous gay and lesbian community and
> network seems to correlate with the growing AIDS epidemic in the
> United States and Canada. While AIDS was devastating the gay
> community, HIV prevention campaigns began to create more
> awareness and discussion of sexuality, orientation and diversity. This
> openness may have been one of the influences that galvanized urban
> indigenous gays and lesbians to begin to identify and address issues

that affected them like racism, substance abuse, homophobia, spirituality, and identity (1998: 1),.

The transition from being a gay Indian to Two-Spirit and the establishment of Two-Spirit societies created an alternative identity for many of the largely urban oriented indigenous gay and lesbian people. As Lang points out: "In urban Native American gay and lesbian communities, it [Two-Spirit] has led to the development, and strengthening, of specifically Native American lesbian and gay identities and roles" (1998: xv). The increasing popularity of the term Two-Spirit as a way to describe the unique position of gay and lesbian Indians resulted in the establishment of more and more "Two-Spirit" communities. Given the flexibility of the concept of Two-Spirit, more people felt a greater connection to their Indian identity previously unavailable to them because of issues of blood quantum, tribal enrollment and physical appearance. Two-Spirit had the unique ability to be "deployed as a panhistorical as well as a pantribal term" and concept (Roscoe 1998: 111). As a result, many organizations began changing their names-removing the terms Gay and Indian and included the term Two-Spirit-as a way to promote inclusivity. Urban gay Indians began to experience not only an alternative social realm to the gay white community, and were also able to identify themselves and socialize in ways not previously recognized as possible.

Two-Spirit society, not only as it was represented by political/social organizations but also by a set of social relations, emerged as an alternative to the bar-based gay culture, and became a space where individuals could not only feel comfortable with being gay, but also re-associate themselves with their Indian

identity. Many of the people I interviewed expressed dismay at the predicament of being Indian and participating in a popular gay culture associated with alcohol abuse and racism. It is no secret that popular gay culture is based in a bar social scene markedly separated from non-gay social spheres. Usually when going to a new city or region the first place gay people go to "find others like them" is the local gay bar or dance club. Gay bar culture, combined with the negative impact of alcohol on the Native population creates a difficult position for gay and lesbian Natives As Phillip told me, "If you want to find sex, meet other gay people, and feel free to behave how you want, there is no other place for people to go except gay bars." He went on to talk about the problem of being Indian in this atmosphere: "Whatever gay is, it isn't Indian and everything gay is new, young, thin, white, wasted and sexy. When I go to these places I feel conspicuous because I am obviously Indian. I don't get as many negative responses since people know me from drag, but other people I know really would rather not be Indian and just gay so they can have fun." He went on to say that the connections that have been established between Two-Spirit people as a result of the creation of a specifically Two-Spirit space provided him with an escape from this atmosphere and opportunity for friendships and relationships with people who shared his same values and heritage. However, he also felt that because so many Indians would not participate in Two-Spirit society, it could be more limiting in options for friends and partners than the popular gay scene. Important about Phillip's and others feelings is the recognition of the alternative that Two-Spirit society offers individuals to be social, find partners and friends, and most importantly to many, be Indian.[17]

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[17] For more discussion of Two-Spirit people and their experiences as gay and Indian, see Chapter 3, "Gays and Indians."

At the same time that the gay community is perceived as having overwhelming negative aspects, Two-Spirit societies are not completely disassociated with the gay community, as they participate in Gay Pride parades, marches, and the bar scene. As we will see in Chapter 3, many Two-Spirit people, including the Modelo and Eagleton groups as a whole, used gay community events and gathering places as avenues to create awareness and to recruit new members. Furthermore, as the number of gay and lesbian American Indians participating in Two-Spirit social groups is limited, many people participated in the dating and social activities of the larger gay community and bar scene to expand their choices in sexual partners and friendships. Again as we will see in Chapter 3, participation in the gay and lesbian community was a point of contention for many Two-Spirit people and a source of ongoing conflict in allegiances.

Two-Spirit Identity: Creating a Space for Difference

Two-Spirit society is as much about being a particular kind of person as it is about having organizations, political action, and government funding. Many Two-Spirit people saw gay and lesbian organizations such as GAI operating as bureaucracies or based in agencies that serve a valuable purpose, but mimicking non-Indian ways of conducting themselves. Therefore, the transition from gay and lesbian native organizations to the notion of Two-Spirit allows for social and political activities to be considered as something other than just an aspect of gay and lesbian society and political action. As Sheila pointed out· "Two-Spirit is not some sort of fetish club like leather, Levi, or drag queens," and as many would add has the distinct position of being about religion, culture, and sexuality. Accordingly, we must draw a

clear distinction between what is considered Two-Spirit society, the organizations in which Two-Spirit people participate and the larger generic identity "gay." Two-Spirit identity, according to the people, is not drawn solely from membership in a Two-Spirit organization, but rather is drawn from the ways in which people conduct themselves on a daily basis and the ways their conduct is viewed by others and their relations. It is in and through social interaction with tribal, spiritual and social Indian communities where Two-Spirit identity represents a continuity in the diversity of traditions in Native America. Lang emphasizes: "On a political level, within the context of the interaction of these communities [Two-Spirit communities] with the Indian communities at large, the interpretation of contemporary gays and lesbians as continuing the once culturally accepted traditions of gender variance will hopefully lead to greater acceptance" (1998: xv).

As we will see in subsequent chapters, Two-Spirit identity is explicitly linked to the continuity between contemporary religious and social practices and the role that Two-Spirit people played in the past. As Roscoe points out: "With the use of 'two-spirit' contemporary natives align themselves with traditional culture and can make a claim for acceptance that no other gay minority group in the United States can ... they are representatives of original tribal cultures ... Such a discursive move, while anachronistic, gains two-spirit natives access to a rich heritage of images, practices and role models" (1998: 111). Many Two-Spirit people would take issue with Roscoe's characterization of their connection with the past as outdated, however he directs us to an important detail, which is the importance of the connection between

contemporary Two-Spirit people and a historic role that emphasized difference as a revered quality imbued with a special place in Native social arrangements.

Many academics present Two-Spirit as a "pan-Indian" social movement (Epple 1998, Goulet 1996, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1993, 1998). However, the Two-Spirit people represented in this study repeatedly saw themselves as distinct products of particular tribal traditions and using Two-Spirit as an identity through which to work for their acceptance within tribal communities. Pan-Indianism implies that the individuals identifying as Two-Spirit have lost their cultural distinctiveness through the invention of a multitribal identity. Let us consider a point made by Jackson: "As a theory especially interested in forms of cultural performance such as dance and ritual, Pan-Indianism assumes that individuals or groups engaging in social gatherings across tribal or national boundaries will increasingly lose their cultural distinctiveness, ... but it also ignores the capacity of communities to consciously maintain distinctive local practices in interactionally complex settings" (2000: 45). Accordingly, scholars of North American gender diversity would have us believe that Two-Spirit is only suited for individuals who have no connection with their tribal identities through personal relationships or geography (Epple 1998, Goulet 1996, Lang 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1997). Two-Spirit is intended to be a multi-tribal identity, however it is also used to reference a tradition that is no longer publicly acknowledged in Indian communities. We must keep in mind that most Indian communities in North America no longer have social roles for multiple genders. Also, I was often reminded that the decline public roles paralleled the decline in Native language use, and as a result the words for multiple genders are no longer part

of the public discourse. Often people would refer to themselves and others as a Two-Spirit person affiliated with a particular tribal tradition, such as a "Seminole Two-Spirit." By combining Two-Spirit with their tribal identity they are accessing what Jackson refers to "local practices in interactionally complex settings" within tribal traditions as well as a contemporary conception of their specific role in those settings (2000).

Instead of conceptualizing Two-Spirit identity and organizations as a pan-Indian phenomenon, Two-Spirit people see their identity as continuations and extensions of social roles and identities within Native communities. Paul Gilroy's sees such continuations through the notion of the "changing same," which addresses the "reproduction of cultural traditions" without examining the "transmission of a fixed essence" temporally and historically. Modifications in tradition occur through "the breaks and interruptions that suggest that the invocation of tradition may itself be a distinct, though covert, response to the destabilizing flux of the postcontemproary world" (1991: 126). Within the 'postcontemporary world,' Two-Spirit identity, culture and society are traditions conceived of within "the jaws of modern experience and new conception of modernity [that] are produced in the long shadow of enduring traditions" (Gilroy 1991: 126). Two-Spirit subjective experience/knowledge occurs through the convexities of modern Indian and gay knowledge, while being acutely aware of historically rigid discourses within tribal and generic Indian communities. In this sense, Two-Spirit creative aesthetics and practice do the work of identity as self-knowledge through the destabilization of contemporary Indian discourse and the (re)discovery of tradition, tribal or otherwise. That is, the performance of things

Two-Spirit - holding ceremonies, mastering crafts, dancing, structuring social relations- are proffering authentic proof of a trans-temporal and trans-spatial relationship with Two-Spirit social function and responsibility.

As we will see, it is in the context of learning the traditional ways of specific Indian communities and the ceremonial and cultural preservation aspects of Two-Spirit where identity is formed and modified as a specific representation of Indian. Such practices as learning to lead sweat lodges, beading and regalia making, healing ceremonies, and blessing newlyweds, represent just a few ways I observed in which Two-Spirit people are re/connecting with their historic role and individual identity. Two-Spirit society as social relations and organizations provide access to the discursive and behavioral attributes for the development of one's identity as Two-Spirit. In this way, Two-Spirit identity and cultural practice becomes one aspect of the fluidity of individual identity, where people emphasize their connectedness with generic identities such as Indian or Two-Spirit as well as highly specific identities associated with tribe or ceremonial communities.

Urban/Rural continuum and cyberspace

As a result of the urban focus of early organizations, the effects of their activism and services at that specific time did little to directly help individuals who were living on reservations, in rural non-reservation communities and smaller cities. Weston points out: "The gay imaginary is not just a dream of freedom to 'be gay' that requires an urban location, but a symbolic space that configures gayness itself by elaborating an opposition between rural and urban life" (1998: 55). For many the urban gay space is one of unordinary tolerance and acceptance which has precipitated

a focus on the "urban foundations" of Two-Spirit society and identity. Medicine credits the urban environment as not necessarily precipitating the seeking of alternative gender roles, but rather offering "greater avenues of accessibility" not available in reservation communities (1997: 153). However, most scholars qualify their discussion of Two-Spirit as a specifically urban identity under the assumption that individuals who live in rural or reservation areas are integrated into their tribal communities (Epple 1998, Goulet 1996, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1993, 1998). Very few of the people represented in this study have a solely an urban orientation with their ideas and experiences as Indian and gay. Although a few people lived briefly in major cities, most had not, and still maintained close contact with family and friends in outlying rural areas and ceremonial grounds. While many people are in fact integrated into rural communities and ceremonial grounds, they are not integrated as gay or Two-Spirit.

Undeniably, the expansion and community maintenance of Two-Spirit society owes a great deal to the internet. Many individuals who have come to participate in Two-Spirit gatherings and societies have learned about those opportunities through chat rooms and websites. There are numerous stories about the connections made between Two-Spirit people and organizations through the use of email, web rings and web sites; bringing together people who were otherwise separated by geography. Notifications of ceremonial events, deaths in the community, gatherings, meetings at powwows and prevention issues are often exchanged via list serves and websites. The result of these electronic efforts is an expansion of Two-Spirit social relations that would otherwise not be possible. As many people have pointed out, contact

between individuals living in remote areas or on reservations and other Two-Spirits is frequently only through the internet.

Eagleton and Modelo Two-Spirit Societies

By the mid-1990s, the term Two-Spirit was widely used by Native gay and lesbians to encompass not only their contemporary social identity, but as a connection to the social history of their importance in Indian society. During the course of this study I observed the Two-Spirit society emerging as the quintessential social unit for many indigenous gays. There are numerous Two-Spirit organizations across America and Canada, with many of them, such as the San Francisco, Minneapolis and Manitoba groups, exceeding ten years since their beginning. However, what has emerged more recently are organizations in smaller cities and reservation areas that take their inspiration from founding organizations and tailor their activities to the specific needs of group members while emphasizing a spiritual and cultural connection to their Native identity. The Eagleton and Modelo groups each developed in different ways and are maintained by different kinds of social relations, but the experiences of both groups' members are similar, and at times converge with one another to access the amalgam recognized as Two-Spirit people.

In the mid-1990s, as the term and idea of Two-Spirit was spreading throughout the US and Canada, the Indian clinic in Eagleton was working on establishing an HIV/AIDS outreach program designed to help individuals infected with the disease and their partners obtain social services, counseling and medical treatment. Despite the relatively small size of Eagleton there is a considerable indigenous gay male population when adjacent suburban and rural areas are taken

into account. Because the IHS clinic was some distance from the urban center and a significant portion of the Indian population in the area had moved into the urban and suburban area of Eagleton, the Indian Clinic was established as a non-government, non-profit clinic for the delivery of basic health services, such as general medicine, counseling, dental and optical. With the increase of HIV/AIDS infection among Indian people, the clinic began to apply for funding to support a department solely devoted to HIV/AIDS education, testing, counseling and intervention. The gay men's group named Eagleton AIDS Prevention emerged in the beginning as a support group for people who were infected and their partners. As understanding increased about the behavioral issues involved in the infection of HIV/AIDS, the clinic sought to transition the emphasis of the group to one of wellness versus that of an AIDS support group. "Two-Spirit society owes a lot to increased HIV funding and programs," said Mick. He went on to illustrate an often recognized fact, that the political struggles of early AIDS activism, particularly among communities of color, precipitated not only the funding that Two-Spirit groups are using to operate, but also the conception that a strong personal acceptance and community help prevent behavior leading to the acquiring of HIV/AIDS. With these ideas Mick and Ben have been able to receive funding and move the group toward one with a general wellness focus for Two-Spirit people.

Using the clinic group as a foundation on which to receive money for food, travel, and gatherings, the Eagleton group has developed over the years its own set of social relations outside of the clinic-based group. While, many people involved in the Eagleton group only participate in the bi-monthly meetings or clinic sponsored

"outings," others are extensively involved in the larger Indian community of the area and maintain social relationships with group members on a close friendship basis. Therefore, social relations of Eagleton members crosscut and overlap in various ways with an institutional realm and the more socially Indian realm.

While the Eagleton group is based both in the Indian bureaucracy and the Indian community, the Modelo group is solely self-sustaining with prevention grants and personal funds sponsoring much of their travel, food and gathering needs. Many people have made it a point to recognize the Modelo group as something different than the bureaucracy-based groups in its inception and practice. Inevitably the Modelo group is often compared with other groups as a "more traditional" Two-Spirit society, but also has been criticized for "mismanagement" of funds. It is in the differences between these two groups that we see some of the same issues of money, participation and government regulation that have plagued Native self-determination efforts for the last 100 years.

Modelo's group was organized following a vision that Andy had after attending an International Gathering in the late 1990s. Having experienced the positive atmosphere of the gathering, Andy was called to organize a Two-Spirit society that not only involved the social aspects but emphasized the religious aspect missing from Two-Spirit identity and social roles. Furthermore, by emphasizing Native spirituality Andy sought to give gay and lesbian Natives access to religion without invoking the "negative" influences that Christianity has played in the Indian and gay communities. In my discussions with Andy about the Modelo society he consistently emphasizes the ceremonial aspect of Two-Spirit as the way in which to

live a healthy life, which includes having positive social and romantic relationships, resisting substance abuse, having self-respect, and practicing safe sex.

Andy was the unelected leader of the Modelo group, primarily because he wrote most of the grants for funding, organized ceremonial meetings and had extensive knowledge of ceremonial ways. Most of the activities that Andy organized were for spiritual purposes, such as sweats, practicing Sun Dance songs, and religious instruction. In addition to the ceremonial aspect, Sheila and Glen were often unofficially responsible for the social aspect of group activities, which included cookouts, teaching crafts, outings to bars, organizing the float for gay pride, trips to powwows, and generally hanging out. Andy was noticeably absent from the more social aspects of group activities, which he often reminded me were not part of his role as a Two-Spirit person. Andy reminded me over lunch, "Let them go to the bars and drink and go to powwows. When they need healing and want to learn they will come around." It is this distinction between the traditional ceremonial aspect of Two-Spirit people, and the social aspect of Two-Spirit society where differences exist -not only between individuals who identify as Two-Spirit but also the ways in which this distinction is reflected in organizations and gatherings.

Societies represent a formalization of relationships between people who identify as Two-Spirit, but also as Phillip reminded me: "They give us what we need. What we are not getting from our own tribes and families." Accordingly it is through and by these societies where many people make the connections needed to "feel Indian."

Kris echoed this:

> To me my journey is to get in touch with my Native Americaness ...
> the Native American side of me. It's something that I feel that
> connects me with the big picture. My generation is lost ... our
> generation doesn't have a connection to our culture and I feel that I
> need to feel connected. Being Two-Spirit is being connected to a
> specific group.

Being connected to Indian culture was one of the primary reasons that individuals

gave for participating in Two-Spirit organizations and social activities. For many,

Two-Spirit society represented a space where one could comfortably identify as being

Indian without enduring the racism prevalent in gay society. Also, Two-Spirit society

provided a space where individuals who did not grow up "traditional" or were

alienated from participation in the Indian community could learn cultural traditions

and perceive themselves as playing a significant role in an aspect of Indian society.

Activities such as gatherings, group participation in powwows, group meetings and

generally hanging out at people's houses doing beadwork or socializing, all acted to

provide the needed social interaction and connection to "Indianness" that so many

were seeking.

Gathering

One afternoon at the Eagleton annual retreat Andy told me that he saw such

gatherings as historical memory in the making. He went on to explain that he

imagined, Two-Spirit people gathered in the same way as they were at that moment

before the arrival of Europeans. He talked about how he imagined that the Two-

Spirit people traveling with their bands or communities would congregate with one

another away from the main camp and socialize in a way that only Two-Spirits

"would understand." He went on to say that, at these historic gatherings Two-Spirit

people were to have taken part in some of the same activities as contemporary Two-

Spirits, such as learning crafts, ceremonial ways, and the rejuvenation of their identity. Important about Andy's discussion is the assumption that Two-Spirit people through time have shared with one another the difference/sameness currently manifested in their social relations, but also the ways in which the gathering is used to support and teach the Two-Spirit way.

Gatherings represent one of the single most important aspects of the Two-Spirit social world in that they represent specific Two-Spirit space where certain disjunctures in the dominant discourse are welcome, providing the social relations important to community/identity maintenance. Gathering has been a tradition among American Indians since contact as a spiritual, social and political device against oppression. Two-Spirit gatherings coalesce into a history of contentious religious actions such as the Ghost Dances and the socio-political gatherings of the American Indian Movement. In fact, a year before the first Two-Spirit gathering, Beverly Little Thunder having grown tired of attending the annual Lakota Sundance and "... pretend[ing] to be someone I was not" and "sit[ting] quietly while cruel jokes were made about lesbians and gays," organized the Womyn's Sundance in the Lakota tradition (1997: 206-7). The Womyn's Sundance began in 1987 and, much like current gatherings, continues to be a source of strength for Native lesbians who wish to lead a spiritual life (Lang 1997: 112).

In gathering, Two-Spirit engagement with American Indian culture resides in what Vivian Patraka would characterize as the difference between "space" and "place" (1996). Gatherings occur in a "space" that incites "multiple acts of interpretation" which is constructed in opposition to "place," a site regulated and

"narrativized in advance."[18] Mainstream Indian "place," in this sense being

community events, positions and access, is one where roles for men and women are

discursively predetermined as heterosexually "traditional."[19] Regulatory frameworks

of place do not welcome parody and alternative performances, therefore limitations

on discursive interpretation prevent Two-Spirit participation. In reaction to this

alienation, gatherings occur in a space that Two-Spirit people have created as sacred,

social and political, where acts that transgress regulatory discourse are welcomed.

However, it is important to recognize that Two-Spirit space still occurs within the

discursive realm of Indian "tradition," which does not allow for wholly new

interpretations. The result are gatherings where men and women go to lodge

together, where women perform male ceremonial and social tasks, men dress as

women Southern cloth dancers. These examples represent small transgressions made

significant within the discourse on Indian identity. By creating a Two-Spirit space

within Indian discourse, they are ensuring a connection with the community and their

goal of fulfilling traditional roles.

The first open and public gathering of gay and lesbian Natives, *The Basket

and the Bow, A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Native Americans*, was held by AIGL

in Minneapolis at the Minneapolis American Indian Center during the summer of

1988. As McLeod explains: "The name for the gathering was derived from a

Shoshone-Bannock tradition, which allows children to choose their sexuality,

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[18] E. Patrick Johnson (1998) has also used Patraka's (1996) characterization of "space/place" to examine the alienation of Black gay and lesbians from traditional Black churches.

[19] Although the acceptance of difference is considered a "traditional" value by many Indians including Two-Spirits, what is considered traditional by the generic Indian community tends to favor strict gender roles for anatomical males and females, which is seen as assimilationist by many Two-Spirits. Therefore, what is traditional is up for debate where the Indian community and the Two-Spirit

symbolized by either a basket or a bow" (1998: 3). Over 60 participants from across

North America attended the gathering. At the first gathering they held a women's

pipe ceremony, talking circles, giveaway, and workshops on AIDS, coming out.

relationships, and chemical dependency (Roscoe 1988: 109). The positive impact of

this gathering spread rapidly and developed into what is now recognized as the

"International Two-Spirit Gathering." The International Gathering attempts to bring

gay and lesbian First Nations and Indian peoples from all over North America

together for unity in social and political practice and has been held every year since

1988 with the location alternating between Canada and the United States.

As individuals from all over the US and Canada started attending the

gatherings, many groups began to hold their own retreats, each with their own distinct

take on the Two-Spirit gathering. Most gatherings follow a basic format of

socializing, some cultural events such as talking circles and a small powwow, while

others incorporate more ceremonial practices such as sweat lodges. HIV/AIDS

funding from Indian health agencies and AIDS prevention grants are often used to

sponsor such gatherings, therefore all tend to have workshops, talks or sweats that

deal specifically with these issues. Due to the negative impact of alcohol on the

Native community all the retreats are alcohol and drug free, and often incorporate

substance abuse workshops as an aspect of the gathering. Also, workshops

emphasize the building of self-esteem and healthy long term relationships with

partners through such Indian specific therapeutics as talking circles and sweats.

Wenakuo

community overlap. Chapter 4, "Two-Spirits and the Indian Community," addresses this issue at
greater length.

In July of 2000, I made the ten hour drive along with Robert from Eagleton to the secluded Wenakuo mountain camp just northeast of Modelo. After parking our car, we made a two-mile hike with our gear to the isolated campsite. As we approached the camp we could see a couple of teepees through the trees and smell smoke from the fires. As we got closer we could hear the choruses of laughter that usually accompanied any Two-Spirit event. When we entered the camp we received the usual long line of embraces from our friends and "brothers." We were immediately escorted to the ceremonial fire where we were smoked off with sage and cedar. Some people were making breakfast and others were preparing the lodge for the morning sweat. Looking at all this activity, I was amazed at the sheer number of people who had endured camping without toilets, running water, and eating camp food for the previous ten days. For those ten days around 60 people from all over North America had been going to lodge daily, cooking meals, gathering firewood, holding council meetings, teaching crafts, participating in ceremonies and two people had "gone up on the hill" for vision quests. During the giveaway on the last day of camp one person was made a pipe carrier, and many others were given their first eagle feather. I had heard about how physically and emotionally straining the Wenakuo could be many times, but the commitment to learn and experience "Indian ways" on the part of people attending was overwhelming. When I pointed this out to Jeff, he glowingly said "I just wish the elders could be here to see it."

After the establishment of the Modelo group, Andy and several other socially and politically active Two-Spirits organized the Wenakuo (welcome home) retreat in 1997 to fulfill the traditional spiritual needs of Two-Spirit people. As Andy and

Sheila explained it, the thing that separates Two-Spirit people from other Indian people is their ceremonial role and obligation, of which Wenakuo attempts to teach and emphasize that responsibility. Wenakuo is the place where Two-Spirit people go to learn their traditional roles, especially for those who were not raised "traditional." Elders and specialists teach how to conduct ceremonies and vision quests, ways of communicating with spirits, powwow drumming, how to make regalia and generally learn contemporary Indian cultural ways. Andy sees his role in helping organize the Wenakuo as a way to teach Two-Spirit people how to fulfill their role and send them out into the community to do "good work" with Two-Spirit and non-Two-Spirit Indian communities. As we will see in the following chapters, the Wenakuo represents the place where many individuals' journeys begin or are invigorated through the use of established, invented and appropriated cultural traditions.

Unlike the Eagleton gathering, the Wenakuo specifically prohibits non-Native gays from attending, sex between participants or couples is not allowed, everyone must do some form of cooking, gathering wood or cleaning and most everyone is expected to participate in some aspect of the ceremonies. According to the organizers the rigidity of the Wenakuo is designed to promote learning, discipline and respect for others not possible when individuals are under the influence of popular gay culture. Although most people agreed with the regulations, by the end of the ten day camp most people had grown weary of the regiment and some would leave to go home out of tiredness and in same cases disdain. As Andy reminded me, "Wenakuo is not were you come to meet partners, have sex, or be gay. It is where you come if you are called to learn and walk the path that is intended for you."

Eagleton Two-Spirit Gathering

As my first encounter with the concept of the gathering, the planning process of the first nationally advertised Eagleton retreat revealed different views people had about the content of gatherings. For the most part the Eagleton gathering represented a social occasion for Two-Spirits from around the country to come together, socialize, learn about other traditions, "snag" and develop relationships. Although the Eagleton group had sponsored retreats in the past for Two-Spirit people within the state, this was the first time they were going to invite people from all over North America to attend. I started my project with the Eagleton group about 6 months before the retreat, and soon after my arrival was incorporated into the planning and fund raising efforts. The primary concern of many people in the group was finding the money to cover the cost of the camp and food making attendee's only financial responsibility getting to the camp. The agency that funded the men's group and the clinic would not allow funds designated for the group to be used for the retreat. Determined to find the money, we held garage sales, we raffled a star quilt my mother had made, took up collections at every meeting, solicited funds from gay friendly churches and generally scrounged for every penny. The group was able to raise the funds, plus some extra, to pay the costs of the gathering. In all, forty people came from mostly the central and western US to attend the retreat. Included in the activities were a "no talent show" predominated by lounge like drag acts, some with Indian themes, talking circles, hikes, stomp dancing, hand games, and on the final night a powwow and giveaway. Other than smudging gathering participants, no ceremonies took place at the first gathering.

Seeing that the gathering meant enough to the group for it to raise over $1500 dollars, the second year Ben and Mick were able to secure a considerable amount of funding from the clinic and from a private donor. Word had gotten around about how successful and fun the first gathering had been, and the second year so many people pre-registered that they almost reached the full 60 bed capacity of the campground cabins. The second gathering followed the format of the first, but Ben and Mick made a significant point to expand the wellness aspects of the gathering by having guest speakers come to discuss being transgender, substance abuse, and what it means to be Two-Spirit. Also, Ben was able to have an Indian movie personality come and discuss the importance of the reincorporation of Two-Spirit people into Indian society. With friends and family invited the retreat powwow reached over 70 participants with a record number dressing in regalia, and the group hired a professional powwow drum to come and perform. The result was a combination of Indian, gay and human services activities, which all had as their goal emphasizing a positive self image for Two-Spirit people.

It was at the Eagleton gathering where Andy invited me to the Wenakuo retreat. I had heard many things about the retreat from Sidney, who had gone the two previous years. However, Andy wanted to reassure me of it's spiritual focus, and that "I would not see a drag show there." It was then that I realized the different perspectives that gathering represented, but also the ways in which the gathering represented the different ideas individuals had about Two-Spirit identity and roles. Although the organizers of the Eagleton gathering emphasized it as a social event, one could not help but notice the comparisons made between it and the Wenakuo

retreat. As the Eagleton retreat emphasized Two-Spirit society as an inclusive social event by incorporating popular gay culture, the Wenakuo emphasized Two-Spirit social relations as something specifically and exclusively spiritually Indian. These two perspectives I would see over and again in general ideas about what it meant to be Two-Spirit, but also in the ways that people who identified as Two-Spirit related to one another.

The reordering of discourse represents an attempt by Native gay and lesbians to create a social realm where sexual difference is not only tolerated but embraced. Two-Spirit social relations are founded on the goal of self and social acceptance, which many gay and lesbian Natives feel cannot be found in mainstream Indian society. As we will see throughout this study, social and self-acceptance are inextricably linked in the life of gay and lesbian Indians. The hostilities, both explicit and perceived, toward same sex desire as difference in the Indian community greatly effects individual access to cultural practices, while the hostility toward individuals of color among the gay community effects access to social and sexual participation. Therefore, the desire of gay and lesbian Indians to participate in their culture and be accepted by individuals who share that culture is to a great extent responsible for the appearance of Two-Spirit identity.

Chapter Three

Gays and Indians: Difference and Ideal Types at Work in Two-Spirit

Subjectivity

In the last chapter, I addressed the ways in which Two-Spirit has come to be

not only a set of social relations, but also a distinct position at the intersection of

Indian and gay identity. In this chapter I examine the ways in which emphasizing

Indian identity relies on the discourse of ideal types and how individuals see

themselves and one another adhering to that construction of personhood. Other

scholars focus on the incontestable effects of Two-Spirit connections with behavior

characterized as Indian –e.g. signs, symbols, beliefs (Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997,

Thomas and Jacobs 1999, Roscoe 1998). However, what has yet to be addressed is

this: in seeking (re)incorporation into the community and access to the sign "Indian,"

how do Two-Spirit people make use of the dominant discourse on 'ideal types'

through their increased participation in and reliance on modern tribal and generic

Indian community signs and symbols?

Two-Spirit people are positioned, by themselves and others, in relation to the

available discourse on "Indianness" and by accessing contemporary interpretations of

Indian cultural symbols. In seeking legitimization by performing the required acts to

be Indian, Two-Spirits rely on signs and symbols from the mainstream Indian

community to determine what qualifies as legitimately Indian and thus Two-Spirit.

Although Two-Spirit people recognize and to some extent emphasize themselves as

different, they use the dominant discourse on Indianness – tradition, blood quantum,

cultural participation, tribal membership, "the rez" - to insure a recognized sameness

with Indian communities. Two-Spirit identity is in and of itself a difference, but from most peoples' perspectives one not to be separated entirely from the Indian or tribal identity. Accordingly, it is through attempts by Two-Spirit people at making the sign Two-Spirit intelligible to other Indian people where self-knowledge/subjectivity is firmly seated in dominant discourse on ideal types.

Two-Spirit people shape their ideas about who they are in relation to dominant ideals about what it means to be Indian and what it means to be gay. Many Two-Spirit people had strong feelings about the qualities an individual must possess to be considered Two-Spirit, qualities which articulate with community regulations on Indian authenticity, race, tradition and cultural practice. As definitions of Two-Spirit move from an urban gay community identity to an Indian community one, the ways in which individuals identify as Two-Spirit are increasingly relying on the discursive content of identity from the Indian community. Therefore, definitions of what qualifies as Two-Spirit have the potential to become subject to the controversies surrounding Indian identity. As Two-Spirit people attempt to emphasize "Indianness" as a crucial aspect of their social and political identity, Two-Spirit becomes subject to discourses of race, culture, sexuality, gender and authenticity emphasized in Native communities. Two-Spirit identity has the potential to rely on the qualifications of "being Indian" endorsed by tribal and generic Native communities for a sense of belonging and legitimization. Therefore, we should consider how the potentially complex and contentious aspects of organizing/identifying as Two-Spirit reveal the ways in which identity is constructed in the discursive space of difference. The

discursive space of difference in the Two-Spirit world is found at the intersection of sexuality, race, class and gender, where intersubjective experience is shaped.

In this chapter, I am considering the ways in which Two-Spirit subjectivity is created, complicated, and deployed by the intersection of sexuality, racial identity and cultural behavior as Two-Spirit people attempt to align themselves with Native society. I seek to answer these questions: what are the ways Two-Spirit people rely on cultural identification versus sexual orientation to locate their identity?; by transitioning from a gay focused identity to an Indian centered identity, in what ways is Two-Spirit subjective experience engaged by contemporary ideas about being Indian?; and in what ways does the influence of dominant Indian ideas on cultural practice create expectations complicating the Two-Spirit goal of social and personal acceptance? In asking these questions I am attempting to move discussions of Two-Spirit subjective experience out of the descriptive realm of merely another 'group' for gay Indians, and to explore it as personal identity, experienced and interpreted, within the daily lives of individuals.

Reconciling Gay and Two-Spirit

Definitions about Two-Spirit as a term and identity vary. Some see it as a marker equivalent to "gay Indian," while others see it as a specific set of social practices and an essence incomparable to any other kind of person. Accordingly, Two-Spirit identity emphasizes accepted and expected social behaviors and attitudes by which individuals are included and excluded from Two-Spirit social relations. In this sense, Two-Spirit has gone beyond a name or concept for 'gay urban Indians' and has become a sign permeated with its own regulatory framework.

Apparent in interviews, observations, and conversations, is the on-going interpretation of what it means to be Two-Spirit and how that meaning/definition articulates with dominant ideas on Indian racial and cultural identity. Emphasized in dialogues were how Two-Spirit people differ from the generic gay community. They further draw upon differences between their social practice, straight Indian people, and non-Indian gays who desire to be culturally Indian sometimes referred to as "wannabes" or gay and lesbian "new age granolas." Within Two-Spirit communities, identity resides in the important distinction people make about what is seen as specifically non-Indian, therefore not Two-Spirit, and what is seen as specifically Indian and ideally Two-Spirit.

The qualities one should possess to be Two-Spirit mirror many of the tribal and generic Native community ideas concerning what Indians are thought to represent, such as blood quantum, enrollment and community participation, as well as what Andy referred to as "walking in a good way." Dispositions seen as specifically not Two-Spirit parallel behaviors characteristic of the gay community perceived as negative by both non-Indian and Indian non-gays. Strategically, and mostly out of fear of alienation, individuals are attempting to distance themselves from negative stereotypes of gay people prevalent within popular American and generic Native society. In doing so, Two-Spirits are perceived as recognizing themselves as Indians first, and their sexual orientation as something secondary to their ethnic identity (Lang 1997: 111, Roscoe 1998). Rather, in making their identity more intelligible to contemporary Indian communities through perfecting "Indianess" they emphasize Two-Spirit as an Indian identity versus one solely defined by "popular gay identity."

Therefore, they are seeking to define themselves as a particular kind of Indian, rather than merely an "Indian kind of gayness." Instead of privileging ethnicity over gayness, they seek to reconcile their sexual identity with an ethnic identity that is not explicitly associated with the social and sexual practices of the latter. Two-Spirit people are well aware of the general hostility toward gays in mainstream Indian and non-Indian society. Therefore, as we will see, they emphasize "Indianness," while de-emphasizing sexual practice as the defining element of Two-Spirit identity. While "Two-Spirit" is not absent from sexual references, I was often reminded by people that Two-Spirit was about more than sexual desire. They realize that Two-Spirit people are going to be accepted by communities not for their "gayness" but for their "Indianness." Therefore, behavior seen as being more stereotypically gay, such as promiscuity, partying in gay clubs, and flamboyancy, is often perceived as less Indian and thus less Two-Spirit. At the same time, individual Two-Spirit knowledge of contemporary manifestations of historic traditions, such as beading, powwow dancing, singing, and spiritual practices, helped to further segregate Two-Spirit people from those seen as strictly gay.

> Jack: Sooner or later we must figure out those qualities that define a Two Spirited person in contemporary society. This self-definition is important for us and the future generations. It has to come from a cultural framework. By that I mean an Indian perspective whether it be from a mixed blood or full blood, who is urban or rural, and whose community of reference is a federal, tribal and/or state land base. I believe it is not just content that matters, but context.

Gay as a term for sexuality and certain aspects of it as a cultural identifier are incorporated into Two-Spirit identity. However, the term gay takes on a series of

meanings that are often placed in opposition with ideas about Two-Spirit. The meaning of the term gay is used by Two-Spirit people as a signifier for multiple behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, we will see that 'gay' often will be used to refer to: 1) the non-Indian (perceptibly white) dominated generic gay community, 2) to denote cultural attitudes and behaviors, 3) a set of behaviors seen as negative, and 4) as a term referring to strictly a sexual orientation in preference over the clinically loaded term "homosexual." As we will see in this chapter distinct lines are drawn between the non-Indian identified aspects of 'gay' and those aspects seen as gay through the lens of Two-Spirit identity.

Are there Gay Indians?

When I arrived at the Gay Pride parade and picnic sponsored by the "Eagleton Pride Center," people were setting up tents, tables and beer stands around the perimeter of the park. Within an hour a sizeable crowd accumulated awaiting the passing of the parade along the street adjacent to the park. Protestors lined the sidewalk opposite where the pride participants were observing. As floats for various gay and support organizations passed, the protestors shouted through megaphones, and held signs stating, "Got AIDS?," "God killed Sodom and Gomorrah," "Die Fags." Things were surprisingly calm considering the atmosphere of conflict the protestors were instigating. A few people went over to yell back, but for the most part, people were focused on the parade and not giving into the temptations of conflict. Watching the floats pass, we anxiously awaited the Eagleton Two-Spirit Society float, which was one of the many gay organizations participating. When they passed, Sheila, in full jingle dance regalia, was sitting across the back of a Pendleton-

covered red convertible Mercedes waving as if she were a queen in a homecoming parade. The car was followed by five of the "guys" in their straight dance regalia, stepping to the blaring powwow music resonating from the car. Once the car and the dancers got close enough to hear, Jimmy and the other men standing in the street let out a celebratory "lululululu." I watched for the expressions on people's faces, and noticed some people were laughing, some people gazing like tourists at a powwow and one person, baffled, said to his friend, "... are there gay Indians?"

The question of the existence of gay Indians came up multiple times during my fieldwork. While at dinner with a Cherokee family, some of the guests were inquisitive as to my research project. While I was telling them that I was working with a ceremonial and social subgroup of American Indians, the host interrupted, "They're gay, ya know Two-Spirits, like berdache." The other guests, both Indian and non-Indian, looked surprised at this disclosure. A Cherokee man responded with many questions about Two-Spirit people and their history. As in most cases, the Indian people at the dinner had little to no idea about the respect once given to Two-Spirit people. The conversation came to a close with his statement, "You would think that homosexuality wouldn't have spread into the Indian community." The Cherokee man's statement assumes that the dominant discourse of masculinity among Indian society does not allow for "gay Indians," but also employs the conservative popular idea that same sex desire was a choice or a contagious social "illness." As Beatrice Medicine observed from her experiences as a socially involved Indian woman: "Many Native American women in leadership positions have maintained that male homosexuality is a result of contact with Europeans and, mostly have held such

sexual perverts with disdain" (1997: 152). The subtext of comments about 'homosexuality' reveals that same sex desire is perceived as non-Indian by both Indians and mainstream non-Indian society.

I had known for some time from Two-Spirit people that the gay community did not recognize "racial" diversity, and especially not Natives. Also, I surmised that mainstream Native society did not react positively toward gay and lesbian Indians. After realizing at that moment in the park and at the dinner that there were no gay Indians according to gay society, I further understood that there were no gay Indians according to Native and mainstream society. What struck me most is the disjuncture that gay Indians caused in accepted signs and symbols of what American Indians are thought to represent. I brought this up later in the year during a discussion with Ben and Mick:

Brian:	People have asked me, 'are there gay Indians?'
Ben:	Yeah, that was like down at the gay pride, the protestors were saying 'why are you all here?' ... they couldn't believe it... ya know ... and they thought we were degrading the Indian community by marching in a gay pride parade. See ... people don't think ... they have this thought in their mind ... WARRIORS! [laughs]
Mick:	Which we can be ...
Ben:	Which we are ... ya know, but we have different warrior types. I just love the way we are changing people's thinking about stereotypes.

Given the identity politics surrounding being Native in the 21st century, contemporary Two-Spirit men are subject to accepted popular ideas, positive and negative, about what it means to be an American Indian. As Craig Womack points out: "I would speculate that a queer Indian presence fundamentally challenges the American mythos about Indians in a manner the public will not accept ... Further, identifying an

Indian as lesbian or gay makes the Native radically resistant to the popular tendency to make Indians artifacts from the past, since no one associates such terms with the warrior days when men were men and buffalo were scared" (1999: 280).

Inevitably, Two-Spirit identity is subject to the multiple discourses regulating Indianness, whiteness, gayness, straightness, masculinity, femininity and authenticity. Emerging from the intersection of multiple influences is a Two-Spirit identity created and maintained in relation to dominant ideas about Indian and gay identity. Two-Spirit identity articulates with and manipulates discourses on gay and Indian despite the inability of gay and lesbian culture to recognize Native Americans as an important aspect of their society, as well as the denial of Two-Spirit people by Indians.

Two-Spirits and Gay Indians

One winter evening, Sheila, Jeff and Carl came up to Eagleton to "go out to the bars." They were living in a very rural area, and wanted to be around the gay social scene for a weekend. We had been out for a couple hours when we ran into a group of 5 or so Indians at a western theme gay bar. Jeff, Carl and Sheila already knew some of them from the powwow circuit, but did not know them well. We ended up talking to them most of the night about things gay and things Indian, such as who you know, what style you dance, and for the Navajos, "are we related?" When the bar started to close down, Sheila took the liberty of inviting them all back to my house for a 49.[20] Using the coffee table as a drum we started pounding out songs and

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[20] Although Jeff and Carl had a powwow size drum in the car, we had been drinking and it would therefore have been inappropriate to sing at a drum often used for ceremony. As anyone familiar with 49s knows, car hoods, trashcans, and coolers are often used to replace drums in social drinking situations. Furthermore, the leader of the drum (coffee table) made certain that no powwow or ceremonial songs were sung because we had been consuming alcohol, despite the insistence on some favorite dance songs on the part of other singers. Stigma and the negative feelings about alcohol and

sang until the early morning. One of the visitors sat there with his mouth open in surprise listening intently, and said that he had never been around the drum, and did not really participate in Indian social activities. Later that morning at breakfast I asked Sheila what she thought about the "Two-Spirit people that had come over," and she replied, matter of factly, "... they're not Two-Spirit, just a bunch of gay Indians." She went on to tell me that if they were Two-Spirit they would not spend most of their time "being gay" at the bars, would participate in the Two-Spirit community, as well as Indian culture or their tribal communities.

The greatest distinction I heard individuals make about Two-Spirit identity, other than between Indian and white, was between those individuals who identified themselves as Two-Spirit, and those who were perceived to be non-Two-Spirit or rather a "gay Indian." Accordingly, the relationship between gay Indian and Two-Spirit significantly mirrored distinctions frequently made between Indian and white/non-Indian. That is, the term and conception of Two-Spirit is reserved for individuals who chose to articulate their identity as gay not solely in the white defined world of the gay bars and social scene, but within indigenous conceptions and social roles. Emphasizing Two-Spiritness thus gives the generic gay community a secondary position in their lives.[21]

Gregory Conerly found similar attitudes in his examination of allegiances among "Afrocentrist" and "Interacialist" gays and lesbians:

> One major consequence of having a primary communal affiliation is that conflicts have arisen between black lesbigays who have chosen to

Indians also plays a significant role in the separation of the bar scene from practices considered 'traditional'.

[21] Two-Spirit as an identity making "gay" identity secondary is also mentioned by Lang (1998), Roscoe (1998) and Thomas and Lang (1999).

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affiliate with different primary cultures and between them and the
larger black and or lesbian and gay cultures within which they are
marginalized. In particular, many blacks criticize those who have
chosen a largely white lesbian and gay culture as their primary social
world, because they see them as denying their black cultural heritage
... Central to a black-identified definition of blackness is to have roots
in 'the' Black community and to place a supreme value on one's home
of origin (1996: 134, 138).

In a comparable way, the ability to define one's identity in the realm of the Indian
community versus that of the gay community to legitimizes one's identity as Two-
Spirit and further separates them from the white gay community. Conerly goes on to
point out that seeking recognition in one's community of color presents the following
problem: "... ultimately choosing a primary community when you do not have
access to one that accepts both your racial/ethnic and sexual preference identities is
an intensely personal decision that, for many, centers around [the] question: Which do
you find to be more oppressive or important politically, racism or homophobia?"
(1996: 140). Native gays and lesbians are at a similar juncture. However, they differ
because they run the risk of unintelligibility among Indian communities by showing
social markers of gay identity and participation in gay popular culture. In other
words, if they prefer the sexual tolerance of the gay community, they may be
perceived as less culturally Indian. They inevitably encounter disparagement
participating in the Indian community as an openly gay person, because the majority
of non-gay Indians do not recognize historic much less contemporary sex and gender
diversity.

Although many gay and lesbian Indian people equated Two-Spirit with a code
word or marker for being gay and indigenous, many individuals had distinct
associations between individual behavior, beliefs and being Two-Spirit. In most

cases the division between Two-Spirit and gay Indian rested more on the ways in

which people were perceived as conducting themselves in ideal ways socially and

personally. An, individual showing him/herself as making a contribution to an Indian

community through participation in Native culture and a clear allegiance to Indian

people are more likely to be considered as fulfilling Two-Spirit ideals by his/her

peers.

Sean:	In my opinion you have to be in touch on a spiritual type of journey to find out who you are to be Two-Spirit. I've been out to the clubs before and seen people who I assumed were Native American that were gay. They're gay, but you never see them at powwows and gatherings like that. I don't really feel like they are [Two-Spirit], cause they are just relating as being gay. They don't acknowledge their Native Americanness.
Jack:	I agree that there are differing levels of involvement in community and that individuals have differing perceptions of whether they consider themselves 'gay' or 'two-spirited'.
Ben:	The term Two-Spirit, to me, should be more of a sacred thing. If you're gonna carry that term Two-Spirited, you should be walking the talk and living it.

Individuals who perform the required acts to be considered ideally Two-Spirit, or

Indian, establish a difference between those who are 'culturally', 'spiritually', and

'biologically' Two-Spirit, and those who fail to meet performative requirements. In

this way, Two-Spirit people make clear distinctions between themselves as Indian

versus individuals perceived as only gay. Thus, an unambiguous differentiation is

made between a community perceived to be based merely in sexual orientation (gay)

and one based in cultural practice (Two-Spirit). As previously pointed out by

Thomas and Jacobs: "... two-spirit reflects the range of sexuality and gender identity

derived from spiritual contemplation of one's place on this earth, this contemplation shored up by the teachings from parents and elders about how to live as a two-spirit person" (1999: 95).[22] Accordingly, many Two-Spirit people attempt to emphasize their social and spiritual practices as something separating them from a strictly sexual practice interpretation of their identity. However, the distinction between gay and Two-Spirit is considerably more complex than has been previously recognized. Being Two-Spirit becomes framed in terms of sexual identity as it articulates with the symbolic and behavioral requirements of being Indian. Access to the sign Two-Spirit becomes about more than sexual orientation to include a specific set of qualities recognized not only as "Indian" but also Two-Spirit.

> Andy: For me, a two spirit person is of native blood, of native culture, practices native customs, and in some way contributes to the well being of a native community. Now, many people out there that are "Indian" and registered with one concentration camp or another will call themselves Two-Spirit but have nothing to do with the Indian community. In fact, they are very "gay" or "lesbian" but culturally not very "Indian".

Therefore, despite an individual having a CDIB card, stereotypically Indian looks, or a well-known family, the failure to meet performative requirements could result in not receiving the designation of Two-Spirit by other Two-Spirit people. While the two components of being Indian and gay are required to be considered Two-Spirit, being an indigenous gay who is not culturally involved with a community does not meet discursive requirements.

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[22] Williams (1987), Roscoe (1993, 1998), Allen (1981), Jacobs, Thomas, Lang (1997), Lang (1998) and numerous other scholars emphasize the goal of recognizing Two-Spirit ("berdache" to some) identity as spiritual attempting to make it on the whole separate from sexuality and sexual practice, especially when conceived of in Euro-American terms.

Glen: Two-Spirit is different than being gay. Two-Spirit is the traditional role that gay people held. All Two-Spirit people are gay, but all gay Indian people are not Two-Spirit, ya know? I think of the traditional role that Two-Spirit people played in our traditions and our old ways; the prayers, the story tell'n, arts and crafts, the raising of the orphans, care for the older people. I see a lot of Indian people out at the bars and they say 'Oh I'm Two-Spirit' and I just look at them and say 'are you sure you're Two-Spirit or just a big ol' queen?'

Often I was told of people who had stopped coming to the Eagleton bi-monthly meetings, or had stopped coming to Modelo ceremonial events, but were seen 'out at the bars'. Inevitably the information about the person is framed in terms of choosing to be "gay" over Two-Spirit, or "trying to be white/gay" over being Indian. Michael Red Earth's article "Traditional influences on a Contemporary Gay-Identified Sisseton Sioux" speaks to this distinction:

I hadn't been seeing the others [gay and lesbian Indians] because you don't see 'white queers' in Indian Country. My cousin asked what I meant by 'white queers in Indian country.' I said, 'I thought to be queer you had to be concerned with a certain type of style, a certain type of look and a certain type of philosophy to live your life by, all defined by rich white gays. Being Indian didn't fit in with that look. I realized that I was seeing queer Indians all along, but I was not seeing the queerness because it didn't fit in the parameters I had set. When I saw queer Indians, I didn't see the queer, I saw the Indian' ... 'When I finally looked, I didn't see a queen screaming 'MARY!', I saw a queen saying, "Eh-h-h-h' (1997: 215). [23]

Two-Spirit people would mostly agree with Michael Red Earth's statement that in order to be "gay" in its popular manifestation one had to be non-Indian (conceived of as "white") (1997: 214). Being generically gay meant turning away from one's Native

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[23] "Mary" is a generic term in gay society to refer to another gay person in a rebuke or as an endearment. And as Michael Red Earth (1997: 216) explains: "Eh-h-h-h is pronounced 'a' as in 'day'. It is an exclamation to let the listener know that the speaker has said something humorous."

heritage. Perceptions about others as turning from their Native heritage is further used to delineate those who were ideally Two-Spirit and those who were merely associated with "gay."

Sheila updated me about one Modelo person who I observed being very active in the Two-Spirit and powwow communities but whose participation slacked off and he eventually stopped participating in anything Indian or Two-Spirit. He had stopped returning phone calls and email to Two-Spirit people, and is not attending powwows or gatherings anymore. According to Sheila and Glen, he was seen out at the bars, but appeared reluctant to associate with the other Indian people at the bar. He had cut his once very long hair and gone from adorning silver Indian jewelry and western style clothes to "the preppy look" that Sheila clearly associated with the wealthy white gay world. Sheila spoke of his preference for white/gay people as 'not wanting to be Indian' and choosing to hang out in upper class gay establishments as a way of showing he is better than "them stupid Indians." Another person harshly pointed out: "despite his outward appearance those people [the white gay people in the upper class bar] still see him as a drunk Indian." In this way, his behavior is taken to signal a change in allegiances similar to the characterization that many people made by calling individuals "apples"; red on the outside, white on the inside, and thereby challenging the legitimacy of his identity as Two-Spirit.

Karina Walters sees the inner group prejudices of the gay community as expressions of "internalized, colonized processes within a system of white heterosexual institutionalized systems of power," where "the group that ultimately benefits from within-group oppressions is ... white gays and lesbians [who] reinforce

their power as members of white society by being racist" (1998: 56). In many ways Two-Spirit people saw Indians who preferred the gay community as allying with the oppressive aspects of non-Indian society. Therefore, by participating solely in 'white' gay society, Indians were compromising themselves politically, culturally, socially and personally. Walters further points to the conflicts between affiliating socially and politically with a homophobic Indian community or a racist gay community, where "GALOC [Gays and Lesbians of Color] participate in disparate social worlds, which include their gay and lesbian community, their community of color, and the dominant culture" (1998: 51). The gay community, when seen as a white, oppressive institution by gays and lesbians of color, creates a conflict of allegiances in terms of social participation and identity. Although many Two-Spirit people would rather not go to gay bars or involve themselves with the gay community, one's desire to be socially gay in order to find sex and partners can be an inherent conflict with one's desire to be socially, spiritually, and culturally Indian. Inevitably, the negative associations that the gay community invokes, such as racism and unhealthy living for Indians, is a factor in how individuals are perceived by other Indians, on which acceptance or alienation is at times pending. People who are perceived as spending too much time in the gay social world can be declared as losing or lacking the special ability that Two-Spirit people presumably possess, such as clairvoyance or relationships with the Creator. Accordingly, those who are perceived as giving too much to the white/gay community are seen as moving further away from what it means to be Two-Spirit and Indian; further from "fulfilling their traditional roles" in Indian society.[24]

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[24] The concept of "fulfilling traditional roles" is examined later in this chapter.

'Healthy' Two-Spirits

As mentioned in Chapter 2 the rise of Two-Spirit organizations is an attempt to give gay and lesbian Natives an alternative to the 'white' and bar focused gay community as well as to promote self-acceptance and healthy relationship practices As Lewis and Ross point out: "… self-hatred or homophobia often has its origin in a lifetime of gay-aversive conditioning which is usually reinforced through the primary agents of culture, religion, family of origin and peers" (1995: 208). They go on to link self-hatred to various aspects of putting oneself at risk for HIV infection through unsafe sex and substance abuse. As many people I interviewed told me, Two-Spirit identity and society gave individuals an alternative to self-hatred and risky behaviors. Opportunities for participation in Two-Spirit social events and ceremonies were often framed in terms of an alternative to social activities seen as promoting negative behavior. Participation in activities seen as unhealthy, or stereotypically gay, such as extensive use of alcohol or drugs, hanging out in the bars, having unsafe sex, or being promiscuous, were all seen specifically as not associated with "Two-Spirit" but more directly linked to "gay" society. Accordingly, unhealthy living is perceived as a personal health issue, but also one of perception. In that, by Two-Spirit society focusing on the potential of a 'healthy' gay lifestyle, including self-acceptance, stable relationships, and minimal substance use, they were establishing a difference between themselves and popular images of gay and lesbian culture. At one time or another, Two-Spirit people condemned most behavior seen as fulfilling mainstream non-gay society's stereotypes about same sex desire, and popular cultural images of gay society as "flamboyant," "promiscuous," "infecting," and "risky."

There is a tension between the desire to have sex, find sex partners, and forms of behavior considered excessive and destructive. Many Two-Spirit people find themselves in a problematic situation, considering that gay bars, bath houses, and cruising spots were some of the only places to be openly gay, find sex partners, and meet potential long-term relationship partners. Activities such as cruising in gay bars, going to places associated with gay sex, and alcohol use (both in gay contexts and in general), were seen as potentially contributing to the stereotypes that have pervaded Indian society by way of Christianity and popular cultural images of gay people. Therefore, by participating in those behaviors associated with dominant perceptions of gay social/sexual practice, Two-Spirits ran the risk of being solely identified with the negative aspects of gay society by Indian communities and their peers. Furthermore, activities seen as fulfilling negative stereotypes were explicitly linked to behaviors that would lead to ill mental and physical health. In most cases, ill health is perceived in terms of several intersecting ideas about lack of self-esteem, alcoholism and drug abuse, and HIV infection. Individual, and thus group, survivability is explicitly compromised by: having unstable relationships, HIV infection as the result of alcoholism and drug abuse or promiscuity, and mental instability as the result of self-esteem issues, which is related to all of the above. Accordingly, a 'healthy' Two-Spirit person is a person who does not behave in ways that could contribute to perceptions of a connection between Two-Spirit people and those things considered condemnable by mainstream Indian and non-Indian societies or negate one's survivability. When I asked Mick about the link between Two-Spirit societies and healthy living, he replied: "... we look at it as a more holistic thing, giving

individuals a place to be who they are, to socialize away from unhealthy things like alcohol and drugs; to help build a sense of community, to help build a sense of self-esteem, so that we can basically support each other in living healthy lives."

Therefore, the positioning of the Two-Spirit body within unhealthy atmospheres is seen as potentially dangerous to the person as well as the community. In this way, Two-Spirit society is often conceptualized as an 'healthy' alternative to the negative aspects of gay society and low self-esteem. Ben and Mick comment on being healthy:

Mick:	Unfortunately a lot of the people, both male and female, that we would like to come to group are dealing with other issues that prevent them from wanting to come Until they come to a place where they are ready to try and deal with those things they probably won't come.
Brian:	Having been out to the bars with some of the guys in the group, I noticed that some people we encounter appear reluctant to come to group because they drink regularly, and are concerned about the sobriety focus. How is this a factor in participation and health issues?
Ben:	When we do our skills building, which we have incorporated a lot of role playing and look at things that trigger you to do risky behaviors. People have so many issues, alcohol being one, sex addiction and drugs being another. We talk about these things and people that don't come aren't wanting to face it yet.
Mick:	We want to support each other in living healthy lives. Some people aren't ready to do that yet. I mean so many people will come to gay pride when we have our booth, and sit at the drum with us. I think partly shame is involved in their lack of regular participation. They fear that we are going to judge them because they have done something that is unhealthy for them. But we don't judge. I mean there are a large number of people who are ready to stand up and try to live healthy lives that are involved with this group.

Ben: I have seen our people out at the gay bars totally
            partying and drunk. When you have that as your
            number one love, and you don't ever want to catch
            yourself too far from access to a drink. Those kinds of
            queens don't want to be around healthy people.

In an effort to promote stable relationships and positive self-image for Two-

Spirit people, the Eagleton group held what is referred to as a "skills building

workshop" meeting on the occasional Saturday. The two all-day workshops I attended

consisted of general introductions, the distribution of printed materials produced by

the CDC and IHS, and a series of group exercises. The main focus of the workshop is

the avoidance of 'risky' behavior through self-acceptance, and avoiding 'triggers' that

lead to compromising behavior. Worksheets on identifying 'problem' behaviors or

self-esteem issues were used to promote open discussion. The most revealing

responses during the workshop were when people divulged various experiences

where they felt that they had compromised their health by consuming too much

alcohol or participated in unprotected sex as well as negative aspects about their

romantic relationships. These discussions took the form of a talking circle, where an

eagle feather is passed from person to person and they responded to questions asked

by Mick or Ben. Responses generally addressed the ways in which people were

reflecting on behaviors that compromised their relationships or health. However, the

overriding theme involved individuals using their identity as Two-Spirit as a resource

to overcome 'unhealthy' aspects of their behavior, negative relationships or self

esteem issues. Most people in the talking circle stated that once they had emphasized

the Native aspects of their identity they had more positive feelings about being gay.

They felt that identifying as Two-Spirit allowed them to build their self-confidence,

and divert their attention to what many characterized as the "more positive aspects of being gay and Indian."

Karina Walters (1997: 43-65) and Walters and Simoni (1993) address the issue of self-acceptance among Native American gays and lesbians in terms of clinical models and social service practice. In their psychologically based research, they examine the ways in which individuals 'develop' their identity as gay and as Native. Part of this development is dealing with the conflict in allegiances between gay and Native centered identities as well as potential conflicts in values between Native and gay society. Their conclusions reinforce the ways in which Two-Spirit society is perceived by some as attempting to create "balance" in American Indian gays and lesbians. Walters states: "Another intervention includes helping the client to find culturally relevant ways to 'come out' that do not deny or split off the gay or lesbian or Indian aspect of self." Therefore attitudes about cultural values and conflicts in allegiances are best mediated by "helping the GAI [gay American Indian] client to integrate both identities" (Walters 1997: 60). However, what Walters (1997, 1998) and others (Walters and Simoni 1997, Brown 1997, Jacobs and Brown 1997) barely touch upon and mostly neglect are the ways in which a separation between generic gay identity and Indian identity is inevitable in the current situation of Two-Spirit people. That is, what Two-Spirit people think about "gay" as a behavior and a culture is influenced by typical Indian community ideas. Any ideas about "integrating both identities" lack this critical observation. Most of the people I encountered who identify as Two-Spirit see themselves as distinctly different than merely gay and Indian, but on the whole a different kind of person. Therefore, the

desire to "connect with Indianness" emphasizes Two-Spirit difference from the gay community more than their sameness. They attempt to separate themselves symbolically from the gay community as a means of accessing the Indian one.

In the preface to the edited volume *Two-Spirit People*, Duane Champagne states: "... the sacred gifts of the Great Spirit yields a possible path to greater self-esteem, greater cultural affirmation, and a guide to life and self-worth within a relatively hostile cultural and political climate. These beliefs can form a ground for GAI [gay American Indians] individual and group reaffirmation of purpose and have therapeutic value for individual GAIs distress" (1997). Most Two-Spirit people would agree with the latter statement. Many of them found therapeutic value in getting in touch with one's Native heritage, which is often emphasized as a goal in society participation. Accordingly, a common theme in distinguishing Two-Spirit from the perceptibly negative social realm of 'gay' is the path to "getting healthy." Ben often told me that he felt he was living unhealthily when he first came out and was "going to the bars." Unhealthy living for Ben was drinking excessively, doing drugs and having sex with random people at bath houses and cruising spots; all of which he and others readily associated with mainstream gay society.

Ben: We are all here on earth trying to find who we connect to and what our purpose is in life. I feel like that when I became connected spiritually [Two-Spirited] I started on that journey. When I first came out I partied. I was a heavy drinker, heavy drug user. I was still searching and I just went off the path. We start blocking out those parts of our lives [gayness, Indianness] because we think it is wrong. We get so far off the path that we start trying to find it in alcohol, drugs, whatever we can find to fill that void. When I was going out to gay bars and getting drunk I was still on my journey. I just had to learn that the two don't mix [journey and alcohol].

I was in major denial about my gayness. I grew up in a
mostly non-Indian world. My dad was a minister.
They made me feel ashamed. I didn't want to be
Indian, because I wanted to fit in. I was running from
everything: my gayness, my Indianness. You see, once
I started on my journey as a Two-Spirit person I
became healthy.

Ben made a connection between 'getting in touch' with his Indianness and

living a healthy life (as did many other people). To some extent, Two-Spirit society

and identity can be seen as a way to provide "culturally relevant interventions" called

for by researchers among American Indians (DePoy and Bolduc 1997, Rowell 1997).

However, Two-Spirit identity and society are seen by many people as more than a

means to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, but rather a place to

locate one's spirituality and identity.

Andy: I came out and immersed myself in gay culture. I
moved to LA went out to the bars and did that whole
scene. But there was always some component of it,
some element of it that didn't fit. It was fine but it was
a culture surrounded around sex, especially gay male
culture. It left out the other elements that were part of
who I am, the Indian and the gay elements that never
communicated with one another.

I stumbled across this Two-Spirit community at a major
gay event in Washington and I figured out that I was
not the only one who feels this way. I was already
doing work in the Modelo community, but it was HIV
work for gays not Two-Spirit. The work I was doing
didn't make me feel any better because I was
experiencing the same racism and discrimination in the
gay community that I was experiencing in the general
white community. I also needed that spiritual
connection only found in the Indian traditions.

Participation in the Eagleton group fluctuated dramatically from the time I began the project to the time that my own participation began to slow. I discussed the fluctuations with Ben and Mick on several occasions. They explained to me that attendance in such organizations fluctuated based on the seasons, individual needs and various other factors. However, they noticed many of the trends that I had noticed. Several of the once foundational members of the group were attending sporadically, and sometimes not at all. Ben, who had been in the group for 5 years, explained that many of the group members in the past had gone through the cycle that I had witnessed of slowing in participation. He pointed to factors such as new relationships, 'falling off the wagon', and conflicts with other members. He was quick to point out: "Once these queens wanna get healthy again, they will come back, but not until they decide they need us again."

Resisting invisibility: recruiting, bars and gay community awareness

Going "out to the bars" was a frequent activity when I would go to Modelo. Modelo, as a major city, had multiple thriving gay bars, restaurants and a "gay district." About two months after Sheila temporarily moved to the Eagleton area, I took her with me on one of my research trips to Modelo so she could visit family and friends. While in Modelo we went to a local gay restaurant and gay bars with her sister and a few people from the Modelo group. When we arrived at the restaurant, we were put at the very back in a corner, despite the fact that there were many better tables throughout the restaurant. When I mentioned this, Glen replied, "We're Indian what did you expect." I was taken aback by this statement, mostly because my assumptions of "diversity" in the gay community were still slightly intact. When we

got to a local Western theme gay bar, at which Sheila and Glen were regulars, we got a table and began ordering drinks. Eventually, all of us made our way out to the dance floor to two-step. After the music had stopped, we accumulated at the edge of the dance floor, and during the conversation, standing side by side facing one another, formed into a circle. I laughed and pointed this out, and Sheila's sister Donna replied with something along the lines of protecting ourselves by knowing who our relatives are and turning inward out of necessity.

One issue often faced by both the Eagleton and Modelo groups is not only keeping group participants involved, but also getting new people involved in Two-Spirit society. Both groups tried various means of making contact with other gay and lesbian Natives. For example, the Eagleton group frequently ran advertisements in the local gay and Indian newspapers giving contact numbers at the clinic. Also, Ben would often go to powwows and talk to people he knew from the local gay scene but were not involved in Two-Spirit social and religious activities. Modelo members would also use newspaper advertisements, list serve announcements, and public outreach as ways to expose people to the group. Seeking out potential group members in popular gay society such as the bar scene, while attempting to maintain a separation from popular gay society, proved to be a particularly difficult and contentious task. Efforts to find other Two-Spirit people were complicated by racism rendering Indians invisible in the gay community, and homophobia rendering gays and lesbians invisible in the Indian community. Public outreach became further complicated by differing opinions on the ways to reach the 'invisible' gay and lesbian Indians. Issues about participation in activities focused within the gay community

drew many varied opinions, as did public outreach to gays and lesbians at Indian events.

Besides being present in gay bars talking to people, often Modelo group members would perform exhibition dances or singing in regalia as a part of larger cabaret or benefit shows in gay bars and gay community sponsored events. Some individuals saw attempts at creating gay community awareness and participation in large scale events such as gay pride activities, as giving too much to a community that had previously and continues to be hostile to them by promoting an unhealthy lifestyle for Two-Spirits and ignoring an Indian presence in outreach and politics. Recruiting and performing and outreach in the gay community, particularly bars, brought into question for some people whether such activities were "proper" Two-Spirit behavior. Doing things like wearing your regalia to and performing in bars where there is alcohol present, performing dance and singing exhibitions with an implied "Indians on parade" feel, and spending time supporting larger gay community organizations were understood as Two-Spirit activities with both negative and positive consequences. I was often reminded that performing in bars and having floats in gay pride parades have as their goal community awareness. As Sheila, who advocates this form of outreach, pointed out, such performances create a positive image of Two-Spirits and Native gay and lesbians which may help other indigenous gays gain self and social acceptance. The goal, according to Sheila, is "bringing more gay and lesbian Indians into the circle of Two-Spirit."

Sheila detailed many times her and Glen's participation in bar-sponsored multi-performer cabaret style acts, as well as dancing and singing during gay

community benefit gatherings and conferences. In most cases these performances involved Sheila dressing in a beaded buckskin or jingle dress, and Glen in his straight dance regalia[25], with other people singing at a large powwow drum or hand drum. According to Sheila, these performances were directed at letting other Indian people know that one could find compatibility between their Indian identity and sexual preference. Under the pretext of awareness these performances also had as their goal to emphasize differences within the gay community, and differences between Two-Spirit people and non-Indian gays. In many ways Glen and Sheila's performances were what Scott refers to as "small arms fire" (1985: 22-27). In Scott's study of Indonesian class relations, the symbolic content of social inequality is passed through the observation of class behavior and reified through the stories the poor and the rich tell about one another (1985). Accordingly these performances "gain much of their power as symbols by virtue of their reality as concrete human examples of the behavior they have come to signify." Small arms fire emerges as "a critique of things as they are as well as a vision of things as they should be" (Scott 1985: 23). Therefore, Sheila and Glen dressing in full regalia, singing songs in Lakota, and taking their performances seriously, challenges the invisibility of Indians in the gay community. Simultaneously, these public performances, while disarticulating 'gay', also provide a point of social and symbolic reference for gay Indians in the audience. Sheila often reminded me that her presence as a male-bodied person dressing in female regalia also provided a disjuncturing of popular assumptions about Indians.[26]

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[25] Straight dance is a style of powwow dance with a specific style of regalia influenced mostly from the Plains Indians. It is also the style of regalia used in wardance societies such as the Ponca Holuska.
[26] The ways in which Sheila's performances in powwow dancing are used to disjuncture Indian community assumptions are addressed in chapters four and five.

When seeing her dressed in female regalia, other gay Natives would recognize a complimentary relationship between being Indian and their sexual or gender orientation. She further saw performances as a way to break down anxieties that Indians have about participating in their culture, as well as the alienation they may feel in the generic gay community. After performances people would frequently come up to talk to them expressing an interest in the Modelo society. Frequently, when I would inquire about new members, she would tell me that they had come to the group through a connection made at one of the local gay bars.

> Sheila: We are constantly fighting the fact that the gay community nowadays does not recognize the Two-Spirit person. When I was in Modelo, I was the campaign queen for the Two-Spirit group. Many of the gay organizations never heard of us, they never knew anything about Indian Two-Spirits. Indians to them are just drunks in the bars and that's all they see. They never knew there was a group and when they found that out they picked the person who was the most traditional looking; their own personal token Sacajawea.

While Sheila is a proponent of gaining visibility in bars, certain members of the Modelo and Eagleton groups criticize recruiting in bars. Detractors most often cite the negative effects of the gay lifestyle, as well as the hostility toward Indians in popular gay hangouts. Andy in particular is the greatest proponent of not recruiting in bars. Simply being in a gay bar is seen as representing a negative image of Two-Spirits. Most realize the utilitarian function of gay bars as a means to find friends, sex and relationships. However, many times I heard of Andy being critical of Sheila and other people for "giving too much to the gay community." Andy, Jay, Robert and others perceive performing in bars as equivalent to the kitchy displays of Indianness frequently found in stereotypical representations of Native Americans. When

discussing others' bar performances, they would invoke the history of Indian

exhibition dancing for white visitors to the reservation. In this way, many see gay bar

performances as contributing to white gay community domination over Two-Spirit

people, despite the assumed awareness they were intended to bring.

The Modelo group's participation in the 2001 Modelo Gay Pride Parade is a

telling example of the ways symbolic action is interpreted differently by group

members. According to Sheila, the float for the parade was fairly simple in its design

on a flatbed trailer with a raised platform where they placed an individual dressed in

"regalia." Participation in the parade was already an issue of controversy, but the

"regalia" became the point of contention for group members. The individual standing

on the platform was wearing only a faux fur breach cloth and a war bonnet made of

turkey feathers. Many of the Native people at the parade as well as those who

participated saw this as creating a negative image of Two-Spirit people akin to an

endorsement for Indian symbols as mascots. However, Sheila saw the regalia as

being more easily absorbed by the mostly white gay community. She felt that if

everyone dressed in their dance regalia and looked very serious, the gay community

would be less likely to take notice. Sheila told me, "We were trying to make 'Indian'

campy, so we would connect with those [white] queens on some level." Other

Modelo group members disagreed with the motives, seeing it as not their

responsibility to make Two-Spirit intelligible to the broader gay community on any

other level than specifically Indian.

Despite the efforts at 'recruitment,' the number of individuals participating in

Two-Spirit social activities changed little during the year and a half I spent actively

involved in both communities. The sheer number of Indian people I knew from local communities, powwows and ceremonies who I then saw in gay bars is surprising to me. I was further surprised when those people involved in Indian communities and the gay community separately vehemently declined to participate in Two-Spirit society and social activities. Mick, Ben and I had a discussion about this issue, where I became somewhat of an informant.

Brian: The other night I was out with some of my friends who are not Two-Spirit people. I was at a "straight" bar, and there was a whole group of gay Indians that I had seen out with Sheila before. I started talking to them, and one of them said 'you aren't gonna start talking about that damn group [Two-Spirit] again are you?' Mick, what do you attribute to that attitude?

Mick: They may have had a negative experience in the group or with group members before. They may be in denial about having HIV or their risks for that. It could be the alcohol thing. I mean for my information, when you were talking to them, did you get an inkling of why they didn't want to participate?

Brian: One guy, I think he is Cheyenne. For him the issue was being 'out'. There were also some Navajo people who said they had never been around the Indian community. They said that they had grown up in Arizona, and everyone thought they were Mexican, and that was just fine with them. In some way, they didn't care to be identified as Indian.

Mick: So they don't have any connection with their Indianness?

Brian: Right. That's the idea I got from them. They also, to some extent, appeared to be worried about the real Indian thing. You know being judged about their knowledge and the way they look.

Mick and Ben went on to tell me that they had always had difficulties getting people who they "knew from the bars" to participate in the group. They saw the prohibition on alcohol at events as a potential reason. In light of my comment, both Ben and Mick acknowledged that issues surrounding authenticity also came to bear on participation. Also, many people were reluctant to be seen with known Two-Spirits at powwows and other Indian events for fear of encountering homophobia. Fear of "being exposed" as a Two-Spirit, or being associated with a marginalized group within the Indian community, is perceived to be the single greatest deterrent to reaching potential group members.

Efforts at recruitment by the Eagleton society were most complicated by fears of being "outted" in the Indian community. Often the Indian Clinic would have a table set up at local powwows, where Ben and Mick would often sit as representatives of the Eagleton group. They would hand out condoms, information on HIV/AIDS and attempt to talk to people about the Two-Spirit group. This form of outreach represented particular difficulties for individuals who did not want to be associated as gay in the Indian community. Many of the people such booths were designed to make contact with would not approach Ben or Mick out of fear of being associated with gay Indians. Some Eagleton group members expressed dismay at the setting up of booths for outreach, but were even more disconcerted by Ben's frequent outreach visits to powwows and tribal community events. Ben would often attend small powwows and distribute "snag bags" which contained condoms, HIV/AIDS information and business cards for him and Mick. For the most part people were afraid that non-gay Indians would find such materials "offensive." As we will see in chapter four many

individuals, especially in the Eagleton society, had a fear of being associated with gay Indians, and as a result usually maintained a distance from such things as the clinic booth and participation in Two-Spirit events.

Two-Spirits and 'Real' Indians

Just as issues of authenticity surrounding generic Indian and tribal identity are expressed in terms of blood, appearance and culture, often so to are conceptions of Two-Spirit identity. As often as I heard individuals detail the social, sexual and spiritual requirements of being Two-Spirit, I heard people readily dismiss individuals identifying as Two-Spirit based on how they looked, whether they were enrolled in a tribe and if the tribe required a high or low blood quantum, whether they participated in their tribal culture, and if their upbringing, behavior and knowledge is characterized as 'traditional.' In this way, recognition of Two-Spirit identity became indistinguishable from the criteria an individual would have to meet to legitimately be considered Indian by most dominant community standards. Many individuals showed a disdain for regulations such as "Indian pedigrees" (blood quantum), ceremonial access rules and the adherence to the rules of powwow performance. But for the most part I witnessed, and experienced first hand, the exacting privilege maintained by those individuals who were characterized as phenotypically "traditional" (looking Indian), grew up on the "rez," or had politically and socially powerful families in the Indian community. The dispensation that certain individuals experienced is almost exclusively a result of their adherence to dominant standards, Indian and non-, about who is the ideal type of person to be called Indian. Inevitably, individuals are subject to the discourse on Indian identity as a means to determine

who is legitimately Two-Spirit and Indian as well as who is not. Individuals become

subjects of questions of authenticity, public and private, often grounded in the

semiotic markers between such socially recognized identities as Two-Spirit, gay,

Indian and white. Accordingly, it is within the discursive dialectics on Indian, gay,

and Two-Spirit, where the performance of identity is figured, translated and acted out,

resulting in a set of exclusionary and inclusive features based on notions of cultural

and racial authenticity.

Phillip Deloria's study of "Indian play" discusses the intersection of race and

cultural practice where individuals who "... imagined an accessible Indian culture,

also refigured racial difference around at least three variables – genetic quantum,

geographical residence, and cultural attitude. The highest possible degree of

authenticity inhered in the traditional, reservation-based full blood. The least

authentic figure was the progressive, urban, low-quantum mixed-blood ..." (1998:

143). The "commingling of racial essentialism with the behavior that helped define a

culture," as Deloria points out, complicates perceptions of the authentic, thereby

making all behavior, attitudes, appearance and practice subject to racialization (1998:

143). In this sense, all recognition of Indian and Two-Spirit performance becomes

subject to evaluation based on the phantasm of a racial and cultural authenticity. It is

within the dominant discourse of racialized culturist knowledge presented as "the

real" that Two-Spirit subjectivity is partially realized.

Constructions of "the authentic" are fashioned in "opposition to a perceived

state of inauthenticity." The discursive requirements of authenticity rely on signs and

symbols of inauthenticity to provide "a steady screening of representations ... a

constant attitude that one must take toward oneself" (Foucault 1986: 63). What constitutes the 'real' is then conceived of and embodied in individual and collective relationships to representations of the authentic. "The ways people construct authenticity depend upon both the traumas that define the maligned inauthentic and upon the received heritage that has defined the authentic in the past." Accordingly, individuals who seek the real have already brought into question their own authenticity and must "locate authenticity in the figure of an Other" (Deloria 1998: 101).

Changing ideas about authenticity through time have exacerbated Two-Spirit alienation. That is, once the Indian community came to question the social status of Two-Spirit people, then they became inauthentic in many communities. However, those individuals who are perceived or perceive themselves as having an authenticity recognized as valuable by the Indian community are in a favorable position over those who do not. Individuals who have access to the accepted signs and symbols of the Indian community, such as the desired phenotype or a prominent Indian name, tend to be more accepted by Two-Spirit society. Access to dominant notions of authenticity structurally divided notions of Two-Spiritness as it could be behaviorally and physically manifested in signs and symbols. As we have seen with the discursive differences between gay and Two-Spirit, we can see similar attitudes in Two-Spirit uses of dominant ideas on what constitutes authentically Indian, and thus authentically Two-Spirit.

Blood Two-Spirits

Most of the people I interviewed and interacted with showed disdain for the symbolic regulations of blood quantum, cultural knowledge and phenotype, and the ways they were used to alienate people. At the same time, I witnessed almost everyone, including myself, consciously and unconsciously using these standards to identify themselves, or as a measure in the determination of one's Indianness or Two-Spiritness. Ideas about what constitutes Two-Spirit, Indian, wannabe and non-Indian readily intersect mainstream Indian controversies over blood quantum, appearance, and cultural heritage. Issues of race in Indian society came up frequently in general discussions and interviews. Most had strong feelings on racial essentialism as disturbing and destructive. One of the most telling sources of opinion is the year-long debate over the criteria required to gain access to a Two-Spirit web post, which ironically turned into a debate over what characteristics a person should possess to be considered Two-Spirit. When establishing the gay and lesbian Indian email post group, Juan, the creator and manager of the group was grappling with the issue of who should be allowed to join the group conversation and be able to view some of the personal information being disseminated by email. To determine who could get access, Juan posed the question, "Does appearance, cultural practices, knowledge of tribal customs, etc., impact your decisions of whom is Two-Spirit?" For over a year this single question created a sometimes fierce dialogue directly addressing the issue of blood and community derived identity. Immediately, group members seized the opportunity to make their views on Two-Spirit identity known, which inevitably included opinions on race, blood quantum and cultural participation:

Abequa:　　　... my point is that the shared perspectives and

values are more likely to be common ground for those whose quantum is one quarter or more. I really don't care if one is enrolled or not ... I am more interested in the socialization aspects and the non-dilution of our voices. One example is the fact that a person who is 1/64th (or less) Indian can be an enrolled member of the Cherokee tribe. Now, am I to believe this person is likely to have our shared values and should automatically be part of this group? Don't think so. If this person ever has a nosebleed, (s)he will be in deep shit ...

Istahiba: What you are asking us to define is: Who is Native? An easy way is, of course, enrollment. But how accurate is this? Does this mean that those individuals who are not enrolled are not, in fact, Native simply because they are not eligible for benefits?

Practice of culture is not necessarily an indicator either. Many of us know people who are full blood and do not identify with their heritage at all. There are also people who, like myself, are mixed blood and quite light, who are vested in their culture and those practices. I believe that we need to try very hard to not exclude those who may not be able to document their lineage but believe themselves to be two-spirited.

Paul: This is a very emotional issue for groups of our culture to address. In my tribe acceptance was granted for many diverse groups of people, not only those born into the tribe. Persons who had proven themselves to be worthy of tribal acceptance ranged from white, Black, Hispanic and other Indian tribes. Acceptance did not mean specifically tribal membership although some were granted this privilege but all were allowed to live and participate freely with the tribal consigns. As for myself, I am an enrolled but I also have to stop and consider what that specifically means. Blood quantum to me is a term that was invented by the white government as a means to insure all the subdued, a polite term, Indian nations to be recorded on the rolls of the Bureau of Indian Affairs approved registry.

Clearly certain people made an unambiguous connection between individual

definitions of what it means to "be Two-Spirit" and generic conceptions about blood

and cultural Indians in contemporary society. In seeking acceptance among Indian people, Two-Spirits readily articulated with dominant community standards about authenticity to themselves and one another. As we can see opinions varied from those who saw Indian identity based on blood and those who saw it embedded in community participation and recognition. Important about this debate is the ways in which on going debates in tribal communities are reflected in Two-Spirit ideas of identity.

Considering that more than three quarters of the Two-Spirit people I knew would identify as mixed blood, many of them showed tremendous contempt for blood quantum as an indicator of Two-Spiritness, or as a prerequisite for individuals to participate in Two-Spirit society. Despite an individual's knowledge of his/her tribal culture or generic Indian culture, people were readily included and excluded based on their appearance, cultural practice and blood quantum. Individual sense of social position, as well as other's perceptions of a person's sense of social position, were firmly imbued in self-representation around blood and community participation.

Andy: I have worked very hard in my life to cast off all vestiges of colonialism. I am a mixed blood and I know very well who I am and have no doubts about how "Indian" I am. What I have experienced, however, even within the indigenous communities, are forms of racism so deep seated they could only have come from teachings of the white man. There is, at times, a righteousness with those that have been registered that I lose all hope for there ever being a return to the "place of harmony" that our ancestors knew.

Glen: Attitudes are there where people say, who is he to tell me something cause he's mixed blood. I can see why people are suspicious of mixed bloods because of the wannabe thing, and when people meet me I can tell they are a little standoffish.

In one example, Jeff is often readily positioned as white based on his pale

skin, blonde hair and blue eyes despite being an enrolled member in a Southeastern

tribe, speaking the language fluently, leading ceremonial dances, conducting healing

ceremonies, and having an extensive knowledge of tribal and Indian traditions. Many

people told me that when they first met Jeff at Two-Spirit events they were suspect of

his authenticity because of his appearance, but grew to trust and respect him because

of his knowledge. As Stuart told me, "Jeff's knowledge is amazing and he is

probably more Indian than any of us." Conversely, many of the 'rez' Indians and as

some referred to themselves 'urban full bloods,' maintained skepticism of Jeff's

position as a cultural leader within Two-Spirit society because he is a "quarter blood"

and "looks white." Therefore, despite his performance of certain ceremonial dances,

and those performances being informed and sanctioned by elders in his community,

he was privately challenged on the authenticity of these performances. The

relationship between cultural practice and its racialization came to bear on every

aspect of Jeff's Two-Spirit and generic Indian involvement. Although these

assumptions and prejudices are often the standard for the generic Indian and tribal

communities, the racialization of cultural practice among Two-Spirit people goes far

in showing the subject effects of dominant ideas on social relations of already

marginalized individuals. Glen sees his effort at participation in the Indian

community as complicated by blood related authenticity.

> Glen: Where I'm from there are more full bloods there, and
> they think you are some white guy coming in there
> tell'n them they need to accept Two-Spirit people.
> Whereas if you go where there are more mixed bloods

> ... it is easier there. Blood issues are decisive in all
> places and being mixed blood has a lot to do with it
> because people look at you suspiciously. I see how
> people look at me at powwows sometimes, especially
> when I win the competition. Being around mixed
> bloods is a lot easier.

Glen's statements reflect a persistent assumption among Two-Spirit people; that their alienation from communities based on their sexual orientation will be exacerbated by issues of racialized authenticity. Individuals who felt that they may not meet the phenotypic or blood quantum standards to "be considered authentic" by others had considerable anxiety about social acceptance. The overriding assumption was that mixed blood individuals would be more accepting of other mixed bloods, but also more accepting of sex and gender differences. However, in many cases individuals recognized as maintaining various degrees of Indianness participated in some form of discernment determining other's acceptance and participation.

Two-Spirits and wannabe's

Glen, Matt and Jeff were putting up a teepee at the Wenakuo campsite to use for meetings and ceremonies. A few other people and I were helping out by holding onto lodge poles. Glen was clearing rocks and twigs out of the way where the teepee was going. A little pine sapling was in the way of one of the poles, and Glen jerked it out of the ground, roots and all, tossing it into the brush. Immediately a girl I did not know moaned, holding her chest, and said "Oh God, I felt that." We all started cracking up at what we honestly thought was a joke. However, we quickly learned that she was very serious, and very upset at Glen's lack of respect for nature, reminding everyone "such disrespect was not the Indian way." News of this "freakish" and "granola" behavior spread through the camp rapidly, particularly the

men's camp, and soon became a running joke. This event has become a notorious example of "wannabe behavior" among not only the Two-Spirit people present at the camp, but has been told to me as an anecdotal story a year and a half later despite my being there to witness it. The girl's community status as a wannabe or granola was exacerbated by her lightness of complexion, not knowing much of her tribal history, the "new-agey" things she said and did and the 'hippie-esque' aspect of her clothing.

Scholars have pointed out the many ways that the gay and lesbian community latched on to early academic representations of the term and concept "berdache" (Thomas and Jacobs 1999, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1998). North American gender diversity was readily equated with Western notions of homosexuality. As a result, the "berdache" became a social and political symbol widely used in the non-Indian gay community. As we see with Anne Bolin's study of pre and postoperative transsexuals, the Western translation of the "berdache" became a symbol for them and the namesake of their support group (1988). Native gay and lesbian scholars have been critical of this appropriation and cite it as another reason for preferring Two-Spirit. However, the crucial aspect of this appropriation is the how individuals who seek to access this history through associating themselves with Two-Spirit society affect interpretations of who has legitimate claim to that identity.

Greater acceptance for gender diversity plays a major role in the appeal of Two-Spirit society -- not only for individuals who have Indian ancestry and were not raised in an Indian household, but also non-Indian New Age gays and lesbians. Maltz and Archambault speak to this phenomenon as a general trend in American society:

> Increasingly, another different image of American Indians has
> emerged, again an image to satisfy the needs of non-Indian Americans

to imagine who they are not and who they could have been. In a time of ecology movements, New Age religious movements, health movements, feminist movements, and gay rights movements, the American Indian has once again captured the imagination of those people who are exploring who it is they wish they were. Popular culture has been captivated by images of Indians as ecologists in harmony with nature, as holy men, as Iroquois matriarchs, and as 'berdaches' free to explore and express their individual sexual and gender identities (1995: 242).

Accordingly, there are a significant number of people involved in Two-Spirit society who have vague Indian ancestry, which automatically makes them suspect by members who "grew up traditional," on the rez, or have worked their way into a position of cultural authority in the community. A separation from new age gays and lesbians is important for many Two-Spirit people. They see any association between Two-Spirit and the non-Indian appropriation of Indian signs and symbols as a means of inauthenticating them to dominant Indian society. As Sheila said, "I don't want people thinking Two-Spirit is some kind of gay granola thing." Andy echoed this with, "Two-Spirit is not a gay club for people trying to find their past lives." As Ben and Sheila have showed me, all one has to do is search the internet for a few minutes to find various websites advertising Two-Spirit societies and events with a seemingly spurious Indian content. Individuals who do not identify themselves tribally and have names like "running buffalo" or some variation on the word "bear" run most of these events. Many of the people who run these "Two-Spirit getaways" are unknown to most of the Two-Spirit people represented here.

Another example of someone who is known as a wannabe is Ken, a man that Sean met on the Internet. Ken came to the Eagleton retreat from another state and acted in ways so unacceptably "wannabe" that he was forbidden from returning.

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From the time of my arrival until the last night at the powwow I watched the retreat participants rapidly alienate Ken. No one spoke about Ken's behavior while at the retreat, however a few weeks afterward he became the topic of several conversations. People pointed out that Ken made a considerable effort to "swoop" on every person he met at the retreat.[27] His blatant seeking of sex with other participants is seen as undermining the purpose of the retreat and played a significant part in his alienation. Although "snagging" does take place, it is often covert. Furthermore, participants do not snag with more than one person over the retreat, and sex between people who do not know one another or who are not involved in a partner relationship is rare. Therefore, Ken's indiscriminant attempts at snagging were seen as offensive. People were also critical of Ken's substantial effort to "look Indian" by wearing a fingerwoven belt and garters over his everyday clothes, a turkey feather in his hair the whole weekend, and t-shirts with air brushed Indian art on them. However, it was Ken's inappropriate behavior at the retreat powwow when people became the most leery of his presence and questioned his "Indianness."

Individuals who are recognized among the Two-Spirit community as having significant knowledge of the "right way" are looked to for leadership in conducting ceremonies and events. Individuals unfamiliar to the group seldom attempt to take on leadership roles. However, Ken attempted to direct the order and direction of the Grand Entry procession around the drum. He also addressed the people in the audience without "talking through" a community leader. Having an elder or the emcee speak for you is considered polite at most Indian events and a sign of respect to the individuals hosting the gathering. Ken's dance regalia also contributed to his

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[27] Swoop is a term used to describe someone pursuing another person for sex.

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labeling as a wannabe. There are particular rules about the components of men's dance regalia, especially straight and traditional dance categories. Straight dancers generally wear a porcupine quill roach on their heads with an eagle tail feather in a "spinner" sticking straight up. Instead of an eagle feather, Ken had a turkey feather. People also pointed out that Ken wore moccasins that resembled house shoes, had a gaudy dance stick, carried a turkey dance fan, and hopped around like a "white guy." Ken's transgressions further led group members to question his tribal affiliation, and thus his claim to Indianness and Two-Spirit identity.

Ken's behavioral transgressions combined with his performance readily drew his authenticity into question. However, Ken's as well as the "granola's" attempts at Indianness would have received a similar reaction in any Native community. Individual's who do not adhere to community standards of behavior and representation are often alienated, held in suspicion, or "shamed out." By alienating Ken, the Eagleton group maintained their reliance on dominant Indian community standards of acceptable behavior and performance when judging an individual's authenticity. Inevitably one's degree of authenticity determines access to the identity Indian and Two-Spirit. Two-Spirit society has a customary higher level of acceptance of new comers than mainstream Indian or tribal groups. However, representations of symbolic Indianness are equally as guarded in Two-Spirit society as they are among the larger Native community. Avoiding being known as a wannabe involves a careful management of one's behavior as well as the use and manipulation of Indian signs and symbols.

tribal Two-Spirits

The emphasis placed on individual tribal affiliation became crucial in distinguishing Two-Spirits (and Indians) from non-Indian gays and wannabes. However, more importantly tribal affiliation became an internal litmus test for authenticity in individuals, and their cultural beliefs and practices. Often in mainstream Indian society, conceptions of identity are tied to nationalist and essentialist interpretations of tribal identities (Sturm 1997, 1998, 2002). As Sturm found among the Cherokee: "Cherokee identity is socially and politically constructed around hegemonic notions of blood, color, race, and culture that permeate discourses of social belonging in the United States ... racial ideologies have filtered from the national to the local level, where they have been internalized, manipulated, and resisted in different ways ..." (1998: 230). Accordingly, dominant ideologies about what racial and cultural characteristics qualify as legitimately Indian, be that tribal or community affiliation, become "local" schemes in Two-Spirit identity. In this way, tribal identities crosscut Two-Spirit identity creating a reliance on dominant racial ideologies for the inclusion and exclusion of individuals. For Two-Spirit people, these ideologies translate into a legitimate claim to tribal identity, but also to community participation.

Tribal and community affiliation added to one's legitimacy as a Two-Spirit person. Individuals from tribes with renowned traditions of gender diversity, such as Navajo nadleehi and Lakota winkte, were often given legitimacy not available to other Two-Spirits. However, general individual tribal affiliation and participation goes further in legitimizing one's identity as Indian and thus Two-Spirit. Accordingly, one's tribal affiliation became a significant aspect of one's Two-Spirit

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identity. At the first Eagleton meeting I attended, I immediately noticed that when we went around the room to introduce ourselves everyone said their name and their tribal affiliation. Tribal affiliation also is important for newcomers. New individuals were often publicly put on the spot about their tribal affiliation. If someone else present shared that affiliation they would ask him or her about their family names to see if they were related and no doubt test their claims.

Tribe switching was a common occurrence for some longstanding members and newcomers. Tribe switching is when individuals appeared to have randomly selected a tribe to claim. I was told that one Eagleton member had originally come to the group and claimed to be Lakota until he found out that there was an active Lakota in the group. Later he switched to Chippewa, and during my fieldwork he claimed identity as Metis. Despite this person being "nice" and "good for the group" many people were disturbed by his appropriation of various tribal identities which he could not support. In both the Eagleton and Modelo groups I encountered many people who I was told were tribe switchers and who could not support their claim to a particular tribal identity. Some group members were so troubled by tribe switching that they completely alienated people who could not verify in practice, phenotype or documentation their tribal citizenship.

In contrast to "tribe switchers" and "wannabes" were those individuals who had "legitimate claims" to a tribal identity, either through CDIB card or community participation. Individuals who had families with strong tribal community ties were often seen as more legitimately Indian than those who were not "part of a community" or had CDIB cards and did not culturally participate. In fact, only a few

people in both the Modelo and Eagleton groups participate in the events of a particular tribe or have families who actively participated in tribal culture.

Matt carried a considerable amount of authority as someone who is highly involved with his tribal community. Matt, as are many of the young males in his tribe, was socialized into the ceremonial community as a young child by his grandparents. Matt's family is also active on the powwow scene. Therefore, from an early age he accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge about his tribal community as well as more generic Indian culture. Matt's knowledge and "flawless presentation" at dances is admired by many of the Two-Spirit people from both groups. During the Eagleton retreat Matt was called upon to advise on the powwow and make "traditional" meals. However, most important for many people was what Matt represents as not only an "ideal" Indian with community approval, but also as a Two-Spirit person. Individuals readily compare their own cultural participation and regalia to Matt with a sense of admiration and longing. I heard numerous individuals comment that they wished that their families were involved in tribal culture, or that their families were there to help them put their dance regalia together.

Being actively involved in the multi-tribalism of Two-Spirit society does not take the place of tribal affiliation in legitimizing someone as Indian. As Jay pointed out: "Just because someone claims to be Two-Spirit, doesn't mean they're Indian." Mick is was recognized as being the most concerned with "proving" his tribal identity. Mick had been attempting to enroll in a Southeastern tribe for at least the last five years. During my fieldwork he was still waiting on a determination from the tribe as to his eligibility for membership. When I asked Mick why tribal membership

was so important he replied that "he wanted proof" not only for himself but mostly to show others who question his identity. Numerous people commented that they saw any quest for tribal membership as meaningless without cultural participation.

Two-Spirit and Performing the 'Traditional'

Two-Spirit identity relies heavily on a recognized connection between historic roles and contemporary practices conceptualized in terms of the highly regarded "traditional." Thomas and Jacobs have pointed out: "The term two-spirit originally was intended to facilitate a linguistic distancing of Native Americans and First Nations gays and lesbians from non-Native gays and lesbians" (1999: 97). The conception of Two-Spirit as a different kind of person, separate from mainstream gay society, and connected with 'traditional' Indian culture rooted in the historical record and cultural memory challenges dominant ideology about same sex relations. Williams notes: "The way out of self-hatred is either to deny any meaningful difference, or to construct an appreciation for the gifts of one's uniqueness. Difference is transformed from 'deviant' to 'exceptional.' The difference is emphasized, becoming a basis for respect rather than stigma" (1986: 61). Two-Spirit people frequently strategically emphasize a connection with tradition, in terms of historic gender diversity and contemporary practice. As a result, the notion of the "traditional" as it is a signifier for acceptable and ideal types of behavior is used to further differentiate Two-Spirit people from mainstream gay society. Therefore, I would argue that the emphasis on traditional practice has a two-fold purpose: to legitimize Two-Spirit people to the Indian community in which they seek acceptance; and separate themselves from the negative stereotypes of popular gay lifestyle.

Scholars have pointed out the link between contemporary Two-Sprit and historic gender diversity as a legitimizing factor for Two-Spirit self-acceptance as well as acceptance in generic and tribal Indian society. Roscoe (1991, 1993, 1998), Thomas and Jacobs (1999), Lang (1998), Williams (1987), Jacobs, Thomas and Lang (1997) and numerous other scholars emphasize contemporary Two-Spirit connection with historical representations of gender diversity in terms of social, ceremonial and material practices as a means to combat homophobia and stereotypes in Native communities. Also, this connection between historically grounded traditional values/practices and contemporary Two-Spirit people is operationalized to insure a connection between Two-Spirit as a referent for the sign Indian. Therefore, practices such as going to ceremony, powwow dancing, learning rituals, drumming and singing, and making Indian crafts are all framed in terms of Two-Spirit people being "traditional." In these performances of "Indian," Two-Spirit people are locating identity in practices recognized by the dominant ideology as traditional, thereby desiring to meet the performative requirements of Native communities.

Meeting the performative requirements of being Indian emphasizes the ways in which Two-Spirit people are members of the Indian community. At the same time, it emphasizes ways in which Two-Spirit people see themselves as beholden to the Indian community, a community that can be at times perceived as hostile. Two-Spirit people participate in the Indian community in varying degrees, depending on how comfortable they are participating. For some people, attending powwows and Two-Spirit events and just being around other Indians, was enough to get what Sean called "the Indian fix." However, for others, meeting the performative requirements of

being Indian meant asserting oneself in public space as a dancer, or perfecting

ceremonial knowledges and performances. Accordingly, legitimizing Two-Spirit as

Indian becomes about fulfilling one's traditional responsibilities through obtaining

ceremonial knowledge, being "better women" through excelling in crafts and

women's work, and being an example for other Two-Spirit people through "good"

community participation.

Two-Spirit and traditional responsibility

Distinctions about who is a Two-Spirit person and who is a "gay Indian"

clearly draw upon the recognition of a contemporary connection with the historic

roles of Two-Spirit ancestors and participation in 'traditional' Native culture.[28] Most

"gay Indians" would quickly draw on historic tolerance and respect as a means to

legitimize their sexual orientation. Conversely, Ben said, "just because they accepted

gays that doesn't mean that they're going to be like, 'hey queens, we love you now.'

We have to be in the community." In this way, people saw individuals as

significantly less Two-Spirit when they did not make an attempt to connect with

Indian culture through developing skills as a medicine person, crafter, or performer,

and when they did not make connections with an Indian community (of which Two-

Spirit community is included).

> Istahiba: 'Gay' and two-spirited are, of course, not the same thing
> since being two-spirited is a far broader concept than
> simply attraction to members of the same sex. The
> concept implies a way of life and a knowledge
> and acceptance of the responsibilities that that entails.

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[28] Chapter 4 details the differing ideas over the "traditional" acceptance of same sex relations and gender crossing in the Indian community. Also discussed are Two-Spirit attempts at accessing traditional knowledge, practices and public performance and how access is complicated by assumptions about Two-Spirit and gay identity in the Indian community.

The acceptance of Native ways of life is important in distinguishing oneself from gay society. Improving the quality of a person as an Indian entails choosing to emphasize one's ethnic identity over gayness through cultural practice and responsibility to a community. As Jeff told me, "It isn't enough to walk around and say 'Hey I'm an Indian.'"

Two-Spirit people make an explicit connection between a commitment to Indian society and social and personal acceptance. Therefore, acceptance could only be gained through one's realization of responsibility through Indian and Two-Spirit community participation. In some ways, this commitment resembles the concept of "fulfilling the work" that Jack Schultz observed among Oklahoma Seminole Baptists (2000). He shows that being a productive and respected member of a Seminole Baptist community resides in one's consistent participation in social occasions or worship services. Behind this participation is the notion of *vtotketv* or "work." Work or "fulfilling the work" is to "offer prayers, lead songs, or direct any aspect of the worship" (Schultz 2000: 18). In similar ways, performing the work of Two-Spirit resides in (re)establishing one's connection to tribal or generic Indian communities, and achievement of the expectations of the identity Two-Spirit. Two-Spirits frame this "work" in terms of "fulfilling one's traditional role." Fulfilling one's traditional role encompasses not only being a member of a contemporary community, but accessing the known history of roles once performed by the Two-Spirit ancestors. Fulfilling traditional roles becomes translated to perfecting ceremonial knowledge, "women's work," and a commitment to participation in a community.

Two-Spirit people have different ideas about what qualifies as fulfilling their traditional roles. For many people it means simply participating in Indian society on a social level. Going to powwows (and not dancing), being seen, and socializing are ways in which Two-Spirit people can participate in Indian society and not commit themselves to potentially time-consuming pursuits. Also, by participating minimally individuals do not have to "put themselves out there" in forms of public performance. Many times individuals expressed anxiety over taking a role in public Indian events. In one example, we had been pushing Mick for over a year to gourd dance with us. Despite our offering to make his regalia, he refused to participate. He finally admitted that he wanted to wait until he got his "Indian card." The fear of rebuke over not looking "verifiably" Indian, combined with being gay, made him question being accepted in public performance and gave him much anxiety. Many members of both the Eagleton and Modelo society shared these fears. At times Two-Spirit people framed these fears as preventing individuals from fulfilling their traditional roles.

More active individuals, however, saw fulfilling traditional roles as specifically requiring the acquisition of knowledge and the transmission of that knowledge through active participation in Indian communities: Two-Spirit, tribal and general. Active participation inevitably involved confronting many of their fears not only about homophobia, but what the Two-Spirit community saw as the Indian community's requirements of tradition.

> Ben: Once you have established yourself in tradition then
>   you can be given the opportunities to be a leader, be a
>   spiritual guide or a namer. But you can only do that
>   once you are ready.

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Most Two-Spirit people would agree with Ben's statements and, on the whole, felt that any sort of participation in Indian communities required the acquisition of 'traditional' knowledges. Traditional knowledges translated for some people into the basic "do's and don'ts" of Indian society, such as being respectful to elders, not drinking alcohol at Indian events, not drawing attention to oneself needlessly and not pointing at powwows. However, individuals who were more intense viewed traditional knowledges as an understanding of Indian principles and values, historical and contemporary, which were reflected in individual social action and behavior. In this way, individual social participation and perfection of things considered traditional, such as dancing, beading, ceremony, and social obligations, sought to legitimize individuals and Two-Spirit people in general.

Often people reminded me of the role that Two-Spirit people historically held as the 'keepers' of Native culture, and unless they 'perfected' the performance of that culture through ceremonial knowledge and crafts it would continue to be 'lost'. Furthermore, learning, perfecting and performing those knowledges helped to establish and authenticate oneself to Indian and Two-Spirit society.

Glen: It is our responsibility and our duty to approach the people in a good way of course, and say 'I can do this, I can sing these songs, I can do these prayers, I know this ceremony, but when it comes down to it, we are limited in what they allow us to do.

A lot of the young gay Indian people that come out, they have no role models. They come to the city because they want to be around other gay people and all they have is the dominant culture, their lifestyle, and their perception of what gay is. They only see the partying, the sex, going to the clubs, doing the 'gay thing'. When you approach them and say we're having a sweat this weekend, they hesitate 'oh, I don't know,

my white boyfriend wouldn't understand.' In order to be Two-Spirit you have to realize your responsibilities and assume that role. I have a responsibility; I have to pray and I have to keep these traditions going. I have to be an example to the other Indian people. Young Indian people come to the city and they forget about their prayers.

Ben: The way I was taught, the men went to hunt, the women took care of the house, family and the children, we as Two-Spirits were the ones who continued the culture: the spiritualism, the naming, the ceremonies. There was nobody else to do it. We were revered and considered as powerful people. It takes a powerful person to be able to deal with both worlds [male and female] to be spiritual for the people and conduct ceremonies. Being Two-Spirit means being very traditional, it means connecting with the tradition of the tribe.

Andy: So many of the Two-Spirit people, especially those who were coming back after coming to terms with their being indigenous and gender different, really didn't know who they were. They didn't feel comfortable in their own Indigenous communities. They really didn't know what their roles and responsibilities were.

As the aforementioned statements illustrate, fulfilling traditional roles requires a significant commitment on the part of the individual. Not only do many people emphasize the required connection with fulfilling one's roles, but also an emphasis was placed on Two-Spirits being active members in the creation and maintenance of communities. That is, responsibility in traditional roles involves coming "in a good way" to Indian communities and asserting one's knowledge, as well as learning. How subtly that manifests itself is unclear, but it remains that making one's knowledge useful to "the community" is explicitly necessary. In this way the

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contemporary connects with the "usefulness" of Two-Spirit people historically and provides a recurrent reason for acceptance among Indian society.

Reclaiming ceremonial roles

Emphasis on reclaiming Two-Spirit traditional ceremonial knowledge is often equated with the ways in which Two-Spirit people can be reincorporated into tribal and Native society. In part, learning to conduct ceremonies is considered a crucial step in fulfilling one's traditional roles. That is, if an individual is seeking recognition as a Two-Spirit person in the 'traditional' sense, then they are expected to obtain some form of ceremonial understanding at the least and ideally participate as a member of a community. Providing and teaching the ceremonies to other Two-Spirit people is also emphasized as an aspect of traditional role performance. Making one's knowledge of ceremonies accessible by conducting ceremonies or teaching them is also crucial. By conducting and learning ceremonies, Two-Spirit people see a distinct link between themselves and the ceremonial and social roles of their Two-Spirit ancestors. This link not only provides a validation of their access to such privileged knowledges, but also seeks to substantiate their insistence that these roles are vital to Indian and tribal society. Perfecting the performance of these knowledges also functions to further distance Two-Spirit people from being defined by their sexual orientation.

Two-Spirit feelings about the necessary connection with tradition are similar to what Fowler observed with Gros Ventre youths' attempts at reviving pipe bundle traditions that were at risk of being lost. Gros Ventre youths "view Indian religion as central to Indian identity ... To youths, involvement with the pipe bundles is

important as it symbolizes commitment to the revival of tradition, on the one hand, and rejection of white culture and repression on the other hand" (1987: 150). By accessing and reviving pipe rituals, the youth were making links with historic traditions, but also seeking to balance the "misfortune encountered by the Gros Ventres." However, the Gros Ventre youth experienced difficulty and resistances in accessing the content of pipe ceremonies because the elders did not see the youth as spiritually or functionally ready (Fowler 1987: 149-56). The Gros Ventre youths, as do Two-Spirit people, understood that once contemporary practices are linked with the "traditional" past, symbolic content is made intelligible to the rest of their society. Therefore, by 'reviving' traditional ceremonies and ceremonial roles, individuals are making themselves intelligible to Indian communities as people qualified for spiritual responsibility and as community members concerned with the well being of the people. The significant relationship between performing ceremonies recognized as traditional, and ceremonies being performed by a person who holds a traditional responsibility, has a considerable symbolic content. Accordingly, it is the access to the symbolic content through the performances of ceremonies, such as sweat lodge, pipe ceremony and stomp dance, where Two-Spirit people are attempting to assert their knowledge and reclaim formal roles.

While at the Wenakuo retreat I attended a couple of lodges led by Andy. Careful attention was paid to instructing people who had never or infrequently attended lodge on the proper mode of entry, prayer and singing. Other than the presence of women, the lodges were little different than any other I had attended before. However, most significant about the Wenakuo lodges were that they were led

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by Two-Spirit people. Although Andy had frequently led lodges for groups of non-Two-Spirits, he did so as an Indian man, not as a "recognized" Two-Spirit person. The Wenakuo lodges represent the performance sanctioned by the Indian community but are linked to the spiritual responsibility of the Two-Spirit person. That is, Andy followed Plains standards for the ritual of the lodge, but was perceived as a link to traditional roles of Two-Spirit people. Therefore, the lodge being run by a Two-Spirit person changed the symbolic content considerably for its participants. In fact, many saw the Two-Spirit lodges as having more medicine than ones run by a non-Two-Spirit person. Andy saw the lodges at the Wenakuo as giving Two-Spirit people the knowledge to conduct themselves properly in the lodge and as an eventual step to leading them in both Two-Spirit and non-Two-Spirit contexts. By learning and performing, individuals were seen as linking themselves to the positions held by their Two-Spirit ancestors and to tradition.

Scholars have frequently confirmed the historical presence of ceremonial, sacred or medicine person roles (shamanistic) for gender diverse individuals in Native North American. Most recently Lang (1998), Roscoe (1991, 1998), Thomas (1999) and Williams (1986) have all given evidence to the position of power and respect that Two-Spirit ancestors held in ceremonial practices.[29] They have also connected that position to contemporary practices among tribes such as the Lakota, Zuni and Navajo. Historically, Two-Spirit people became medicine people according to how well they were perceived to relate to the spirit world. In part, Two-Spirit people were already

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[29] Numerous anthropologists since the turn of the century have given descriptions of gender crossing individuals in shamanistic roles, such as Krober (1925) and Grinnell (1962). Lang gives detail on early records of shamanism, as well as a chart showing which tribes had shamanistic roles for 'women-men' (1998: 151-68).

assumed to have a special connection to the sacred, making them inherently sacrosanct. Among the Lakota, winktes would access the spirit world for the people as an altruistic use of their sacred power. In doing so, they would receive community recognition and prestige. In this way Two-Spirit status fulfilled the Indian notion that one's skills should be used for the benefit of others, insuring the well being of the entire society. In some societies, as in the Lakota, non-Two-Spirit medicine people would consult with Two-Spirit people on particular ceremonies or cures (Lang 1998: 153-7, Williams 1986: 32-4). Also, as Roscoe notes for We'wha, Zuni lhamana's mixed gender status allowed them to move freely among both men and women's spiritual roles and ceremonies. In doing so, lhamana insured the exceptional quality and spirituality of the particular ceremonies in which they participated (1991: 145).

It is historically documented that Two-Spirit people added the extra spiritual context needed to give certain ceremonies a greater sanctity. Therefore, fulfilling one's role as a Two-Spirit person relies on individuals obtaining a particular set of ceremonial and cultural knowledges to insure the continuation of "good" for Indian peoples. All of the Two-Spirit people I knew and talked with knew of the sacred roles, and had read about them in the academic literature.[30] Making a connection with the historical context of their sacred role and doing so benevolently "for the people" is a quintessential aspect in the notion of fulfilling traditional roles. As Andy pointed out: "Two-Spirit people had various roles historically, but what we need to focus on is the ceremonial aspects. That is what we can provide for the people."

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[30] People most often cited Williams (1986) and Roscoe (1991) as evidence supporting the historical sacredness of gender diversity.

Another example is Jeff's participation as a stomp dance leader. Jeff had made a significant effort to learn and perfect ceremonial dance songs and leading. At every retreat Jeff was called upon by the people of Southeastern descent to lead a ceremonial dance. At the retreats, Jeff often took the time out to teach other Two-Spirit people how to use ceremonial rattles, build a proper ceremony fire, and sing songs. Jeff also led ceremonial dances and instructed people in his own community, albeit not as a Two-Spirit. He viewed the perfection of stomp dance as his obligation to his tribal community, but also to the Two-Spirit community. That is, he was fulfilling his traditional role as a male in becoming a ceremonial leader, but simultaneously he was fulfilling his role as a Two-Spirit person by making himself useful to both communities. He reassured me on numerous occasions that as long as he knew the dances he would someday get to lead as a Two-Spirit person.

For many Two-Spirit people, the participation and reverence for Indian religious practices is a crucial aspect of one's identity. However, I observed Two-Spirit people being involved in ceremonial practices at varying levels of participation and learning. Smudging rituals, where individuals "smoke" themselves or each other with sacred herbs such as sage, are the most common kind of participation. Often during Eagleton group meetings, Ben or Mick would light sage in an abalone shell and pass it to each person and they would "bathe" themselves in the smoke. On other occasions, Ben would use an eagle fan to cover each person with sage smoke, the goal being to depurate people of negative energy. I perceived this to have a protection and negation of "hate" function, because protection from a perceptibly hostile society was often mentioned during such ritual occasions. Ben had passed this

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ritual to almost everyone in the Eagleton group, and it is relatively common among the Indian community in general. Other times Ben would lead a talking circle, where individuals would pass around an eagle feather or an abalone shell with sage burning in it and discuss current issues that concerned them. Participation in more organized ceremonial communities, however, is rare among the Eagleton group. There were no Native American Church members of which I was aware. A few people stomp danced regularly, and a couple of others participated in ceremonial focused war dance societies. For most Eagleton members, attending powwows served a ceremonial function. Although few people actually danced in the powwow, at any one time at least ten people would meet at local powwows. As Sean said, "Just being in the presence of the dancers and the drum is a religious experience." Some people, such as Ben, are also involved in local Christian or non-denominational churches with a diversity focus. These individuals tend to mix Native themes with their participation in Judeo-Christian based practices. Other than Ben, providing ceremonial services to others is not the primary focus of Eagleton ceremonial interests. Therefore, on the whole, people from the Eagleton group focus less on specific ceremonial traditions, such as sweat lodges, and center on maintaining their own religious concerns.

Modelo group members, on the other hand, place a particular emphasis on being ceremonially incorporated into communities through their perfection of ritual knowledges and practices. In fact, many people in the Two-Spirit community across North America consider the Modelo group the religious specialists of Two-Spirit society. Often they would be invited to Two-Spirit gatherings to "bring the spiritual component." Therefore, it is within the Modelo group where we see the greatest

collective emphasis on seeking recognition as ceremonial specialists. As many

people recognize, Andy is mostly responsible for this focus, as he was the founder of

the Modelo society, and is highly influential in the path it has taken. As previously

mentioned, one of the essential functions of the Modelo society is teaching Two-

Spirit people Native spiritual ways through their annual Wenakuo retreat.

Consequently, the Modelo group spends a large amount of its collective effort

learning to conduct ceremonies, singing songs and putting together the annual retreat.

These activities include holding sweat lodges, frequently in Modelo, gathering to

learn Sundance songs, and obtaining the proper permissions and training from elders

to conduct rituals. Andy describes the purpose of providing this service:

> We needed to begin the work. Start a school, if we can use that
> analogy. We needed to actually begin teaching people how to go back
> to this spiritual role. Realize that we had to go back to the basics for
> most people, such as learning what the medicines are, how to interact
> with an elder in how you treat them, how to show respect. We had to
> teach stuff that many people learn and take for granted in our
> community. A lot of people hadn't been around their communities;
> some had been adopted and raised by whites. Some of them had
> parents who rejected Indian ways.

> To help this situation, I went to some Two-Spirit elders and told them
> that I wanted to start a camp for teaching, and I asked for their
> blessing. And they told me that they would support such a camp.

In an attempt to "do the work" of teaching people to fulfill their traditional roles,

Andy began to expand his own knowledge of ceremonial practices. Prior to founding

the Wenakuo, he had been studying under some Metis elders.[31]

> Andy: At this point I had already been assisting a woman who
> would put people on the hill and other ceremonies. I
> had been working side by side with her and she was

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[31] The Plains, focus of ceremonial practices among Two-Spirit people has also been noted by Lang (1999), Roscoe (1998) and Williams (1987). Accordingly, Modelo group ceremonial teachings and practice have a Plains emphasis.

teaching me all the ceremonies. She was giving me the
work to do, and I was also helping my uncle Bill. I had
already gone on the hill, but I knew giving this
knowledge to other people was something we had to do.

Other people in the Modelo group had also learned ceremonial practices, or had

religious people in their family, as well. With the knowledge that Andy had gained

from willing elders and the help of other Two-Spirit people, the first Wenakuo was

held at a remote location North of the city. At the first camp they "put someone on

the hill" for a vision quest and conducted various other ceremonies such as pipe and

sweat lodge. Other Two-Spirit retreats included such activities as pipe ceremonies

and lodges, but also included drag shows and other non-religious components.

Consistently, I was reminded that Wenakuo was only for ceremony and ceremonial

training.

Andy: We learned that this was something very much needed
               in the Two-Spirit community. It was very different
               than the other gatherings cause it wasn't a place just to
               come together and laugh, it was a place of prayer.
               Everything we did was teaching people how to be with
               nature, not be destructive, to be prayerful.

The year I attended the Wenakuo, I arrived at the camp right as the person was

coming off the hill. There was not room for me in the lodge where Jim was revealing

his vision. However, after the lodge Sheila told me that when someone goes on the

hill at one of the Wenakuo, they come back with information from the spirits about

themselves and messages for Two-Spirit people. Every year someone returns from

the humblecha with blessings from the ancestors and the creator. The humblecha

serves as a further connection with the Two-Spirit ancestors, for according to many of

the people I spoke with, the ancestors are the ones who are to have brought messages

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to the person on the hill. Putting someone on the hill further reinforces a connection with the historic practice of individuals coming by their Two-Spirit identity during a vision quest. Although the people who go up on the hill at the Wenakuo are already aware of their gender and sexual identity, most endure the ceremony on behalf of Two-Spirit people.

In almost everything I was told about the Modelo society, they reminded me of their primary function as a spiritual group. I was further reminded that learning ceremony and taking those ceremonies into indigenous communities, Two-Spirit and non, is how Two-Spirit people are allowed to fulfill their traditional roles.

Andy: Over the last four years we have had the camp and
             many more people come each year. What this told us,
             is that we were doing things right. It was a space where
             people were able to come together as a community,
             cohesively, and learn the things they needed to learn so
             they could again walk the spiritual path and take on
             those roles in their own communities.

During one of my trips to Modelo I attended a house ceremony in which Andy was the primary assistant to the medicine man. The ceremony was held in a basement with the drum in one corner and the altar in the center of the room. When Sheila, Glen and I arrived Andy was assisting in the preparation of the altar and the patients. Andy is very open about his sexual orientation and I assumed that everyone present was aware of his Two-Spirit identity. From other instances were Two-Spirit people felt unwelcome or threatened I was surprised at the level of respect given to Andy, and the ease with which he performed his duties. After the ceremony I discussed my observations with Sheila, and she simply said, "They trust him because he knows the ways and has proven himself as a ceremonial and spiritual person."

"Better women"

Almost every conversation I had with Sheila included a discussion about beading, crafts or techniques of regalia making. Sheila is well known in the Two-Spirit community as the quintessential Indian craftsperson. Her beadwork is truly astonishing, and coveted among Indians, Two-Spirit and non. Sheila is continuously making new jingle dresses, beading buckskin outfits, making medallions for extra cash and sewing regalia for other people. Almost every Two-Spirit person I know who participates in Indian events that require a certain kind of clothing, fan, staff, rattle or drum, makes that item themselves. It seemed that every time I saw Ben, Sheila, Carl, Jeff, Sean, or Glen, they had made a new piece of regalia, added to their regalia or were working on a project for someone else. The degrees of ability and style vary, but on the whole, people continue to perfect their abilities in craft and regalia making. In fact, several people criticized my own beadwork for "not getting any better" and me not trying to come up with more intricate and difficult patterns. The perfection of one's regalia is common in Indian Country, especially when people are competing in powwows. However, Two-Spirit people see crafting as part of their historic role, and to some extent see making their abilities available to others a responsibility. Ironically, the best beadwork I have ever seen is done by Two-Spirit people. In fact, Sheila and her cousin both have beaded pieces in museums.

Historically, Two-Spirit people were often recognized as what Lang refers to as "better women" by perfecting beading, potting, weaving, cooking, caring for children and other kinds of women's work (1998: 241). Early anthropologists noticed among the Winnebago, Hopi, Lakota, Mohave, Zuni and Crow that Two-Spirit people

were well known for their handicrafts as well as keeping the family provided for through their hard work.[32] Because historic Two-Spirit people did not have the burden of child care responsibilities or menstruation, their gender ambiguity allowed them to focus on perfecting handiwork, and also permitted them a flexibility in the kinds of cultural activities in which they participated (Williams 1986: 58-9, Lang 1998: 241-257, Roscoe 1991: 166-9). Williams (1986: 59) and Whitehead (1981: 109) have theorized that historic excellence at women's work was an attempt by "berdaches" to substitute for the prestige that could be obtained in masculine role domains, such as war and hunting. That is, men-women (Lang's 1998 women-men) were to have transferred their "standard male socialization emphasiz[ing] competition for prestige" to the work of women (Williams 1986: 60). For Whitehead, "berdaches" seeking prestige was a device to reinforce biologically male dominance through filching women's modes of production, thereby reinforcing structural inequality against women (1981: 109). However, Lang sees excellence in women's work more about individual gender ambivalence, not a substitute for masculine prestige, and more representative of the kinds of activities available to particular individuals (1998: 244 -6). She states: "They demonstrated masculine prestige-seeking behavior in the masculine role components they retained, and they exhibited feminine prestige-seeking behavior in the feminine role components they practiced" (1998: 245).

Within the debate over the historical importance of excelling in women's work, I tend to agree more with Lang's interpretation that seeking prestige is more of a common cultural value that crosscut gender lines and modes of production.

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[32] Excellence in women's work is noted in early works by Lurie (1955), Erikson (1945), Simms (1903), Stoller (1976), Lowie (1909) and (1935).

However, within the current study, "being a better woman" in contemporary Indian society could be conceptualized in yet another way. As I have argued, conceptualizations about Two-Spirit identity are steeped in the cultural performances required to be considered legitimately Indian. I would argue that being a better woman in contemporary Two-Spirit society is also based in meeting the discursive requirements set out by the Indian community. Therefore, contemporary excellence in the performance of women's work has as its goal a connection with historic roles, but also the goal of perfecting the kinds of activities and symbolic content valued for Indian women. By perfecting beading, jewelry making, camp cooking, performing female ceremonial roles and powwow performance and regalia making, Two-Spirit people are meeting the discursive requirements set out by the Indian community, while articulating with a specific set of gendered activities.

As many Two-Spirit people have detailed in their stories, an affinity with the female members of their family and activities associated with feminine characteristics were very important at a young age and were seen as promoting their perfection of women's work. Historically, Two-Spirit people served to keep the elder women company, while learning to perfect tribal material traditions (Williams 1986: 59). In similar ways, contemporary Two-Spirit people draw a connection between their social involvement with older women and their proclivity for women's work.

> Ben: I was always around my grandmother and learning how to cook, and sew. When I was three years old there is a picture of me with a dress and a shawl on. My mother told me that I was so comfortable in wearing a dress and that role. If I got to be around grandma and those female things all the time, then I probably would have been OK. But they made me feel ashamed.

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Ben's feelings were echoed in many of the stories I heard Two-Spirit people tell. Most showed an interest in arts, crafts, cooking and sewing at an early age, but were discouraged from such activities because they did not meet the requirements of their biological sex. Several people recited how their parents openly discouraged their participation in female related activities through ridicule or physical means. Despite parental efforts at discouraging feminine cultural behaviors, most of the Two-Spirit people I knew could at least sew and cook well.

Sheila was particularly influenced by contact with the elder women of her family. Sheila often detailed to me stories about how she began beading and sewing at an early age with her grandmother. One afternoon Sheila and I were at her sister's house outside of Modelo and she began pulling beadwork items out of a large black garbage sack. She began showing me beaded medallions, moccasins, vests, armbands, necklaces, and just about any item on which one could sew a bead. As she pulled the pieces out of the bag, it occurred to me as she explained how each item came to be, that the pieces represented a stage in Sheila's personal development as a Two-Spirit person.[33] She explained that she would often go to her grandmother's house and sew with her. She learned the intricate details of Plains style beading, regalia making and sewing Indian style clothing from her grandmother. Many items in the bag were ones which she had received her grandmother's instruction. During the time Sheila was learning from her grandmother, she was not living as a woman, and was dancing male fancy and traditional powwow styles. She showed me the boys' regalia she had made herself, and as we moved chronologically to her early

teens she began showing me the women's regalia she had begun to wear and dance in. It is in the powwow dance performances where Sheila began to locate her transformation from publicly male to publicly female, but also in the making of regalia, where she attempted to perfect traditional knowledges.

In her attempts at perfecting traditional crafts and public performances Sheila was becoming a better woman. Sheila's ability to bead, dance, and cook better than other Indian women is a point of pride for her and often recognized by other people, Two-Spirit and non. She made the best frybread I have ever had, managed to bring meals together for large numbers of people at gatherings, and would consult with other people on the crafting of regalia. After she moved to Eagleton she was approached by many people to make regalia items and beaded princess crowns. In one instance Jeff was making a pair of moccasins to trade for an eagle bustle. However, after seeing Sheila's fully beaded buckskin, the man with the bustle wanted Sheila to make the moccasins instead of Jeff. Sheila, as well as other people, saw the demand for her work as an affirmation of her Two-Spiritedness as well as her "better woman" status.

The ways in which people were recognized as "better women" or worked within female-influenced traditions in some ways articulated with stereotypes about gay men as the best hairdressers, decorators, dressers, cooks, and listeners. Matt is recognized as being a "flawless hairdresser," and many of the Eagleton group members would have him "do their hair" before retreats and powwows. Sean not only beaded, but also made beautiful stained glass pieces, painted, and is recognized

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[33] Sheila was Lakota who have a somewhat intact public notion of the historical role of the winkte. However, she preferred Two-Spirit, because she had not been socialized into Lakota society as a

as a talented interior decorator. Ben is recognized for his abilities as a cook, spiritual person and an intent listener. Each person seemed to have a specialty that they brought to the group and, in doing so, made their talents available to other people. Therefore, at meetings, gatherings, and retreats, various people were called upon to be in charge of making meals, saying prayers, emceeing the drag show and powwow, teaching crafts, and organizing.

One example of making their talents available to others was the six-month collective effort put into assembling Robert's straight dance regalia. Sheila was responsible for a lot of the sewing involved in making the broadcloth leggings and trailer. Jeff and Carl assembled and beaded a dance stick and eagle fan. Glen helped with making the beaded bandoliers, and Ben provided the eagle feather worn on the top of the roach. Because Robert did not have contact with many people in his family, and they did not participate in Indian society, the other Two-Spirit people pooled their efforts so he could be ready for his powwow debut. These people fulfilled tasks that would have been done by the female members of Robert's family. That is, most straight dancers' mothers, sisters or grandmothers tailor their ribbon shirt, leggings, breechcloth and trailers. They are also usually responsible for beading the dance stick, constructing the fan, and making moccasins. As we watched Robert dance in the arena in his new regalia, someone said, "... now everybody will want Two-Spirits to make their outfits."

The recognition of themselves as working toward the perfection of Indian material traditions goes far to legitimize Two-Spirit access to Indian social worlds. As we see with the demand for Sheila's handiwork, Indian people recognize quality

winkte, but denied that role of respect by her family and community.

and distinctive craft traditions. However, most important about the perfection of Native material traditions is its obvious and distinct connection with the Indian community. That is, many Two-Spirit people excel in designing, crafting and performing according to community standards of the ideal. They adhere to the unspoken rules surrounding beading styles, dress patterns, and ritual performance. In their adherence, they rely on the dominant discourse for access to the social and symbolic realm of Indian.

Individual desires at accessing identity are embodied in particular discursive moves manifesting themselves in concerns over authenticity, historical content, preservation and community recognition. In this way Two-Spirit people, as I have shown, strategically use the dominant discourse as means to legitimize their identity as Indian versus that of gay. Attempts at perfecting dominant ideals about Indian identity seek to solidify what Two-Spirit identity represents. In doing so the ways in which individuals obtain a self-knowledge within representations of the "ideal" become evident.

The considerable amount of effort individuals put into negating the seemingly negative aspects of "gay" in preference for Two-Spirit (Indian) invoke a connection with a history of gender diversity in Indian culture as a means to separate themselves from the potentially negative effects of identifying as solely gay. Furthermore, by locating their identity within the Indian community signs and symbols, they are provided greater opportunity to create openings in the dominant ideology, and thereby alter what it means to be Two-Spirit and Indian.

Chapter Four

Two-Spirit and Indian Community Relations: The Problem of Desire

The perceptions and experiences of Two-Spirit people act to frustrate their attempts at accessing Indian social worlds and cultural resources. Fear, combined with a lack of public acceptance of their difference, goes far in thwarting Two-Spirit attempts for community participation, thereby reinforcing dominant control over what constitutes "Indian." In their search for acceptance in Indian society – generic, community and tribal – Two-Spirit individuals perform the required tasks to be considered legitimately Indian, while perceiving that a place of recognition in their culture hinges on their sexual orientation. When faced with the prospect of not being allowed to participate in community events, many Two-Spirit people feel it necessary to hide their sexual orientation or gender difference. Therefore, any acceptance they receive from communities is perceived as conditional on keeping their sexual orientation a secret. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Two-Spirit people attempt to reconcile their yearning for roles in tribal, ceremonial and generic Indian communities with perceived and experienced hostility toward their gender identity and sexual orientation. I attempt to show that despite emphasizing "Indianness" as the determining factor of their identity, Two-Spirit people inevitably become subject to community standards and perceptions of sexual orientation and gender; therefore, many Two-Spirit people perceive that they can never fully achieve recognition within the community as Indian while simultaneously identifying as gay.

Despite recent academic discourse stressing acceptance of gender diversity in contemporary Indian communities, the majority of Two-Spirit people I encountered

had multiple negative experiences within respective Native communities surrounding their identity as gay and Two-Spirit. Many Two-Spirit people conceive hostility toward gays in Native communities as ubiquitous. Not all openly gay Two-Spirit people are denied community access. However, many openly gay Two-Spirit people see themselves as merely "tolerated" by their communities versus being incorporated. Some Two-Spirit people actively participate in their communities and are assumed to be gay by other people. Although they may participate in their communities while being suspected of being gay, they are seldom open about their sexual orientation out of fear of alienation. Two-Spirit people assume that openness about their orientation will assuredly negate any respect, status, and privileges afforded them within their communities. Therefore, a significant problem arises when individuals desire to participate in their communities while desiring to be open about their sexual orientation. Two-Spirit people's feelings of alienation are exacerbated by the assumption that Indian communities will judge them according to their sexuality and gender orientation, not their commitment to the preservation of Native ways of life.

All of the major works cited in my study emphasize the ways in which some Two-Spirit people are accepted in their communities (Roscoe 1991, 1998, Williams 1987, Lang 1998, Thomas and Jacobs 1999). By emphasizing the rare occurrences of familial and community acceptability, they are ignoring the majority of Two-Spirit people who see themselves as not accepted in their tribal and local communities. Studies of Native North American gender diversity have yet to ask: in what ways do dominant ideas about same sex desire complicate Two-Spirit attempts at social and self acceptance? Also, despite individuals' attempts to feel accepted by perfecting

Indian identity, how do the regulatory practices that govern Indian identity render Two-Spirit identity unintelligible to communities? Despite Two-Spirits performing the requirements of recognition in the Indian community, why are they denied access to prestigious symbols and rewards? In order to answer these questions we will examine the ways in which Two-Spirit people are positioned by their sexuality and gender.

As we have seen in statements by Two-Spirit people in the previous chapter, they are critical of conceptions that their identity is solely defined by sexual orientation. Academics also critique the possibility of sexual practice and object choice as a determining factor for Two-Spirit identity. As Cannon notes, the focus on "homosexual acts" in colonial and early anthropological interpretations of gender diversity "... suggest that sexual object choice was more important than gender-crossed behavior in Native social classification systems" (1998: 6). Mostly, scholars have emphasized social role over sexual orientation for both contemporary and historic Two-Spirit people (Blackwood 1981, Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1998, Thomas 1997, Thomas 1996, Thomas and Jacobs 1999, Williams 1987). Making the distinction between social roles and modern conceptions of "homosexuality" is important for the reconciliation of misinterpreted historic gender roles in early anthropological works. Also, as Lang states:

> There is more to Native American two-spirit identities than sexual orientation. While both traditional two-spirit people and contemporary two-spirit people are viewed by urban Native American gays and lesbians as manifesting gay roles in their sexual preferences, gay/lesbian/two-spirit people see themselves as carrying two-spirit traditions far beyond sexuality (1997: 113).

Despite the academic reworking, interpretations of Native American gender diversity ignore the significant role that dominant conceptions of same sex desire play in contemporary Two-Spirit identity. Almost every Two-Spirit person I met, talked to, interviewed, and spent time with emphasized that his/her identity was less about sexual orientation than anything else. At the same time, Two-Spirit people are very vocal about the lack of a place for many of them in Indian communities due to homophobia. Two-Spirit people see the misunderstanding of and discrimination against their sexual orientation and gender identity as the reason for the lack of acceptance in Native social relations. Furthermore, most feel that their sexual orientation exacerbates other potentially alienating characteristics based in conflated representations of race, class, authenticity, blood quantum and community/tribal affiliation.

Many scholars are highly critical of analyzing Two-Spirit identity as determined by sexual orientation (Blackwood 1981, Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997, Lang 1998, Roscoe 1998, Thomas 1997, Thomas 1996, Thomas and Jacobs 1999, Williams 1987). I would agree that scholars should avoid characterizing Two-Spirit people based solely on their sexual orientation. However, we must recognize that Two-Spirit sexual identity is the basis upon which they are alienated from social belonging and/or fear being structurally denied access to social participation, prestige and resources. Therefore, when faced with the possibility of being denied community access, it is sexual orientation that becomes the determining factor for many Two-Spirit people. I argue, then, that while Two-Spirit people do not see their sexual orientation as a determining factor in their identity, many Indian communities do.

Accordingly, overcoming bias against their sexual orientation becomes a monumental barrier in gaining access to tribal, ceremonial and generic Indian community participation. That is, the recognized prejudice against gays and lesbians in many Indian communities acts to frustrate Two-Spirit people's desires to be open about their sexual orientation or gender difference while attempting to be active members in their respective Indian communities. Therefore, instead of completely ignoring sexual orientation as a part of Two-Spirit identity, we need to examine the ways it creates obstacles to accessing community participation.

Making desire the subject of analysis is complicated by previous scholars' strategic de-emphasis of sexual orientation in identity formation in Native sex and gender systems. In arguing that Two-Spirit identity does not represent only sexual desire, Herdt (1997), Thomas and Jacobs (1999), Thomas, Jacobs and Lang (1997), and Roscoe (1998) fail to recognize that mainstream dominant Indian society views Two-Spirit people according to sexual desire. Furthermore, they fail to recognize that Two-Spirit people perceive Indian society as reacting negatively toward them based on their sexual desire and that they feel that their orientation is the single most important alienating factor. Therefore, in focusing on the social construction of gender roles, scholars have failed to address the modern social construction of desire in Native communities.

I propose that we examine the ways in which Two-Spirit people experience their positionality as it is based in dominant perceptions and actions of aversion toward their sexuality and gender. In order to do this we need an examination of desire as something more than felt by subjects, but also as a conception through

which subject relations of inequality are acted out. Inevitably Two-Spirit relations to the communities in which they seek to participate will be affected by a discernment of qualities the community seeks to emphasize, "gayness" being recognized as not one of them. Accordingly, what we must understand is that the 'problem of desire' also resides in the ways that Two-Spirit people perceive and experience non-gay Indian bias against their sexual desire. This bias is generated in the ideals that allow non-gay Indians to equate Two-Spirit people with their sexual desire. By equating Two-Spirit people with their sexual orientation, Two-Spirit desire for social belonging is frustrated. Therefore, we must problematize the *whole* of desire. The whole of desire is not only sexual desire but also individual longing for self-acceptance, acceptance in their communities, and a socially affirmed identity that represents how they see themselves. Therefore, I argue that dominant perceptions of sexual desire complicate the fulfillment of other desires.

Reconciling Two-Spirit and Indian

Almost every tribe in North America has some form of historically documented social role for Two-Spirit people. Roscoe has documented 157 instances of individuals who were gender different having at least a named identity, and in most occurrences, a social role in as many tribal groups (1998: 223-47). Most of the major figures in anthropology who conducted studies in Native North America at the turn of the 19th century or for the Bureau of American Ethnology encountered gender diversity or recorded its existence from oral histories. With the exclusion of a handful of contemporary tribal groups, all of the documented public identities for alternative genders are no longer in use. Accordingly, many contemporary Native

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peoples do not recognize gender diversity in their society as something present historically or contemporarily. Likewise, many Native people consider same sex relations or gender mixing within modern Western perceptions of homosexuality and gender crossing.

Two-Spirit attempts to relocate a place in Indian society are exemplified by the ways in which they actively pursue association in mainstream and tribal Indian communities; by the ways they attempt to reconcile community perceptions of same sex desire with a desire to participate socially. Most of the Two-Spirit people represented in this study sought participation in tribal and generic Indian community events. However, their participation was often complicated by the fear of being a target of homophobic behavior or outward acts of hostility by non-gay Indians. The respected scholar and Two-Spirit elder Beverly Little Thunder tells of her experiences

> As I became more deeply involved in the ceremonies of my people and began to participate in the Sun Dance Ceremony, I become more and more terrified of being "found out." I feared that if anyone knew of my desire to be with another womyn I would be stricken from the ceremonies that were now such an important part of my life. My fears turned out to be real, but I never expected that the same people who taught me so much ... would be some of those who would later reject me (1997: 206).

The latter statement captures what many Two-Spirit people felt about participation in non-Two-Spirit ceremonies and events. Some tribal groups and families are very accepting of Two-Spirit people. Even so, of the people represented here, only one was allowed a clear and distinct role as a Two-Spirit person in his/her family and community. Feeling that their Two-Spirit identity would alienate them, most Two-Spirit people participated in tribal, ceremonial and typical Indian social events in the ways expected of male Indians, and not as Two-Spirit. As I mentioned in chapter

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three, and we will see in more detail below, Indian community expectations of male bodied persons are based in a heterosexual orientation and behavior emphasizing masculine gender roles. Therefore, same sex desire and gender crossing, as an accepted aspect of contemporary Indian identity is difficult for mainstream Indian society to resolve. Conversely, Two-Spirit attempts at reconciling their identity with cultural expectations of the sign "Indian" become complicated when they are the subject of homophobic actions and have anxiety over being alienated because of sexual orientation or gender transcendence.

Access to the Indian community and associated identities is regulated by the performative requirements placed on individuals. The identities in question are not only that of Indian and Two-Spirit, but also other important titles of prestige in Native society such as 'head lady dancer', 'stomp dance leader', 'medicine person' and 'elder'. Each of these identities is imbued with power and prestige in generic and tribal Indian communities. Accordingly, identities of prestige are subject to performative requirements. Even more mundane identities such as 'jingle dancer', 'singer', and 'beader' are permeated with performative stipulations. Two-Spirit people, in an attempt to meet the requirements of these identities, spend a significant amount of time making regalia, learning songs, and going to ceremony.[34] Nevertheless, most feel that despite their best efforts they do not have access to community identities due to intolerance for their sexual identity. That is, they perceive Indian community hostility toward their sexual identity as having the potential to overshadow their achievements of cultural knowledge and practice. Most

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[34] Chapter Three details some of the ways in which Two-Spirit people seek to perfect Indianness in their cultural practices.

people are well aware that public recognition of their sexual orientation and gender identity does not meet the community regulations for access to particular positions in Indian society. Therefore, anxiety over homophobia and alienation causes many people to keep their orientation a secret. Staying in the closet for self-preservation becomes the only option for many Two-Spirit people who want to participate in social and religious communities. Individuals who are open about their gender transgressions and sexuality are publicly and privately rebuked or simply ignored.

Fear over the potential denial of community access and associated identities overwhelmingly governs how Two-Spirit people behave in public, as well as who they associate with at public gatherings. Their awareness of Indian community regulations on identity frames the ways in which Two-Spirit people participate, but also tends to frame the ways in which they see themselves in relation to Native communities. By being gay, lesbian, or Two-Spirit, individuals run the risk of not being accepted in the communities in which they desire to participate. Two-Spirit goal of representing themselves as faithfully embedded in tribal tradition emphasizes their sameness with mainstream Native peoples, while simultaneously they seek acceptance of their differences. Attempts at associating Two-Spirit with modern conceptions of "Indian" are frustrated amid dominant community regulations on available identities.

There are no names for us

Later in my research I began to assemble my gourd dance regalia and participate in powwows with Ben, Sheila and several other Two-Spirit people. Ben become my gourd dance guide, instructing me on the proper assemblage of items, and

we often gourd danced together. At one high school benefit powwow in Eagleton, I won a raffle for a cedar box used to hold regalia. Earlier, when the woman came by to sell the tickets, I bought one and Ben told me to touch the box to give it my medicine. Ben assured me that I would win it. To my surprise I did win the box. After I received the box, the elder who sold me the ticket came by to congratulate me, and she pointed to Ben sitting next to me and stumbled "that, you know, that ... gave you good luck." It was obvious that she had some indication of Ben as being different in a way that allowed him to influence such outcomes. Also, it was apparent she did not know what to call Ben when naming his Two-Spiritness. Clearly she did not want to use Western terminology, such as gay or "homosexual," but she could not articulate it in Indian terms either. Later that evening I pulled her aside and mentioned how the term Two-Spirit was used to describe people like Ben who once had a significant place in tribal traditions. She mentioned that she had heard of people "like that" when she was a little girl, but she did not know "they still existed" as other than Indians who identified as gay. We had a short conversation where I took the opportunity to explain the ways in which Two-Spirit people were learning to be spiritual leaders and the keepers of traditional knowledge and crafts. She said that no one should feel like they were not welcome in Indian society and "we need people who know how to do those things." I questioned her about how people would accept the public incorporation of Two-Spirit people in Indian society, by which I meant Two-Spirit as a term and identity that is part of the public Indian discourse. She replied that it could happen, but "it might take a long time."

Two-Spirits and mainstream traditional

In the previous chapter I discussed the ways in which Two-Spirits conceive their practice of the traditional as a means of legitimating their access to the sign "Indian." Here we will look at the notion of the traditional as it becomes contested in conceptualizations by Two-Spirit and mainstream Indian society. Most Two-Spirit people refer to the acceptance of all differences, but especially gender variance and same sex desire, as a traditional value. In making this connection Two-Spirit people rely on the historical evidence, academic literature, community experiences and family or community stories passed orally. However, to a large number of contemporary generic Indian and tribal communities, same sex relations and the transcendence of the categories man and woman is seen as non-traditional. As Glen told me, "What constitutes a 'traditional' value involves more about how a certain aspect of assimilationist values come to be seen as 'traditional' in the Indian community." Bea Medicine relates: "I became involved in gender studies after speaking with a handsome young Kiowa man ... Later another woman from his 'culture area' approached me and said, 'Isn't it terrible that this good-looking man is gay? And that is what happened when the Europeans came to us"(1997: 146). This statement illustrates a common theme where mainstream Indian society sees same sex desire as explicitly brought on by contact with non-Indians and therefore non-traditional. Antithetically, Two-Spirit people see the decline in the acceptance of difference as brought on by the acceptance of Christianity and Euro-American values. It is differences between these two perceptions of sex and gender where Two-Spirit people locate their perceptions of mainstream Indian intolerance and their desire to counter it.

Involved in the disagreement concerning how Two-Spirit people fit into

Indian tradition is one that can be placed to coincide historically with the adaptation

to Western values by Indian society, and the decline of Two-Spirit social roles.

Michael Red Earth, a Sisseton Dakota, explains:

> I became a source of conflict, an example of the contradictions
> between the assimilationist and traditional views. The assimilationist
> view would believe that because I was gay I was bad, but the
> traditional views of the importance of family and respect for a person's
> spirit helped them see that 'Michael is good.' The assimilationist
> would feel that effeminacy is 'bad' for boys, whereas the traditional
> way allowed my interest in beadwork and feminine behaviors to be
> nurtured. One of the feminine behaviors that was nurtured was taking
> care of children, which conflicted with the assimilationist belief that it
> is bad to have gays around kids ... when I was fifteen I officially 'came
> out' ... The assimilationists, including my mother, were upset for
> obvious reasons. The traditionalists were confused – they didn't know
> what this [gay] meant (1997: 213).

The disappearance of ceremonial and public roles for Two-Spirit people in

Indian society is frequently noted in the academic literature. Anthropologists as early

as Kroeber point out that encounters with the "Caucasian attitude" led to the

repression or concealment of "berdache" social status (1940: 209). From the time of

first contact with Europeans, gender diversity and same sex relations were repressed

by religious condemnation and violence. Early explorer accounts give explicit detail

of the murder of Two-Spirit ancestors by the Spanish. From the moment of contact

and into the twentieth century Euro-Americans actively condemned recognizable

gender diversity and same sex relations. Some Indian agencies went so far as to make

it illegal to cross dress (Roscoe 1991, 1998, Williams 1986 Lang 1998). The goal of

the assimilation of Indians combined "outlawing" traditional ceremonies and cultural

behaviors, with an emphasis on Christianity, as well as the relocation of children to

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off-reservation boarding schools. Roscoe points out: "The environment in these schools was openly hostile to all forms of traditional Indian culture. 'Berdache' behaviors were quickly spotted and suppressed." Roscoe further notes that many adult lhamana in Zuni and nadleehi in Navajo societies stopped dressing in female style clothing because of "white ridicule" and threats of violence (Roscoe 1991: 199-200).

Forced separation from 'traditional' religious ways and from the people who practiced them is often given as a reason by academics and Two-Spirit people themselves for the decline in historic Two-Spirit roles.[35] The pressures placed on Indians by the American government to abandon traditions as well as the influence of Christianity contributed to the decline of indigenous religious practices on the whole. The tradition of gender diversity was consistently interwoven into the religious practice of Native peoples. Therefore, the change from public incorporation to the suppression of Two-Spirit public roles is easily located in Native religious adaptation (Williams 1986: 188-192). The result was a decline in the ceremonial use of Two-Spirit roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, when many Indians began to convert to Christianity they accepted ideologies about the "sinfulness" of same sex relations. Williams further sees the decline of the acceptability of gender variance in Native adaptation to Western patriarchal values. He states: "Just as the status of Indian women declined with the adoption of patriarchal Christianity, so did 'berdaches' ... No longer is he ["berdache"] combining the power of both women and men; in Christianity he is seen as subverting his natural male superiority to take an inferior

female form" (1987: 189). Lang adds: "Because of the influence of white ideas and Christianity, gender variance and homosexuality have come to be seen as identical by many Native Americans themselves, and both phenomena are consequently met with strong disapproval" (1997: 109). Therefore, the critical moment of change from acceptance to condemnation is readily located in the decline of many Native ceremonial and social practices that incorporated Two-Spirit people.

It is in these early interventions, specifically with the incorporation of Christian values, where most Two-Spirit people locate the beginnings of a change in attitudes toward difference in the Indian community.

> Sean: Christianity has had an enormous amount of influence on the Indian community. They [Indian society] have Christian beliefs that homosexuality is wrong and they don't feel that we have a place because of it. If they continue to look at us that way, then we cannot fulfill our traditional role.

Two-Spirit people directly associate the influence of Christian values and Western notions about sex and gender on Indian people as the reason for their decline. However, more important is the idea that Indian acceptance of these values is preventing Two-Spirit people from fulfilling what they see as their traditional role in Indian society. The lack of acceptance that Two-Spirit people feel is directly related to the knowledge that their differences were once perceived as valuable in Indian communities. Issues of acceptance are further exacerbated by the insufficient recognition for Two-Spirit perfection of 'traditional knowledges' and the absence of a public function for their performance of knowledges.

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[35] Roscoe (1991, 1998) and Williams (1987) provide extensive discussions connecting "acculturation" with the decline of public roles for gender diversity and acceptance of same sex relations during the contact and colonial eras.

Glen: We are limited in expanding our religious role to people outside of the Two-Spirit community because Europeans have influenced our people so much, they have gotten away from their own traditions. When the Two-Spirit people who are open come to them and say 'I can do this', I know these songs and whatever else, the community closes them out. Because they have been influenced by the Christian churches to think that we are evil, and they say 'no we can't have a Two-Spirit person up here doing that because we've gotten away from that tradition'.

Ben: When you had a society or tribe that supported Two-Spirited they helped you to achieve your spiritual goals. Here we are being constantly knocked down for it. Two-Spirit has become a negative connotation in the Indian community. Back then [historically] it was a positive connotation. We were taught that whatever was different was not negative, it was seen as a gift. Today we are constantly having to get into people's faces and struggle constantly.

As Glen and Ben's statements show, Two-Spirit people desire more than to be just 'tolerated' in Indian society, but rather to be brought into public cultural practice.

Being incorporated into Indian society as Two-Spirit was the key point of contention between them and the Indian community. I was reminded by several men who preferred to take on mixed gender ceremonial roles that their performances would not be acceptable at ceremonial occasions. Todd stated, "The community couldn't handle a man taking on the female or mixed role at the grounds."[36] Many Two-Spirit people knew both male and female ceremonial roles, however only felt comfortable in performing male gendered roles in community contexts. Todd had the knowledge to perform the female associated role of "shaking shells" as well as the male associated

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[36] Stomp dance communities from the Southeast refer to the places where dance ceremonies are held as "the grounds." Ceremonial ground identities are crucial to many Southeastern peoples identities.

role of leading songs and dances. However, it was only at Two-Spirit events where I saw men incorporate both female and male roles into their performances.

Many people participate in Native social events, such as powwows, and go to ceremony, but do so within the expectations of 'male' members of that community, not as Two-Sprit people. This participation is seen by many as not equivalent to participating as a Two-Spirit person. That is, people feel that they are being held to the standards associated with anatomical sex versus their gender identity. Individuals who feel the need to mix gender representations in their regalia or cultural performance do not feel free to do so.

The desire to participate as a Two-Spirit person is complicated by the lack of specific cultural practice incorporating their difference. Accordingly, their frustration about not being incorporated is exacerbated because all Two-Spirits know that, historically, people who shared their differences were publicly inducted into Native societies, as well as given positions of prestige.

> Sean: In the past, with our ancestors, Two-Spirit people actually had an important place in society where they would conduct ceremonies. They were accepted and had a part in everything. I feel that we don't have a role right now because we are not approved of anymore.

Sean' statement reflects the attitudes of most people that I knew. Essentially, Two-Spirit people recognize a discontinuity in the ways their differences had been incorporated historically and are renounced in contemporary Indian society. For Two-Spirit people, the link between community approval of them and being allowed to have "a part in everything" is contingent on Indian communities' acceptance of same sex desire and gendered difference. Two-Spirit people see the acceptance of

practices such as men wearing shells at stomp dances and gender crossing in powwow performance as examples of community acceptance. Not to say that Two-Spirit people's primary existence in the community is to be one that emphasizes same sex relations or gender crossing. Nonetheless, they perceive their exclusion to be based on community biases against individuals who desire people of the same sex and gender, or participate in gender crossing and mixing. This disapproval does more than isolate individuals. Most importantly it prevents them from participating 'traditionally.' Not being allowed to participate traditionally as a Two-Spirit person is further conceptualized as preventing them from accessing their traditional roles, which as we saw in previous sections is quintessential to Two-Spirit identity.

I posed the question to all of the people I interviewed as to why a role for Two-Spirit people is mostly not available in tribal and mainstream Indian communities. On the whole, they pointed to the "decline" of what they characterize as "traditional values" in Native society. "Decline" was consistently used to designate what Two-Spirits see as a negative change in Indian social values. The change in "traditional values" that Two-Spirit people are referring to is directly associated with the ways their difference is no longer incorporated by mainstream and tribal communities. Therefore, Two-Spirits explicitly perceive acceptance of gender diversity as a component of the quintessentially "traditional."

Schultz comments that the traditional is a "shared history of interaction, communication, negotiation and face-to-face encounters between people of a social group- not a fixed set of traits, behaviors, structures, or modes of production" (2000: 4). Accordingly, the adaptation of Indian society to Anglo socialization pressures

effectively and permanently altered the "history of interaction" between historic Two-Spirit people and their communities. Stoller adds: "... observations long since noted on the deterioration in American Indians of techniques or ritualizing cross-gender behavior. No longer is a place provided for the role – more, the identity ..." (1985: 177). The discursive possibility of Two-Spirit ritual and social individuality was no longer available once the public performance of their identity became sanctioned. In this way Two-Spirit people perceive the shift from acceptance to intolerance as a negative change in the traditional on the part of non-gay Indian peoples.

By the early part of the 20th century, most Native communities no longer publicly incorporated gender diverse traditions. However, Sheila grew up in one of the few reservation communities where there were elderly community acknowledged Two-Spirit people well into the early 1980s. Unlike most Two-Spirit people, Sheila has been a witness to the decline in the "traditional" acceptance of Two-Spirit people.

Sheila:	In the old days, when I was a kid, I would go visit the Two-Spirit people because they were always doing arts and crafts. They would tell me about different plants, ceremonies and gossip. Nowadays, there's a breakdown in traditional society. A lot of it has to do with the upbringing of kids. And traditionally winktes were liked by people because we were the babysitters of the tribe and we took care of the kids. People would leave their kids with Two-Spirit people, because they could trust us and we taught their kids about being Indian. People now don't instill this traditionalism in their kids.
	I can tell when a kid has been raised traditional. They respect me, and don't give me a hard time. The traditional people are respectful at powwows. But I have had to leave powwows before because people weren't traditional. Nobody wants to stick with what traditions worked and what was there before.

As Sheila's statements indicate, the exclusion of Two-Spirit people from everyday social roles was often cited as a reason for their decline in society. Her sister adds:

> I think because of the decline of the Native culture, the language, the traditions with my parents and today's youth, they don't understand that several hundred years ago with most tribes in North America there were Two-Spirit people. And because they don't understand it they fear it.

Because contemporary Two-Spirit people, as well as those who came most recently before them, were hidden or no longer accepted as a public identity, people did not have exposure to them. In effect, the change in contact with "traditional" roles through time isolated not only the Two-Spirit person, but also the *concept* of the Two-Spirit person. In one example, Sheila detailed to me how some of her older uncles and cousins had to stay "in the closet" while living on the reservation. She told me that everyone knew that there were gay people, but "... no one ever acknowledged it. It was something that people didn't talk about." When one of her uncles began losing weight and became chronically ill, no one spoke of the disease AIDS. When he died, family and friends referred to him as having cancer. Sheila attributed intolerance, as the result of a loss of tradition, as the primary cause of the secret life that her uncle had to lead. She also blamed the lack of public roles for his getting HIV/AIDS. Since there was no place for him as a Two-Spirit person in tribal society, he had to turn to the gay community to "express that side of himself." Sheila's story is one of many where changes in what was publicly recognized as traditional have had the effect of alienating Two-Spirit people in contemporary Indian society.

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Changes in cultural values and traditions manifested in attitudes and behaviors of a particular society often bring with them a change in social and ceremonial practices. Hobsbawm characterizes these shifts or "inventions" (I prefer "changes"): "... we should expect it [changes in what is perceived of as tradition] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable ... when such old traditions and their institutional carriers ... no longer prove sufficiently adaptable ... or are otherwise eliminated" (1983: 4). Therefore the decline in the practice of socially incorporating sex and gender difference is the result of changes in cultural practices making the role of the Two-Spirit incompatible to modified customs. Modifications then produced ceremonial and social roles where sex and gender difference were seen as not pertinent, necessary or desirable. Glen gives us an example:

> One of my Pueblo friends, her grandfather was a medicine man. When he was retiring because of age, he gave his duties and knowledge to a Two-Spirit man. She remembered her grandfather telling her that she must treat that Two-Spirit person with respect. But since so many of the old ones have died and the younger people have taken over and they make fun of that Two-Spirit person. They don't respect him, and have taken those roles away from him. I know it is the influence of school, churches and TV.

Thomas and Jacobs further point out: "The absence of recognizable and specifically trained transgender people has led to erasure of the traditional transgender roles and the institutionalization of intense homophobia on reservations, as gay and lesbian homosexuality came to be the focus of social attention, marked as social deviance imported from the white world" (1999: 96). Conversely, Two-Spirit people see the intense homophobia in their Native communities based on the "import"

of Western values into the Indian community. Homophobia and alienation of Two-Spirit traditions is an extreme point of contention between Two-Spirit people and mainstream Indian communities when framed in terms of traditional values.

> Glen: Dominant society has such a hold on Indian people.
> And a lot of Indian people refuse to acknowledge these
> things [the existence of Two-Spirit people]. They want
> to pick and choose the traditions that sound good to
> white people, and make them look good to white
> people. They say 'we can't tell them about the Two-
> Spirit tradition, because they are evil.' They feel like
> they have to leave the Two-Spirit people out because of
> the influence of the church and white values. So it is
> going to be very hard for Two-Spirit people to find their
> way back.

Glen's interpretations were shared by many of the people I knew.

Accordingly, they recognize that Indian adaptation to Christianity and certain Anglo ideologies did not provide a place for Two-Spirit people, resulting in the decline of their incorporation into Indian social and spiritual reworking throughout time.

However, this does not mean that people who would identify as Two-Spirit no longer exist, rather condemnation of their sex and gender differences renders them socially invisible or the objects of misunderstanding. Consistently, many Two-Spirit people see this misunderstanding as the result of Indian acceptance of certain Christian and Western values.

> Glen: We didn't lose these traditional ways on purpose. They
> were forcibly taken from us. I heard this old man
> talking one time, and he said when the white people
> used to come, they would ask 'Who are your Two-
> Spirit people?' Then they would kill the Two-Spirit
> people, because their church said that they were evil.
> And then they came to the next village and they would
> say 'we don't have Two-Spirit people.' They were
> saying that to protect their Two-Spirit people. They
> had to hide their Two-Spirit people. So because they

hid them, they didn't get to participate in ceremonies. Also white society has influenced Indian society to the point that they took these roles away from Two-Spirit people. The Two-Spirit people were tired of fighting so they just gave in.

Sean: Christianity and its stigmatism on homosexuality is at the heart of the decline in our roles. But also I consider myself a woman. I feel like a woman. I like to do womanly things like crafts. Somehow that is seen as bad also.

Ben: I used to hate Christianity. I think the Christians have some good things that I bring into my Indianness. They can work together. But if you keep telling a Two-Spirit person that they are going to hell and they're bad, they start to believe it. They don't even pray for themselves, or even the people. When Europeans came the Indian people should have combined the two [Christianity and Native religions] then they would have had something powerful.

Attitudes expressed by Sean, Ben and Glen are on the whole representative of how many Two-Spirit people felt about Indian "adoption" of cultural values. The transition from incorporation to condemnation amounts to what they see as a cultural betrayal. Most Two-Spirit people considered the adoption of Christianity by Native society as indiscriminate and thereby creating a dichotomy between traditional values and the ones that currently alienate them.

Although, Two-Spirit people share the general view of Indian people as victims of colonialism and pressures to acculturate, they are also critical of the Native community for not holding on to traditions of gender diversity as they did other cultural practices. In this way, Two-Spirit people see the respect once given gender diversity as a part of the historic traditional values that Indian communities now venerate. In contrast, many non-gay Indians see same sex relations and gender

difference as something that did not exist historically and should not be recognized as associated with contemporary Native peoples. The ways in which Indian communities view sexual orientation, as well as the ways Two-Spirit people perceive other's perceptions of their sexual orientation, are explicitly tied to modern conceptions of popular "white" gay culture in America. Therefore, many non-gay Indians have difficulty reconciling what they perceive as modern American gay identity and social roles in historic Native communities. This obvious disassociation between what is considered "white" and what is considered traditionally Indian creates a significant disagreement over the place of gender diversity in contemporary Indian society.

On the whole, mainstream and tribal Indian ideas emphasize same sex relations as specifically not in line with "traditional values." As McLeod quotes a tribal chairman: "It is totally opposite to our traditional teaching and religion, which is based on a strong family life. I don't want those two (words: gay native) put together. It's a disgrace to put them in the same category" (1998: 2). Sheila's sister Wanda comments:

> I can't think of one traditional Native community where Two-Spirit people are still respected for the roles that they have, like a hundred years ago. Mostly this is because being gay in mainstream America is a taboo. Even now Indian people have a hard time hearing someone say that they are 'gay' or 'Two-Spirit'. They are afraid because their own people don't understand them.

Two-Spirit people told me of numerous occasions where Indian people denied or could not accept the existence of socially accepted same sex relations and gender differences both historically and contemporarily. Roscoe contextualizes: "... given the associations of homosexuality by Western ... discourse ... as weakness, depravity,

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and compulsion -- it is not surprising that some natives fail to perceive any connection between it and traditional third and fourth genders" (1998: 102).

Ben often detailed to me his interactions with the parents of Two-Spirit people. He felt that most parents equated their son's identity with stereotypical images of gays and lesbians as promiscuous sexual deviants. Parents often failed to recognize their son's sexual orientation as something positive, and for the most part refused to see it in terms of gender diversity traditions. Ben also encountered similar attitudes among people in the Indian community. He stated that, "Most people don't want to think of Indian men as queens or stereotypes about unhealthy gay people." Ben made it clear that in his dealings with non-gays, mainstream stereotypes of gays were easily applied to Two-Spirit people. As a result, most did not want to recognize a historical or contemporary space for Two-Spirit people based on their sexual orientation.

At the same time, the requirements established by parameters of contemporary Indian cultural performance rely on specific historical or "traditional" connections to the social and cultural roles for each individual. "Thus, any deviations from such roles are construed as a betrayal of one's appropriate roles and identity ... Hence, conflicts between gay and lesbian cultural values and American Indian cultural values ... contribute to GAIs' lack of openness and visibility in their Indian communities and families" (Walters 1997: 51). I would agree that it is in the conflicts between gay and Indian cultural values where Two-Spirit self and social acceptance is *partially* seen as incompatible. However, it is contemporary Indian community denial of a connection between contemporary Two-Spirit people and the historic where access to cultural

roles are disputed. That is, reconciling gay and Indian identities is only a portion of their struggle. In their work to recapture the "traditional value" of gender and sexuality diversity, the denial of its existence destroys the strategic connection between the contemporary and the revered past.

Accordingly, most of my non-gay Indian acquaintances see same sex relations as something specifically counter to 'traditional' Indian values. One afternoon I questioned Rob, a non-Two-Spirit Plains man who often gourd danced with Ben and me, about his views on Two-Spirit people. His attitude was not one of extreme homophobia. However, his statement along the lines of "I don't care what they do, just so it's not in my backyard," indicates how some people perceive gay and lesbian Indians. That is, any recognition of gayness as a human quality is one that belongs not in the public sphere, but one that should reside out of civic view. Of course civic view involves the public performance of the "traditional." In conversations that occasionally turned into heated discussions between myself and others, many people explicitly indicated that there was not a place for "that kind of behavior" in traditional Indian public performance. When I inquired as to what "that kind of behavior" entails, most people drew on public displays of affection by two men or men dressing as women. In the event that public roles such as stomp dance leader or lodge pourer were mentioned, a lot of non-gay Indians saw that as merely an Indian man performing male tasks. Therefore, there was an explicit disassociation between the holistic way Two-Spirit people see themselves and the ways they were potentially seen by the Indian community. That is, when non-gay Indians heard the term or concept Two-Spirit, they almost always associated it with same sex relations, or cross

dressing, which was framed as specifically inappropriate behavior for an Indian man. A public role for Two-Spirit people would inevitably involve a recognition of them as different. Furthermore, a positive public association with Two-Spirit people would involve an unconditional recognition of their difference in Indian community values. Such a change seems daunting when confronted with what one Indian woman told me: "They can be gay, they just don't need to flaunt it." And when I told this to Sheila she replied, "... so flaunting it to them just means living to me."

The Winter 2001 edition of Eagleton "Two-Spirit News" led with the article "Two Spirits Respected in Indian Tradition: Indians Have Tradition of Respect for Gays." On several occasions, tribal administrations returned the publication with notes about "never sending it to them again." Ben frequently mentioned some of the overwhelmingly negative notes that were attached to returned newsletters where pejoratives such as "fag" and "homo" were often employed. I also heard of incidents where notes were left on tables in the clinic outreach booth with a similar intent. On one occasion Ben returned to the booth on a Saturday morning to find an owl feather lying on the table. The association between owls and death is well known in Indian Country, and Ben took this to have a clearly hostile meaning.[37] Acts such as these were perceived by Ben and others as representations of Indian people losing touch with their traditional values-- not only with Two-Spirit people being traditionally revered, but as Ben stated, "the lack of respect for the ways Indian people used to treat each other."

Coming out

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[37] Owls have connotations of bad luck in certain tribes, while others associate it in a positive way as transporting souls to the spirit world. They are almost universally seen as omens, negative or positive.

During my research, one of the Eagleton members, Jeff, came out to his mother. Jeff had lived an openly gay lifestyle in college, and after graduation moved to a major metropolitan city in the south where he continued to be openly gay. However, he felt that he needed to be closer to his family and his cultural practices. He moved back to the rural area where he grew up a short distance from Eagleton and began working with an Indian youth organization. When I first met Jeff he had not come out to his mother yet. He was seriously committed to another Indian man who lived in a close by city. They were maintaining a long distance relationship, but were desiring to live in the same place. It was at this point that Jeff felt it necessary to be open with his mother as well as his aunt with whom he is also very close. Eventually, Carl and Jeff moved into Jeff's rural home together. I was surprised at the level of acceptance that Jeff's mom, Sally, and Aunt Louise, gave his relationship. However, Jeff and Carl remained in the closet to the remainder of the family and to the people in the small rural community where they lived. During the Eagleton retreat powwow, Sally got up during their family's giveaway and gave a moving speech about Jeff and his coming out. She told of how she had no choice but to accept this because "Jeff was her son, and it was the way the creator intended it." She went on to say despite being saddened by the possibility of not having grandchildren; she was getting another son with Carl. The room was full of teary eyes and smiling faces, and Sean leaned over to me and said, "My mother would never get up and say something like that."

About six months after the retreat I got to meet Sean' parents. We were all traveling to a powwow in a nearby state where his parents lived. We were not staying

overnight, but merely stopping for "a visit." Sean has been "out" to his parents for about five years, and during that time they have grown to, as he puts it, "tolerate" his sexual orientation. Sean considers his parents very religious, and generally intolerant of gays and Indians, despite being Native themselves. They knew that Sean was bringing his Two-Spirit friends over to visit that day. When we pulled up the gravel drive his father was standing on the porch. All six of us piled out of the van and he came over to talk with Sean. As Sean introduced each of us, his father just stared with no motion at each of our extended hands, an obvious slight in Indian Country, or anywhere for that matter. We eventually moved inside and talked for about an hour in the living room. As we were leaving down the long driveway, his father yelled from the porch, "my granddaddy used to shoot injuns." Ben replied, "I just may come back and shoot you."

Jeff and Sean' experiences barely touch upon the ways being open about one's sexuality to family and friends in the form of "coming out" or "being out" manifests various attitudes and consequences. For Sean the consequences were two-fold. Despite being enrolled members of a Southeastern tribe, Sean's parents considered themselves Indian only in terms of heritage and not social associations and religious practice. Not only were Sean's parents bothered by his sexual orientation, but they were also hostile to his "Indianness." Sean felt that his identifying as Indian only acted to exacerbate his parent's, especially his father's, feelings toward his gayness. Conversely, Jeff's family, who are fully incorporated into the social life of their tribal and ceremonial community, went to great lengths to allow his expression of gender difference. They encouraged his learning female ceremonial roles, and on occasion

held private family ceremonies where he could practice those roles. Jeff sees his Indianness as benefit in gaining self and social acceptance. He told me, "It is really hard being Two-Spirit in a small Indian community. Without the support of my family and friends, I probably wouldn't be dancing and singing."

The experience of coming out for the people in this study varied depending on the individual. Most ideas of coming out included coming to terms with the difference that one's same sex desire represented on a personal level, telling one's family and close friends that they were gay, or being "loud and proud." Most people gave vivid detail of their coming out experience, which inevitably involved telling close friends and family that they were gay. On the whole, people in both groups had generally come out to their family when they were in their late teens or early twenties. In most cases family members were distraught about what they saw as their son's "choice." Accordingly, most coming out stories shared these components: 1) person participates in gay society secretly; 2) person comes out to family and friends; 3) period of awkwardness and non-communication; 4) family comes to accept or alienates person; 5) person reincorporates with family or develops family relationships with other groups of people.

The greatest and most crucial commonality with Eagleton and Modelo group members is not how they came out, but that they came out into the gay community, not in the Indian community. That is, most gay and lesbian Indians see the gay community as the only logical place for them to turn once they decided to be open with themselves, and to some extent their families, about their sexual orientation. People recognized that Indian communities and families provided no social

mechanism for individuals to socialize into their identity as gay, lesbian or Two-Spirit. Therefore a significant number of gays and lesbians "come out" while they are living somewhere other than their tribal, reservation or local Indian communities. Many of the people I interviewed felt that they had to move away from their communities in order to be "who they were" (placing an emphasis on their sexual identity). Generally, this involved moving to a major nearby metropolitan area and becoming absorbed in the gay lifestyle of that city. By moving, they felt that they did not have to draw attention to themselves or their families. Moving became a way to avoid negative attitudes and be allowed more freedom. Accordingly, upon return to their familial area they often "go back in the closet" for fear of homophobia and being seen as shaming their families.[38]

Consistently, coming out is a significant point of anxiety for Two-Spirit people and consequentially is complicated by their desire to participate in the public and modestly small world of Indian society. Walters provides some insight on being Indian and coming out:

> The value of 'coming out' and being openly gay is valued as part of healthy psychosocial development among the gay and lesbian community. However, cooperation, a cultural value emphasizes 'security in being a member of the group and in not being singled out and placed in a position above or below others. The Indian value of cooperation is opposed to the gay and lesbian value of being individualistic and placing one's needs above the group and to self-identity as different and out. [Another] related value held by Indian peoples is to strive for anonymity where the needs of the group are considered over those of the individual. Coming out requires one to openly identify oneself and draw attention to oneself, a process that is considered disrespectful within the Indian community (1997: 51).

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[38] Jacobs (1968) and Medicine (1997) note similar attitudes.

Walters' interpretation of the ways in which coming out is not part of Indian values makes a valid point. At the same time, it assumes that Two-Spirit people want to emphasize their "self-identity as different and out," while in actuality they go through considerable effort to emphasize their similarity with the Indian community by perfecting performances of identity. Therefore, they desire to be an equal part of the community. They also desire the "anonymity" that social incorporation brings. That is, they desire formal social roles in an Indian community where misapprehension about gayness is negated by the incorporation of difference.

Coming out has a significant emphasis in the generic gay community not only as a way to personal acceptance, but also as a political statement about the state of gay and lesbian people in Western society. In the gay community, coming out clearly emphasizes and celebrates one's difference from the greater portion of society and in doing so an individual sets themselves apart from the mainstream heterosexual ideology. On the other hand, the act and the concept of coming out as a gay person in the Indian community is for the most part seldom noticed and unintelligible. That is, "coming out" in the gay community sense is explicitly associated with non-Indian society and values, leaving it as an unavailable means of social incorporation in Indian society. If the goal of coming out is to set oneself apart from the mainstream, then this would fail Two-Spirit goals. They do not desire to set themselves apart from mainstream Indian society. Again, not setting oneself apart from their community is why Two-Spirit attempt to separate themselves from images of mainstream gays. Ben stated that "many people just want to be themselves without fear. They don't want to come in like a big ol' queen and yell 'I'm here and queer'."

Mainstream Indian society has its own form of "coming out" for individuals

wishing to be incorporated into cultural practices.[39] Frequently at powwows and

ceremonies, an individual will be "brought into the circle" during their first

performance as a dancer, singer, or ceremonial leader. These 'outings' are usually

significant family affairs where notice is brought to an individual and their family for

a brief moment. The family usually has a giveaway or a meal during the event to

honor those who have influenced that individual's path into the circle. Outing in the

Indian community publicly acknowledges a woman, man or child's solidarity with the

Indian community, not their individual difference. That is, an individual becomes

recognized as a productive member of that society. Males who are entering the

powwow arena for the first time as straight dancers are wearing gender specific

regalia, are referred to as warriors and reminded by elders of their responsibility as

men. Women who enter the powwow arena are similarly incorporated. However, no

"coming out" status exists for Two-Spirit people, other than the biologically sex

based and gendered form of recognition tying them to the identity of heterosexual and

male bodied persons.

Two-Spirit people are quick to point out that Indian communities once had a

mechanism for the incorporation and socialization of their differences from early

childhood through puberty and into adulthood, thereby making the gay community

form of 'coming out' unnecessary. Most Native American cultures had "traditionally

provided an outlet for sexual 'deviancy' in the institutionalized role ..." (Medicine

1997: 149-50). There is an enormity of historical evidence showing that one came by

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[39] Most Two-Spirit people use the term 'out' to designate its gay meaning. I have used the term to
designate a form of social and personal recognition having a slippage between Two-Spirit and non-gay

their public status as a Two-Spirit person through community and family observation as well as a series of rites of passage.[40] The "causes" of an individual's proclivity toward gender role change was not of primary interest in Native society. Rather, as Lang points out (citing Williams 1986: 53): "... one merely accepted the child's non-masculinity as a part of the latent personality or potential with which the child had been endowed by nature. Since a third gender status was institutionalized in most of the Native American cultures ... a radical divergence and subsequent chasm between sex of birth (i.e. biological sex) and chosen gender role was not regarded as deviant and so did not require an explanation" (1998: 218).

An individual's tendency as a child toward certain gendered behaviors were observed by adults who eventually determined how that child's public identity would be formed. In the case of boys, this usually involved an interest in activities associated with feminine gendered activities and socially participating primarily with older females of the family and community. As Thomas points out for the Navajo, children having an interest in "work, tools, and activities associated with the gender opposite their sex often were encouraged to develop their interests ..." (1997: 165). Inevitably, the desire of these interests, not only in the Navajo but in many tribes, would result in one eventually being publicly designated as a gender other than male or female. In other instances boys who had dreams or visions where they were visited by deities associated with a specific gender role were often recognized as belonging to alternative gender categories. In most cases there were specific rites of passage

Indian social worlds.
[40] 'Becoming' an alternate gender is documented in countless contact and colonial era documentation and in the observances of early anthropological studies. Williams (1987), Roscoe (1998) and Lang (1998) provide extensive reviews of the documentation.

performed where an individual would be recognized as a third gender publicly and would from that point on begin the socialization process associated with that role (Lang 1998: 218-239, Roscoe 1991: 123-146, Williams 1987: 21-24). Roscoe notes that, historically, Zuni men, women and lhamana went through a series of ritual encounters with gender-specific symbols whereby individuals were initiated and publicly recognized into their gender status. In the case of lhamana, they were presented to society in a combination of women's and men's symbols to publicly recognize their third gender status (1991: 132-146). For the lhamana, public recognition of one's status was explicitly tied to a social position with specific signs and symbols intelligible to Zuni society.[41]

As we see with the Zuni example, associating oneself with community recognized signs and symbols is crucial to gaining acceptance. Accordingly, the signs and symbols one is accessing must be associated with a particular social role intelligible to the community one is seeking access. Therefore, "coming out" in the Indian community, within the gay community interpretation, is rendered useless without public recognition of socially incorporated functions. That is, within current ideology of the Indian community, one would be seen as "coming out" as a gay person, not as a member of a community with a specific social position. When we consider the key element to acceptance is recognized social participation, the value placed on the coming out process in the gay community to a large extent fails in the Indian context. As Jack told me, "... there is nothing [roles] in our tribes for us to come out into ... ." Many people do not have contact with their tribal communities or

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[41] Similar cultural practices are associated with the Navajo (Thomas) and Lakota (Williams 1986, Lang 1998).

remain closeted because there are no sanctioned roles for Two-Spirit people and they fear the potential for homophobia. It is within this fear that we see Two-Spirit people modify the outward visibility of gayness, or any difference, as a means to ensure their participation in communities.

Surveilled masculinities

Behaviors seen as stereotypically gay among Two-Spirit people are perceived in many different ways. Two-Spirit people generally assume that their behavior will be judged according to masculine performance standards. Therefore, they take for granted that any behavior seen as transgressing community expectations will be met with hostility. Indian community conceptions about masculinity are assumed to be a fixed solidification of historically determined characteristics firmly grounded in pan-Indian and tribal notions of the "warrior tradition." Timothy Sweet sees the emphasis on the hyper-masculine warrior tradition as the result of "... the masculine gendering of the self as a warrior and the US government policy, also enacted by "warriors," that sought to eliminate the Native American warrior tradition in order to control and ultimately eradicate tribal cultural wholes" (1995: 220-22). Therefore, emphasizing the image of the warrior as the quintessential Indian male relies on its decline and romanticization. Native masculinity is then assumed to have a certain set of historical claims and interpretations that specify what it means to be an Indian male. Accordingly, Two-Spirits, when reflecting on themselves, see these interpretations as more about what a contemporary Indian male is not than what he represents. They know, for instance, that the community associates feminine behavior and dress for men as explicitly not Indian. Two-Spirit people assume

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judgment according to heterosexist community standards. Uebel points out: "... configurations of maleness transmute racial difference into a model of masculine sameness by disavowing the complex interplay of racial and gender difference that crucially underwrites masculinities" (1997: 5). The naturalization of racial difference into an essentialized category of male bodied persons, albeit phantasmic, brings about a regulatory framework against which Two-Spirits compare themselves. Two-Spirit people recognize a homogeneity in community expectations of men. Therefore, they perceive no space for alterations in the performance of "masculine" and "feminine."

Most of the people I talked with saw behaving in flamboyantly effeminate ways, discussing explicitly gay topics, or using "gay talk" at Indian public events as having the potential to be met with disapproval in mainstream Indian and non-Indian society. The distinction between behavior that the Indian community expects from male bodied persons and what many Two-Spirits see as part of their gay identity helps to further alienate certain individuals who do not adhere to perceived Indian community standards. More than anything, perceptions of community surveillance of individual and group behavior shapes the ways in which Two-Spirit people behaves in Indian contexts, such as powwows and ceremony. This surveillance further shapes the ways in which individuals perceive community expectations on the performance of Indian identities. Many people readily invoked the gay community characterization of "butch" or "nellie" to describe individual and collective behavioral expectations. That is, individuals who are seen as expressing typically masculine characteristics are known as butch, and those expressing highly feminine characteristics are known as nellie. The gradations from butch to nellie are

determined by an individual's clothing, mannerisms, tone of voice, and overall behavior. Everyone I talked to felt that the Indian community had unwavering expectations of men's behavior as butch, as well as a general condemnation for public displays of "nelliness" or gayness.

Everyone was certain that overtly gay and alternatively gendered behavior such as physical contact between two people of the same gender or holding hands, was explicitly out of the question in Indian public space. Accordingly, examinations of individual behaviors usually did not focus on larger displays of gayness, but instead were reduced to minute instances of individual mannerisms. However, instances of transgressing community expectations were seen as having the potential to be perceived as disrespectful, or drawing negative attention to oneself or other community members. Perceptions about the ways in which Indian communities would react to open gayness and mannerisms considered "nellie" framed the ways in which Two-Spirit people interacted with one another and non-Two-Spirit people in public Indian contexts.

Foster notes social requirements for Comanche powwows:

> ... powwow participation is firmly tied to ideas about appropriate
> social behavior. By acting in an appropriate or 'right' way in a
> powwow gathering, one presents a carefully managed image of oneself
> and shows respect for the moral worth of others. Attention to the ritual
> within the arena indicates involvement in the occasion, a willingness
> to cooperate in maintaining public standards of conduct ... Comanches
> consider appearing drunk at a powwow gathering to be an egregious
> breach of social conduct ... unable to maintain their own face ... and by
> that inability also devalue the moral worth of everyone present (1991:
> 153).

Being seen as acting excessively flamboyant or 'gay' is equivalent to Foster's example of community perceptions about drunkenness in that Two-Spirit people feel the need to maintain Indian community standards of gender behavior. Any transgression of masculinized expectations would result in negative social attention. Negative attention drawn toward one person is then perceived as drawing negative social attention to other Two-Spirit people. Negative attention toward Two-Spirit people might also have the effect of "outing" someone who is in the closet or wishes to remain anonymous. Therefore, Two-Spirit people critique and attempt to manage each other's public behavior in much the same way as a person who goes to a powwow drunk will be called down for it by an elder, or the arena director.

Before going on a trip to a powwow or ceremonial event as a group, people are often reminded to "be respectful," because "not everyone is out." A distinct association is made between being seen or associated with stereotypical (white) gayness in an Indian context and potentially doing social harm to oneself or others. Being respectful means not wearing 'campy' clothes, being flamboyantly nellie, or using gay talk. Many people associate this kind of "disrespectful behavior" with creating a "bad" image of Two-Spirit people in their association with other non-gay Indian people.

Just as they do not want to "breach social conduct" themselves, no one wants to be associated with an individual who might associate them with behavior revealing identities unacceptable in the Native community. Many people refer to behaving in socially inappropriate ways as "shaming out" themselves and their "relations," including friends and family. Some people frequently complained about public

attention being given to the more effeminate or flamboyant member of the group in Indian social contexts. When attending a powwow with the group, he would often go separately and spend the powwow walking around talking to people instead of sitting around the arena in folding chairs with the other Two-Spirit people. On numerous occasions he referred to being embarrassed by the flamboyant dress or mannerisms of certain group members and did not want to be associated with them publicly. Glen comments:

> Traditionally among Two-Spirit people, there were the butch and nellies. There were very effeminate people, they were very flaming as you could say. But the people very much respected them because they know that was how the creator wanted them to be.
>
> When I first came out I was very condemning of effeminate people because I thought it perpetuated stereotypes. Now I have realized that everyone has their place in this world. Wherever who are you have to be real. But you should not be effeminate because you think you have to.

Similar to Glen, other individuals saw any prohibition on their behavior in Indian contexts as running counter to their rights as a Two-Spirit person participating in community events. More importantly, some people would rather put the burden of intelligibility on the Indian community.

Sean: If they don't like it ["my behavior"] then leave me be. At powwows I try to behave as well as I can, even though sometimes when I get around the girls we start to cackling. I still try to be a little, well I hate to say butching it up, but I try to behave. I put on my church attitude. If Indians are prejudiced to me because of my behavior then they are the ones throwing the circle out of balance.

Sean' statements are illustrative of camp-recognition and the performative as explained by Michasiw[42]:

> What is constructed by the camp-performative is a set of limits ... fixing the viewers in ranges of ironic contract: those who do not know at all; those who think they know but do not; those who know, but only from without and are afraid really to know; those who do know but are appalled, or are laughing, or are laughing at the wrong pitch; and you. All of these limits depend, of course, on recognition on the part of the viewer but these reconditions are structured by the individual viewer's relative ignorance or knowledge of a stable set of codes and on the attitude characteristically struck by the viewer to that ignorance or knowledge (1994: 4).

Subjecting oneself to the "viewers" in the Indian community was not a common practice for many people who attended public events. In fact, most were very careful about their impression management. Behaving in perceptibly nellie ways relied on a set of discourses intelligible by other Two-Spirit people, but remained unintelligible according to dominant public Indian behavior expected of men. Therefore, the lack of "camp recognition" or intelligibility of Two-Spirit community behaviors represents a significant difference when performed in masculinized Indian contexts. For many, the risk of being unintelligible by the Indian community is far too great to risk "shame."

Ben is not a particularly effeminate man, but does have mannerisms that are often popular markers for gay identity. However, I was surprised at his self-described "butching it up" when we gourd danced. He and Robert often reminded me that Indian men were "stoic" and such attitudes were required when powwow dancing. Many people commented on the ways in which the Two-Spirit straight dancers would

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[42] "Camp" is a term used within the gay community and academia to refer to male parodic performances of exaggerated female mannerisms and language. Generally, camp behavior is reserved

no longer behave in campy ways when they were wearing their regalia. Conversely,

when Sean did not change his mannerisms when gourd dancing, he was often

ridiculed and accused of presenting a negative image of Two-Spirit people.

Community Access and Resource Competition

Two-Spirit people's anxieties over dominant perceptions of their identity are

conceived through their experiences with homophobia and hostility in dominant

Indian society. Two-Spirit people are frequently outright denied, or assume they will

be denied, 'rewards' from their attempts at meeting the performative requirements to

participate in Indian society. That is, despite their efforts to perfect the ideal kinds of

performances recognized as legitimate by Native society, access to the commodities

of participation and prestige are withheld by Indian communities. Resource

acquisition in Indian Country does not necessarily constitute access to food and

shelter, but rather access to the economy of prestige goods and symbolic wealth.

Dominant ideology in the Indian community emphasizes resource competition for

such things as princess titles, prize money at powwows, access to good and respected

drum groups, being named head powwow staff, and leadership participation in

ceremonies such as stomp dances and sweat lodges. This kind of resource

competition is regulated within a dominant ideological framework that seeks to

legitimate the performance of various and few Indian identities. Therefore,

individuals who participate in the public social field where resources are exchanged

"consent ... to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant

fundamental group" (Gramsci 1971: 12). Accordingly, by seeking access to symbolic

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for social interactions in gay community contexts, and is assumed to evoke a negative reaction when used in "straight" social realms.

resources, one is obligated to perform according to accepted and regulated community ideas. As we have seen so far, community ideas about Two-Spirit public performance have changed drastically through time, both in physical existence and perception. Consent to these changes is "historically caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci 1971: 12). Through time, Two-Spirit identity became no longer available due to changes in the world of ideological production. Accordingly, these ideological shifts resulted in the alienation of certain individuals from Indian society. In denying the existence of Two-Spirit people, Indian communities "enforce discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (Gramsci 1971: 12). Two-Spirit attempts at seeking symbolic resources occur within the significatory realm of established community signs and symbols, however, Two-Spirit people themselves represent a disjuncturing of semiosis deemed unacceptable. That disjuncturing lies in community perceptions of same sex relations and gender crossing. Therefore, despite an individual meeting the symbolic requirements of female jingle dress dancing to the most finite detail, by being an anatomical male, they create a disjuncture not intelligible in dominant Indian ideology. Whether or not individuals are denied these things by those in power because they are actually known/suspected to be gay is not the only important aspect, but is often expected. Rather we must also consider the importance of the perception of hostility toward Two-Spirit people and how they are manifested in access to the cultural content of Indian identity.

Thwarted performance

Shortly after Sheila moved from Modelo to Jeff and Carl's house outside of Eagleton, she began to jingle dance in local powwows. By this time I had started going to every powwow possible with Ben to gourd dance. We would often meet up with Sheila, Carl, Jeff and Jeff's family at powwows, and on occasion, all camp together at an outdoor powwow. Ben and I went to a benefit powwow at a local high school in Eagleton. Surprisingly, there were at least a hundred Indian people who were there in regalia to dance which is rare for a small local indoor powwow. However, it was in the middle of winter and people were probably starved for some sort of community participation. It was at this powwow where I saw Sheila experience the greatest public slight I had ever witnessed in Indian Country. Sheila was an accomplished jingle, fancy shawl and buckskin dancer. Not only was her regalia impeccable, but she put a significant amount of effort into perfecting and innovating dance steps. I was literally astonished by the significant degree to which she excelled over her competitors. At this particular powwow, Sheila had made a new jingle dress and was feeling particularly good about her recent performances. A few dances after the jingle competition, they were going to announce the winners. However, there was a tie between Sheila and a well known jingle dancer, Lana. The arena director ordered a dance-off between the two, and before the dance started, Lana went to the arena director and stated, loud enough for most of the gymnasium to hear, "But that's a man.." The arena director acknowledged the woman's statement but seemed reluctant to make a scene, and the dance-off went on. Later when the winners were announced, Lana came in first, and Sheila came in third. Clearly,

before Sheila was publicly perceived as a man she was competing for first place. We all stood in agitated amazement as Sheila walked out to receive her prize money and Lana gloated with a huge smile.

Clearly Sheila's perfection of jingle dance regalia and performance became irrelevant once she was recognized as being anatomically male by the dance judges. Until the point of public recognition, people may have suspected she was male, but might have been uncertain and unwilling to question it. However, once Lana made Sheila's transgression part of the public discourse, Sheila's performance became subject to the accepted signs and symbols associated with jingle dance, of which being a man is not one. This example demonstrates how, by not being allowed public performances of their identity, the reincorporation of Two-Spirit is negated, and so too is access to the sign 'Indian'.

Community access

One afternoon I received an outraged phone call from Robert. Apparently Ben had sent the "Eagleton Two-Spirit" newsletter out to many tribal headquarters across Indian Country, as well as to certain Indian organizations. The newsletter contained numerous photographs from the Eagleton retreat where individuals, particularly Robert and Todd, were readily identifiable. Many of the people in the photographs were not bothered by the "outing" represented by the newsletter. However, Todd and Robert saw the newsletter as potentially jeopardizing their attempts at community access or positions of prestige in their communities. Both Todd and Robert were attempting to incorporate themselves into small tribal ceremonial communities and felt that if they were "found out" they would be denied

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access. In fact, Todd was rumored to have received a call from a "tribal elder" asking why he was in such a publication and associating with gay people. Todd was to be adopted by this elder's family, and supposedly because of his association with the newsletter, eventually was not. Although I never heard directly from Todd that he was not adopted because of his "outing," it remains as an example of the ways in which others perceive Indian community hostility toward their sexual identity.

Intolerance for gays and lesbians within not only American Indian society but also mainstream American society overwhelmingly frames how many Two-Spirit people see their position in the Indian community. The result is an attempt by most individuals and groups to minimize the effects of homophobia on their daily lives. Many Two-Spirit people see their access to Indian community activities, acceptance in their tribal or ceremonial communities, and the ability to practice their culture with family as hinging on remaining in the closet. Therefore, being allowed community access becomes explicitly associated with how individuals interpret tribal, ceremonial and generic community performance and participation. As Sedgwick points out:

> Even at an individual level, there are remarkably few of even the most openly gay people who are not deliberately in the closet with someone personally or economically or institutionally important to them. Furthermore, the deadly elasticity of heterosexist presumption means that ... people find new walls springing up around them even as they drowse: every encounter ... erects new closets whose fraught and characteristic laws of optics and physics exact from at least gay people new surveys, new calculations, new draughts and requisitions of secrecy or disclosure ... it is equally difficult to guess for any given interlocutor whether, if they did know, the knowledge would seem very important (1993: 46).

"Heterosexist assumption" leads to most Two-Spirit people moving in and out of closeted and openly gay space and attitudes. Only a handful of people I talked

with would characterize themselves as "completely out" in every aspect of their lives.

Being completely out is usually characterized by an individual affirming their sexual

identity if asked by co-workers, friends, elders, and random people. Fears and

assumptions about the reactions of people in the various social fields where Two-

Spirit people participate determines whether or not they are open about their sexuality

or gender status. Some individuals have fears about their sexual orientation being

used by employers to fire them, and making them subject to homophobic

confrontations and violence. However, access to Native ceremonial and social

communities represents the overriding concern for many Two-Spirit people. Denial

of community access creates the prevalent predicament influencing the decision to be

openly gay in Indian Country.

Again, Todd was particularly anxious about being denied community access,

which made him reluctant to participate in interviews with me. He was attempting to

establish himself as a spiritual leader at his tribal grounds as well as to become a

recognized dancer on the powwow scene. He frequently reminded me and others that

his "being outed" could threaten his standing in the community as well as his access

to cultural participation. People perceived Todd's infrequent participation in Two-

Spirit events as an attempt to avoid being associated with gay people. What bothered

many Eagleton members was their perception that Todd would ignore them at

powwows and ceremonies out of fear of being outed. I, too, noticed Todd's

reluctance to sit with or socialize for long periods of time with Eagleton members at

public events. At one particular powwow Todd passed behind where we were sitting

numerous times without saying hello. Some people took this as a slight, while others sympathized with Todd's difficult situation.

Since there are no public roles for Two-Spirit people in the majority of Native communities, many Two-Spirit people are conflicted about being openly gay and remaining in the closet within their communities. Conflicts within certain individuals about being openly gay in the community were often represented in conflicts over what 'being out' represented for Two-Spirit people as a whole and individually. Generally, there are two opinions on being openly gay. There are those who see being openly gay in their communities as a positive move toward self-acceptance, and positive in social and political progress for gay and lesbian society. On the other hand other individuals view being openly gay as potentially harmful to their social standing, family relations, employment opportunities and safety. Glen stated, "I understand people being in the closet, although it doesn't help us. I have been fired from jobs and lost friends because I'm openly gay. We still have to be who we are though."

There are distinct differences between the ways in which the majority of the Modelo group and the Eagleton group view being openly gay. Many people were quick to point out that the Modelo group was at a greater advantage because of the large population of the city and the more multi-tribal focus of participation. Modelo has a thriving gay community and a 'gay district' where the majority of gay people live or socially interact and where a large number of gay bars, restaurants and book shops are located. This space demarcated for gay culture gives Modelo members a certain freedom that people living in smaller cities and rural areas do not have. The

Native community in Modelo is diverse with a majority of people coming from Plains and Southwestern traditions. Modelo was also a BIA relocation city in the 1950s and has a well established Indian community center which sponsors events. Most Modelo members participate in multi-tribal events such as powwows within the city or in close by towns. Many of the Modelo members participated in smaller ceremonial communities that center on the activities of a particular medicine man. Also, the Modelo group has enough members committed to participation in ceremony to regularly have their own lodges and house ceremonies. It was frequently pointed out that the urban focus of Modelo provides gay and lesbian Indians a certain anonymity when they need it, and a freedom in participation.

Some Eagleton members feel that their participation in smaller rural based tribal and ceremonial communities makes them more conspicuous. In these "tightly constricted ethnic enclaves" individual role change or assertion is much more obvious and runs the risk of being seen as disruptive (Medicine 1997: 150). The ceremonial and tribal groups around Eagleton tend to be tightly knit communities where everyone knows one another. Powwow and ceremonial communities are particularly focused on small group social interaction. As a result, being conspicuous is less desirable for Eagleton members because participation in many of the smaller groups is contingent on acceptance by group leaders and members.

One Eagleton member's story is particularly poignant to this situation. Since my initial arrival at the Eagleton society, Robert had talked about "getting his regalia" together to dance in his tribal war dance society. Being inducted into this society had a significant meaning for Robert. His grandparents had been involved in the tribal

community, but his parents were not. When his grandparents died when he was a young boy he lost contact with his tribal community. As an adult, he was seeking reincorporation into tribal activities. Because none of his living male family members were inducted in the war dance society and were not involved with the tribal community, he had to be sponsored by another family. Robert was adamant about his fear of being outed and not being allowed to participate in the community as a result. Robert's concern over being outed led him to public and privately alienate many of the Two-Spirit people from the group. When Ben announced that he was "taking a van" of people to the yearly war dance celebrations, Robert was very disconcerted and was weary of being associated with Eagleton members. At one group meeting, Robert made the announcement that people from the group were not welcome at the family's camp that was sponsoring him. An invitation from Robert was not explicitly necessary since many people had invitations from other participating families, and I had been attending the dances with a childhood friend since I was in my early teens. Therefore, many Eagleton members and myself went to the dances despite Robert's "warning." However, Robert's anxiety over the mere presence of Two-Spirit people who he might be associated with was visible at the dances. Robert expressed to me on several occasions that he felt conflicted about denying his Two-Spiritedness, but that once he was inducted, being outed would be less of a threat. However, until the point that he was accepted into the community he had to be "extremely careful about being around other gay people."

Many Two-Spirit people adjust their associations and behavior according to the influence of community size, level of participation, and the degree of potential

anonymity. More importantly, Two-Spirit people adjust their associations and behavior in reaction to perceived consequences, namely denial of access, within the Indian community. As we see, being "outted" and perceived as less Indian because of one's sexual identity helps to frame the ways Two-Spirit people perceive themselves and others. Sexual identity further frames the ways Two-Spirit people view the identities available to them among accepted community standards. Fear over sexual orientation issues further urge Two-Spirit people to seek approval of their identity within the dominant discourse on Indian identity, inevitably complicating their desire for community participation.

Accessing dominant community standards

When the Eagleton group decided to hire a drum to perform at the retreat powwow, I observed group members receive a saddening reminder of the prejudices against sex and gender difference in the Indian community. Having a "real" drum group for the powwow at the retreat was very important to the people in the Eagleton group. The year before many of the people who dressed in their regalia were the only one's who knew how to powwow drum, so not everyone danced. Having professional drummers was also important because the group invited many gay friendly non-Two-Spirit friends and family bringing the number of participants close to 70. A "good drum" was a way to allow everyone to participate but also went to legitimize the event as one adhering to Indian standards of conducting powwows.

Unless they are nationally known, most drum groups are seldom offered more than $200 to be the center drum at a major regional powwow. Despite offering $400 for a two hour set of songs to numerous drum groups, no one would commit to

performing at the retreat powwow. Ben contacted several people he knew personally, or relatives of people that he knew to try and find a drum group willing to perform. Ben was open with the headsingers about the need to be respectful to the fact that they would be playing for gays and lesbians and that some would be crossing gender boundaries with regalia. Ben secured one drum through an individual at the clinic, but three weeks before the retreat, the headsinger cancelled. He told Ben that his wife was accusing him of being gay because he was going to sing at a gay powwow. The headsinger was also having trouble finding other people to "sit at the drum." Finally, Ben was able to get a friend of a friend to commit to sing at the powwow.

The drum arrived late, which led everyone to joke about the late drum making the Two-Spirit powwow the "real thing." However, everyone noticed their attempts to hide their snickers and the "good feelings" about the drum dissipated soon after their arrival. The headsinger told Ben that they could only stay for an hour, as opposed to the four hours previously agreed upon. Also, the headsinger demanded that a blanket dance be held in their honor. At generic community powwows a song honoring the drum is usually performed. A blanket is placed by the drum and participants throw money on it as they pass. Blanket dances are a sign of respect, but are also intended to help the volunteer drummers pay for the gas they used to get to the powwow. Ben was upset by their request for a blanket dance, because they were already splitting $450 four ways. However, Ben also felt that the drum was exploiting them because they were relying on them to provide music for the dances. More importantly Ben felt that the drummers assumed they could exploit the Eagleton group because they were Two-Spirit. Ben refused the blanket dance and the drum

group commented that he and the people running the powwow were not Indian enough to know the right way. The drumgroup refused to continue to perform unless there was a blanket dance for them. Skip attempted to mediate on behalf of the drum group telling Ben that it was proper for them to have a blanket dance. Eventually Ben and Mick agreed, and a blanket dance was held, which only produced $11 dollars for the drum group.

I was told by several people that the drum group would not have behaved that way if the powwow were other than Two-Spirit. All of the people present, Two-Spirit and non, took the drum's attitude personally and characterized their behavior as disrespectful. Even more egregious was Skip's siding with the drum group and drawing into question the cultural authenticity of the event. What seemed most devastating at the time was that the drum group's behavior acted to obscure Two-Spirit attempts at accessing the symbolic content of the Indian community. Having a "real" drum group perform was part of the Eagleton group's attempt at conducting the Two-Spirit powwow according to dominant Indian community standards. Inevitably, the drum group's behavior acted to remind Two-Spirit people of the lack of acceptance in mainstream Indian ideology, but also denied them access to the same kinds of respect and participation expected in other Native communities.

In order to understand the ways that dominant ideology renders certain identities unintelligible, I have illustrated the relationship between desire and social belonging underlying Two-Spirit relations with Indian communities. For many Two-Spirit people, social participation involves satisfying the behavioral requirements of Indian communities. For example, few Two-Spirit people are willing to openly

transgress gender boundaries within their respective communities. When Two-Spirit people are participating in Indian social events, most are adhering to the gendered expectations of their communities. In arguing that dominant interpretations of same sex desire confine Two-Spirit attempts at social belonging, I have attempted to show how identifying as Two-Spirit represents a predicament for individuals who long for acceptance while being allowed expression of their difference. In examining the ways sexual orientation and gender identity is a point of contention between Two-Spirit people and dominant Indian society, I also wish to add critical analysis to the research concerning the significance of sex and gender difference.

The idea that dominant perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity are potentially alienating inevitably raises questions about how individuals resist estrangement. This sets the stage for chapter five, which deals with the ways Two-Spirit people have found openings for expression within strictly regulated Native communities. Here the issue of openly challenging heterosexism in cultural performance and finding a place for Two-Spirit people as a publicly recognized identity will be examined. It is in the ways that Two-Spirit people actively resist conventionalized ideas about their sexual orientation and gender difference where another intersection of Two-Spirit identity and dominant ideology can be found. Also, it is in resistance where the predicament of identifying as gay and Indian is partially resolved.

Chapter Five

Mending the Hoop: Resignification and Reincorporation

While Two-Spirit people are structurally denied access to many aspects of mainstream Native society, they are making attempts to reincorporate themselves into Indian communities. They conceptualize this reincorporation as repairing, completing, or "mending" the medicine wheel (hoop), which was damaged when Indian society began to no longer incorporate difference, particularly sex and gender. For Native North Americans the medicine wheel represents the cycle of Indian life in space and time. Health advocacy movements such as alcoholism treatment use the idea of completing the hoop as a metaphor for individuals coping with their alcoholism. That is, a portion of the circle is missing or damaged because an individual's medicine is not balanced as the result of internal strife caused by substance abuse. Paula Gunn Allen uses mending the hoop as a metaphor in her feminist critique of the treatment of women (1981). In Allen's way the hoop represents the whole of Indian society as thrown off balance by its treatment of women (1981). Therefore, Indian society is off balance because of the damage caused by the lack of empowerment for Native women.

Two-Spirit people also see the process of mending the hoop as one of empowering themselves. Part of this empowerment comes from creating a performative space for themselves in public contexts. Making oneself "useful" to communities through taking care of the needs of the people is also an aspect of empowerment. Inevitably, Indian people's recognition and incorporation of Two-Spirit people as a significant part of Native society renders the hoop complete.

Mending the hoop becomes a metaphor for the acceptance of gender role mixing and sexualities in mainstream Native and tribal communities. The hoop will be mended when, as Ben said, "Two-Spirit people can participate in their communities without fear, and can be helpful to Indian people."

In the previous chapter I discussed the ways that Two-Spirit people perceive and experience alienation based on their sexual orientation and gender difference. In this chapter I explore the ways Two-Spirit people are using their sexual orientation and gender identity as a vehicle to challenge their estrangement from Indian society, while fulfilling their need of social belonging. Two-Spirit people are attempting to create a place for themselves within Indian ideology and cultural practice while endeavoring to alter the discourses that alienate them; making themselves intelligible to Indian society. By Two-Spirit people making the effort to become religious specialists, HIV/AIDS outreach counselors and speakers, master craftspeople, master dancers and singers, and ceremonial leaders, they are subverting Indian notions of ideal types. In these acts they are publicly challenging basic 'traditional' values governing performance, while creating slight but symbolically significant variations having as their goal resignification and recontextualization of dominant ideology. Through resignification, resistance acts to make public alternative meanings of what it means to be not only a certain gender or sexual orientation, but also what it means to be Indian.

For Two-Spirit people, resisting the ideological assumptions that prevent a public role, in both social and ceremonial realms, goes beyond symbolic acts of performative defiance. Ortner states: "... acts of resistance are claims for a certain

kind of cultural or symbolic power, the power to define, or to share in defining, the situation and the relations in question" (1999: 216). Two-Spirit people actively draw into question their relationship with tribal communities and Indian society in general through performing tasks at which they are the only willing parties or experts. As we will see later in this chapter, the "work" of HIV/AIDS and caring for children are by far the greatest examples where Two-Spirit people bring social issues they believe are ignored by tribal institutions and governmental health organizations to the public Indian discourse. Also, by actively seeking, teaching, and engaging traditional knowledges, such as beading and ceremony, Two-Spirit people are manipulating what it means to be an Indian and a contemporary Two-Spirit person. Two-Spirit acts of resistance- taking material, corporeal, and symbolic forms- by and of themselves have the potential to reshape the exchange of cultural content between dominant and subordinate groups. However, resistance does not take brute force, but instead becomes part of the ebb and flow of cultural performance, change and social interaction (Scott 1985, Gramsci 1971).

In previous chapters I discussed the ways in which Two-Spirit people locate their identity within the dominant discourse on Indianness, as well as community responses to gay and lesbian Indians. We see that Two-Spirit people characterize their identity as having more of a connection to indigenous traditional gender and occupation than to modern gay identity. Recent scholarship on contemporary North American gender diversity has attempted to emphasize Two-Spirit identity within those interpretations as well.[43] However, conceptualizations of Two-Spirit people,

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[43]Lang (1997, 1998), Roscoe (1998), Thomas and Jacobs (1999), Jacobs, Thomas and Lang (1997), all emphasize Two-Spirit as not equivalent to Western notions about "homosexuality". They also

thus far, have relied too heavily on an ambiguous or strategic connection with historic

accounts of gender crossing and occupation. The consequence is not only the

romanticism critiqued by other scholars, but also a neglect of contemporary issues

(Trexler 1995). In previous sections I pointed out that scholars, through an emphasis

on the historic or novel, have overlooked the ways in which contemporary Two-Spirit

people are alienated by modern Indian society. As a result, the neglect of alienation

gives us little sense of the specific ways Two-Spirit people actively deal with/resist

domination. Roscoe makes cursory mention of the power issues involved in Native

gay and lesbian identity, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS funding and political

action (1998: 99-108). Most studies such as Williams (1986) and Lang (1998)

mention contemporary Two-Spirit, and GAI identity as a homophobia and racial

defense mechanism. Also, articles in the edited volumes *Two-Spirit People* and

Living the Spirit, as well as Thomas and Jacobs, give brief reflection on racism within

the gay community and homophobia in Indian communities as forces in the

establishment of Two-Spirit as a political and social identity (1999). However, none

have yet to address the ways in which Two-Spirit people actively shape their cultural

worlds. Issues of power are expressly missing from earlier examinations due to an

emphasis on intact gender traditions or urban gay Indian social movements and the

focus on making a connection between detailed historical evidence and quixotic

examinations of the present. We get little sense of the ways in which Two-Spirit

people actively engage the relationship between their differences and community

standards of acceptable identities. As Sheila points out: "Researchers are not

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emphasize to varying degrees of intensity the link between Two-Spirit identity and
occupational/gender roles.

interested in the 'right now' because it is too messy and unromantic. They prefer looking at history because everything was supposedly more 'real' then."

All of these issues have influenced interpretations about what it means to be Two-Spirit. However, we now turn to the ways in which Two-Spirit people make their identity part of the public discourse through acts of resignification and resistance. As Butler points out, dominant ideology (discourse) recognizes a particular set of actions and symbols as representative of accepted ideals through signification (1990: 184-5). Therefore, to be a particular kind of person is to repeat (perform) the actions required to signify oneself as adhering to the dominant ideology. Through repetition, the dominant ideology substantiates itself and remains intact; thus each act signifies what remains intelligible for that social group. Resignification is the " ... assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility." That is, certain acts have the potential to draw into question the dominant regulations on intelligibility. These acts have the potential to reconfigure, redeploy and thus resignify associated meanings (Butler 1990: 184-6). Therefore, Two-Spirit people resignify what it means to be Indian through variation on the performance and repetition of a particular set of acts.

Becoming Two-Spirit would be described by many people as coming to know oneself as a particular kind of person. As we have seen, coming to know oneself as Two-Spirit (also in the Foucauldian sense) goes well beyond the simple recognition of sexual identity, but encompasses a series of comparisons and reactions to dominant Indian ideology. In addition, becoming Two-Spirit involves finding a place for oneself in Indian communities through participation and performance. Participation

is not only about seeking a role for individuals, but also about Two-Spirit as a form of community-recognized identity. We know that many communities recognize "gay Indians" as something very specific and frequently unwanted. However the community recognition they are seeking involves the performance of a particular set of acts and symbolic gestures, individually and collectively, intended to create an opening in dominant ideology. As Butler points out, repetitive performance allows for openings where alternative interpretations of identity can be inserted (1990: 185). Becoming Two-Spirit is about finding, exploiting, and resignifying these openings. It is in these openings where Two-Spirit identity is and will be formed, not in the opposition between the two "masses" Two-Spirit and Indian.

In order to get an idea of what Two-Spirit people do to be "Two-Spirit," we have to examine the ways that they seek self-knowledge in ways that have the potential to alter dominant conceptions of appropriate social roles in their communities. In doing so, I ask: in what ways does Two-Spirit identity critically engage the regulations imposed by dominant ideology? By critically engaging dominant ideology through their self-knowledge, how are they reshaping what dominant conceptions of gender and sexuality in Native America represent? Also, through the assertion of their presence, how do they establish a specific set of recognized roles for Two-Spirit people?

Mending the Hoop I: Resignifying Indian

A crucial aspect of completing the hoop for Two-Spirit people is establishing a public space for their performances of Indian identity. Two-Spirit only retreats and gatherings function as providing a public space for many of the people I knew and

interviewed. Many Two-Spirit people actively seek out a space for themselves in mainstream Indian, tribal and ceremonial communities. In seeking to create a space in dominant contexts, Two-Spirit people are challenging what are considered acceptable public social roles and representations. Therefore, it is in their effort to complete the hoop through acts of resistance and resignification where Two-Spirit people critically engage dominant ideas about Indian identity with the goal of acceptance and reincorporation.

Two-Spirit attempts to incorporate their differences in public Indian space take the form of transcending accepted community standards in ways that are not wholly new. Rather, they interpret community standards and modify them to meet the desires and subjective senses of their identity. For example, a Two-Spirit male straight dancer may use the gay pride colors in their regalia beadwork, or they may incorporate female representations into their male regalia. In this way, Two-Spirit people are participating as male bodied persons, but see themselves as challenging the sex/gender restrictions of that performance. For many people creating an awareness of their presence in Native communities requires only slight variations and has the effect of challenging structural relations between forms of representation.

Resignifying performance

The story about Sheila and her first encounter with the "woman in the gold jingle dress" from Chapter Four illustrates some of the attitudes encountered by Two-Spirit people. At the same time it represents a significant act of resistance for the Two-Spirit people who witnessed or heard about the incident. Although Sheila was publicly rebuked, many people saw her dancing and public challenging of gender

lines as having positive results. The day after the initial jingle dance incident, Sheila went with Jeff and Carl to another local powwow so that she and Jeff (who dances straight competition) could compete. To no one's surprise, Lana in the gold jingle dress was there and we all expected there would be trouble. Throughout the evening Lana kept gazing at us while whispering to the other people sitting around her. Later during the powwow as Sheila was lining up with the other dancers for the jingle competition Lana came up and told her: "you don't belong here because the judges know you're a man." As Lana was beginning to create a scene, an older Cheyenne jingle dancer stood next to Sheila, scolding Lana: "Stop being a bitch and get your ass back in line." We were all pretty astonished by the public confrontation, but also by the amount of support shown by the dancer whom no one knew. Later that evening the Cheyenne jingle dancer came up to Sheila and introduced herself, and told us that "Lana doesn't know the old ways."

The contention surrounding Sheila's performances generated more visibility for her gender status and drew attention to the people who associated with her publicly. In the year that Sheila was living with Jeff and Carl, she frequently performed in jingle dance and buckskin at powwows, shook shells at stomp dances, taught beading at a local community college, helped with cooking at events, and went on a few dates with local Indian men (who I was told were sometimes not aware of her gender crossing). Eventually, a large portion of the regular powwow crowd around Eagleton knew Sheila was a man living as a woman. Besides the initial incidents involving Lana, most people did not acknowledge her gender crossing

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publicly.[44] People in both the Modelo and Eagleton groups saw Sheila's defiance of gender boundaries as having a positive effect. In many ways Sheila represents the possibility of redefining community expectations of what it means to be an Indian person. Sheila's competition dancing and doing the work of women is not a parody on gender lines akin to drag, but is firmly established in community expectations of a woman. Accordingly, Two-Spirit performative transgressions are serious and culturally recognizable acts meant to fulfill individual desires for participation. Sheila was in Eagleton for only a year, but during that time she was recognized as creating quite a stir in Indian Country. Before Sheila left, an influential Choctaw woman told Ben that she "thought that Sheila needed to get in people's faces and make them see the right way to be." He lamented, "I wish Sheila would have stayed here longer before going back to Modelo. She was really making people question their ideas."

Acts of transgression are not solely rendered through complete gender role crossing, but rely on more mixing of gendered practices. Most Two-Spirit people mixed gender representation through slight alterations in Indian symbolism that are recognizable but require a knowledge of community ideas about performance. In one example, I became an actor in several minor but informative gender issues around a Southeastern style ceremonial dance. At most Southeast community performances of this ceremony there are explicit rules about the line of dancers alternating between man and woman. Therefore, if there was a man at the end of the dance line, then only a woman could be behind him. I had grown accustomed to "Two-Spirit"

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[44] Although there was a decline in public confrontations over Sheila's gender crossing, Sheila did not win another competition despite often being the most accomplished dancer in technique and regalia.

interpretations of the dances where the usual rule of male - female order was not used, and men would take on the female role of shaking the rattles and wear ceremonial skirts. Shortly after I had begun to participate in the Southeastern ceremonial dances, I went to a dance at Jeff's family grounds with Robert. I should reiterate here that Jeff was very careful of any indication that he and Carl's relationship is more than roommates, and he is extremely "closeted" around his extended family. Sheila was at this particular event as well and it appeared that some people were unsure whether she was a man or a woman. The atmosphere made for a tension of secrecy that tended to frame much of the social interaction and my attentions were heightened in that respect. When the dance started, one younger Two-Spirit boy, Timmy, began to dance taking on the female role of shaking rattles, which drew looks from the older people present. As people fell into the line, I got behind Robert and started dancing. I did not make it around the fire once before Jeff's aunt inserted herself between Robert and me. She scolded me, "If there's not a woman in between the men, then don't dance." I felt embarrassed that something common in Two-Spirit social realms was possibly creating a revealing moment in public gendered social interaction. However, throughout the evening, Jeff and Carl continued to dance next to each other, lessening the focus given to gender order. A further disjuncture later occurred when Jeff's female cousin, who is also Two-Spirited, took on the male role of leading songs. Timmy continued to shake rattles behind her. While community coherence of gender roles was being challenged, it was also being altered. By Jeff and the other people present refusing to adhere to gendered community standards, they were creating the possibility of a different

interpretation of how a dance should be conducted. While reinterpreting gender standards, everything else about the dance was conducted according to accepted ritualized standards. On the drive home I asked Robert for his thoughts. He said, "We did everything the way it's supposed to be done. We just had Two-Spirit people running it, so things are a little different."

Two-Spirit people also frequently engage in less noticeable transgressive acts. Ben sometimes wear a ladies knife sheath on his powwow dance belt, or would wear a piece of his gourd dance regalia in a "contrary" way as an expression of his Two-Spiritedness. Another example is the common use of the gay pride colors in Two-Spirit dance regalia. Glen showed me his first straight dance outfit where all of the beadwork on his eagle fan, dance stick, moccasins, and bandoliers were in the colors and order of the gay pride flag. I often noticed people with small pride flags on their dance sticks or incorporated into parts of their regalia. The incorporation of the red AIDS ribbon into one's "Indian clothes" is also common. Mick has an AIDS ribbon embroidered on his ribbon shirt, Glen both wears AIDS ribbon pins on his dance regalia, and Andy has one on his dance stick.

However, for some, the incorporation of mainstream gay symbolism does not represent a challenge to Indian society, but rather a set of symbols not appropriate for Indian social realms.

> Ben: I think it is wonderful that people incorporate their pride, but that rainbow flag does not represent me as an Indian person, or me as a dancer. That is decoration, not tradition. And that comes from the mainstream gay world not the Indian world. I personally think as Two-Spirit people we need to have our own symbolism and then we can incorporate it. Our Indian people would accept an Indian gay flag rather than the mainstream

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white gay pride flag. If it is an   Indian creating an
Indian thing, then that is more accepted.

Regardless of individual feelings about their meaning, the incorporation of symbols

seen as having a Two-Spirit or gay community recognition act to modify acceptable

community standards of what should be included in one's regalia.

A further irony often pointed out was that the majority of Two-Spirit men that

I knew straight danced. The play on terminology is obvious and was often pointed

out by Two-Spirit and non-gay Indians. As Carl said, "Ben can't straight dance cause

he's not straight. He does some kind of Two-Spirit version." A straight dancing

Two-Spirit person is a humorous irony, yet it signals something significant about the

cultural performance of gender. Straight dance style is adopted from the Osage,

Ponca, and Otoe war dance societies. It is often associated with the most masculine

dance, as well as having the most "traditional" connection to historic forms of male

dance. In choosing "war dance," Two-Spirit people are fulfilling the requirements of

their "Southern" Native tradition. Yet they are embarking on a symbolic gesture by

being gay men, something not often associated with masculinity, and participating in

the most symbolic form of masculine performance. In some ways they are fulfilling

dominant requirements for male bodied persons. However, several people pointed

out that being a gay man performing as a "straight" dancer is in and of itself a

challenge to Indian communities.

Completing the Hoop II: Reincorporating Two-Spirits

The Two-Spirit people I interacted with conceptualize mending the hoop not

only in terms of creating an awareness of their presence, but also in terms of

reincorporation into Native society through recognized roles. Here we will look at

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the ways in which Two-Spirit people critically engage Indian community values in their attempts to address social issues perceived to be not fully dealt with by Indian peoples. They actively engage social issues such as HIV/AIDS and educating youth through "making themselves useful" to Native communities.

Statements in previous sections explained that Two-Spirit people place the blame for their decline on the lack of public roles and incorporation in Indian society. Two-Spirit people clearly connect the lack of public roles to the social problems of Native communities. Many people feel that without Two-Spirit people there to create balance, Indian society will continue to "suffer." Ed echoed this when he told me one night in an intense conversation, "The spirit of the people has been broken by white ways. This is why we don't have Two-Spirit people anymore. This is why Indian people have so many problems. You understand that life is a hoop, and our people are a hoop. We need to repair that hoop." Two-Spirit people see part of Indian society's ills or the lack of completeness in the medicine wheel as a result of the intolerance for difference as well as the decline of Two-Spirit roles in Native societies. Sheila, Glen, Andy and Ben all pointed to Indian society's domestic problems and the problems of the youth as related to a lack of stability between masculine and feminine energies in Native communities. A conversation with Glen demonstrates this idea:

> Brian: Some of the people I spoke with tell me that the reason that Indian people have problems is because they have lost a sense of diversity in their communities and purpose for all kinds peoples. Would you agree with them?
>
> Glen: Yeah, I would agree them. That reminds me of the guy I was telling you about that runs the Sundance. He told

me "In the old times we never had child abuse, we never had spousal abuse, because we had the Two-Spirit people there to stand between the men and the women." One of the roles of the Two-Spirit people was to protect the women and the children from the men. We know how men can be aggressive. In the old days just the presence of a Two-Spirit person in camp would calm the men down. Now that there aren't Two-Spirit people in our communities like the old days, we have child abuse, spousal abuse and so much divorce. One of the big reasons for that is there are no Two-Spirit people in the communities to stand between the men and the women because we know what it is to be both.

The theme of the medicine wheel is repeated through the ways that Two-Spirit people's presence and activities are felt to create a societal balance. By representing a combination of male and female traits, Two-Spirit people seek to balance the forces that men and women bring to a society. As Ben, Glen and several other people emphasized, Two-Spirit people are attempting to stress the transcendence of the Western gender binary in conceptions of their social roles. That is, Two-Spirit people conceive their social roles as a "mix" of gender components, and therefore their social roles as unfixed by the sex/gender binary.[45] As with Two-Spirit cultural performances, they conceptualize their social roles as flexible according to the specific needs of the community. Although they may strive to be "better women" in cultural knowledge, many maintain their identity as male-bodied persons or participate in male oriented social and religious tasks. Two-Spirit people not only see themselves as balancing the energies between men and women, but also balancing the various "things that need to be done" in Indian communities. They see their ability to

[45] I am drawing on the notion presented in Roscoe (1991, 1993, 1998), Lang (1998), and Williams (1986) that Two-Spirit people historically and contemporary represent in gendered occupation a role

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transcend the gendered aspects of social, spiritual and political as allowing them a freedom in movement between various roles that communities need filled. Two-Spirit people can make beadwork items for regalia while also filling the male role of lodge pourer. They perceive this mixture of roles as simultaneously making a place for themselves while creating a balance through service to their communities.

Making a place for oneself in Indian society is tied to being useful in communities.

> Ben:　　　　If we can become people who can help ease the load on some of our medicine people, politicians, chiefs, old ladies, then more power to us. It's what you do to benefit the society.

As I was frequently reminded, "it is not enough just to show up." Rather, most people emphasize that Indian communities are not going to "welcome" Two-Spirits without their having a function in communities. Therefore, Two-Spirit people perceive that they must "prove themselves" to communities as a way to negate the complications created by their sexual and gender identity.

> Glen:　　　　We have to prove to the community who we are. If people come out first they may never get a chance to prove who they are. People may cut them off and not let them be a ceremonial leader. When people find out you're gay, you already have so many strikes against you. If you come to people and they know you are gay, plus you are ignorant of your culture then it will be twice as hard. We have to prove ourselves; that we give something good to the community.

> Ben:　　　　We have got to get over the hurdles they present about us being gay. It is almost like we need to do double than everyone else. Just out of respect until we can get our foot in the door. I'll do what ever it takes except jeopardize who I am.

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not limited to male or female. However, I maintain that the notion of a community recognized third sex/gender is not widely applicable to contemporary Two-Spirit identity.

We have to start getting back involved with the Indian community. If we are fortunate enough to have families and people to help us get back into the community we need to start by just being seen. Once they see that we are honest about our feelings then they will open themselves up to us holding a larger part in ceremony and powwow and society. Sharing a part of it is the first step to healing that Two-Spirited hoop.

Sean: Once the people see what we can do, then they will be like 'we don't really approve of it, but we will let you dance.' Then they'll be like, 'they know what they are doing so it is OK.' Eventually it will be, 'We are glad you're here to dance' and maybe it will someday be 'won't you come please dance with us.'

The reincorporation of social roles into Native society relies on Two-Spirit people making themselves known as knowledgeable individuals. While having knowledge of community values, Two-Spirit people continue to be limited in the ways that they can assert knowledge in public social contexts and have it be intelligible to Native communities. As we saw with cultural performance, most adhere to community standards yet vary symbolic standards in subtle ways. Two-Spirits' social roles follow this pattern as they assert their knowledge of Indian cultural values in social roles, while engaging difficult problems for communities.

In an attempt to fulfill their commitment to communities, and thereby mend the hoop, Two-Spirit people actively engage social issues within the Indian community. Although people such as Andy emphasize the ceremonial role of Two-Spirit people, they have made significant progress toward community acceptance through their commitment to social causes. Two-Spirit people have dealt with the absence of "traditional" public social roles by becoming active in areas where communities are lacking resources, interest or knowledge. They are combining

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traditional Indian values with contemporary necessities to fulfill the needs of the community. The taking up of causes for HIV programs and working with youth are not tasks assigned by Indian communities. Instead, they represent areas were Two-Spirit people have an interest and over time have developed their participation and knowledge to a level that has, to some extent, become required by Indian communities. Two-Spirit people would conceptualize this subtle assertion of their presence in communities as a form of "resistance" having the potential to alter attitudes toward their differences. As Sheila's sister pointed out:

> They have to figure out what works for them. It may not be the traditional ceremonial route, but may be more of a combination between the traditional and the contemporary. This is a way they can achieve being Two-Spirit and utilizing their medicine by helping to educate the greater Native community.

Caring for children

Two-Spirit people further conceptualize their mending of the hoop by taking on the caregiver role and teacher for children in their families and in their communities. Historically, Two-Spirit people were known for fulfilling roles as caring for children in their kin groups and taking on parental roles for orphaned children in the tribal communities (Williams 1986: 54-5). Contemporary Two-Spirit people also feel a necessity to care for children in their family, as well as to teach children about Indian cultural ways. As is prevalent in many Indian communities, children are often cared for by multiple family members. Many people I know had taken on the role of aunt and uncle for children within and outside their families. When they were called upon to help with the raising of a female child, they emphasized their ability to teach young girls female cultural ways, which also was

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applied to male children. Andy and Mike both were taking a major role in the raising of their sisters' "fatherless" children.

> Andy: We come from a matriarchal family, where women
>   make all the decisions. Most men who have married in
>   can't handle that and end up leaving the family. We
>   end up having to raise the children, which is fine
>   because we get to raise them properly. This is all part
>   of being a traditional family.

In line with his statement, Andy has taken on a caregiver and teacher role with his sister's children. Since he has both a niece and a nephew, Andy is required to instruct them on both male and female cultural expectations. He taught the niece to sew, make regalia, cook traditional Southwestern foods, perform female ceremonial tasks and helped assemble her dance outfit. Also, he taught the nephew the ceremonial and social requirements of being a Puebloan man. His niece and nephew frequently accompanied him to ceremonies and gatherings where they would be given tasks such as cooking, and gathering firewood. Andy characterized this role as one requiring a Two-Spirit person because their mixed gender roles made them more knowledgeable of both male and female cultural expectations. Also, because a Two-Spirit person was teaching them, young people were learning a respect for the diversity in Native society that they might otherwise not have been exposed too.

Mike helping his niece through her rite of passage presents an exceptional example of a Two-Spirit person being called upon to fulfill a traditional role. Mike's sister has a teenage daughter, Theresa, whose father left when she was very young. Mike took on the role of providing money, clothes, and support for the little girl. Since Theresa had no aunts, Mike's family called upon him to prepare her for "becoming a woman." As Mike explained it, Puebloan tradition requires a young girl

approaching puberty to go through a training were she learns to pot, weave, cook, conduct domestic ceremonies, and a multitude of other activities required of an adult woman. He told me that it was expected for him to take on the teacher role with his niece since he was the Two-Spirit person in the family. Mike said that, traditionally, a Two-Spirit person would teach young girls how to be women, since they had the time and knowledge to nurture female children. Mike spent a year teaching Theresa how to silversmith, weave, butcher a sheep, build a Hogan and coral, put on makeup and make her hair into a traditional style, as well as various other female oriented tasks. He also ran every day at five in the morning with his niece, because physical fitness was an additional requirement. Mike's family had not always been accepting of his sexual orientation, and it was not until recent years that they began to accept him. He felt that his teaching Theresa the "right ways" helped demonstrate his knowledge of his tribal culture, but also proved that he was bringing particular gifts to the community.

The children that Two-Spirit people cared for and taught were not always in their own families. Jeff's role in maintaining an Indian youth organization is another example of the ways Two-Spirit people are asserting themselves through meeting community needs. Jeff lived in a small rural community where he worked with an Indian youth organization primarily made up of teenagers. Part of his job was to counsel at-risk youth, as well as organize cultural activities with an Indian focus. Jeff went well beyond the requirements of his job to the extent of giving up weekends and evenings in support of the youth. In the geographic area where Jeff was working, there is a considerable amount of working poor Indian families. As with many Indian

communities, alcoholism and child neglect are major issues, as well as adolescent criminal activity, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse among youth. Part of Jeff's task was to use cultural programs to help the teens through their specific issues while teaching them about Indian culture. Jeff told me that he saw his commitment to this work as fulfilling his required role as a Two-Spirit person. He saw himself as ideal for the job because he had the nurturing aspects and cultural knowledge of women and the stern aspects and cultural knowledge of men. Jeff was often also called upon for help when youth group members needed emotional support. He looked at his work as meeting needs not being met by the youths' parents or families and the Indian community. Sponsors of the group saw his work as making the important link between the youth and traditional Native culture. Jeff put a considerable amount of time into teaching the youth Native cultural ways, such as instructing the girls on how to bead and assemble their dance regalia. He was also teaching a group of young men to powwow sing so that they could start performing at events. Despite seeing his work as fulfilling the roles of a Two-Spirit person, he remained in the closet in his community and with the youth. I heard that one of the active older people stated that they knew Jeff was "gay," but they did not care because he had "gotten a lot of kids off drugs" and taught them about their culture.

Some Eagleton members took on teaching and mentor roles with gay youth in particular. One of Ben's adopted sisters had a son who had recently come out. Ben was asked to "talk to" and "help" his teenage nephew deal with coming out issues, as well as instruct him on the role of Two-Spirit people. Mick had a nephew who had recently come out and his family asked him to teach the child to be a good Two-Spirit

person. Ben and Mick both told me that they were glad to do the work of helping these teenagers avoid the problems they had encountered when they came out. For instance, Ben went to great lengths to insure his adopted nephew's exposure to the "healthy" gay lifestyle promoted in the Two-Spirit organization and society. He was continually emphasizing to the young man that his indigenous identity separated him from mainstream gay society. Ben's nephew went with us on numerous outings to powwows and ceremonial dances. Ben was also working with him to assemble his dance regalia. Ben reiterated, "Part of our job as older Two-Spirit people is to make sure that our young Two-Spirits don't get abused by the gay scene." Ben was obviously drawing on the previously mentioned issues of substance abuse and "hyper-sexuality" of the gay community. Also, Ben saw the Two-Spirit community as an alternative for young Indian boys who wanted to come out and avoid the issues that he and so many other Two-Spirit people had experienced.

Doing HIV/AIDS work

Issues of HIV/AIDS were largely ignored in the Native community early in the epidemic. Indian communities saw the disease as something associated with white gays and urban drug users, hence its designation as the "white man's disease." As Roscoe has pointed out, the HIV/AIDS epidemic did not begin to be addressed among Indian gays and lesbians until the late 1980s (1998: 103). At that time, the concern over HIV/AIDS was primarily focused in the urban gay and lesbian Indian communities and had made little headway into the rural and reservation based communities. From the beginning of the epidemic through 1988, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) did not have a separate category for Native Americans with

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HIV/AIDS, which exacerbated the effects of an already underreported number of infected Indian people. However, by 1990 the CDC established The National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC) and urban activist groups had begun addressing the needs of Native peoples with HIV (Roscoe 1998: 105).

It is recognized that gay and lesbian Natives themselves had much to do with the establishment of Native-specific HIV programming in the U.S. Since the late 1980s, several organizations designed to support HIV-infected Natives have been established. Ahalaya in Oklahoma City, the Navajo AIDS Network, and the San Francisco Native American AIDS Project are just a few of the "model" organizations that seek to provide counseling and testing services, meals, housing referrals and some medical treatment for people infected with HIV/AIDS. In the early 1990s, many of the aid organizations turned to issues of prevention, which seek to educate Indian people on the virus and issues surrounding it. Individual tribes and Indian non-profits began receiving funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, which led to the establishment of many Two-Spirit groups, such as the Eagleton group. More recently, the focus on HIV/AIDS has turned from a gay Indian focus to one including all Indian people, particularly youth.

In the effort to educate Native people about HIV/AIDS, Two-Spirit people have found an additional way to serve communities. Almost every Two-Spirit person I interacted with had done some kind of AIDS work. AIDS work was similar to that conducted by the non-Native gay community, which included caring for individuals infected with the disease, visiting and providing food for incapacitated individuals, providing rides to the doctor, giving donations, and volunteering for outreach and

fund raising events. However, the outreach work done in communities, both tribal

and mainstream Indian, is by far the most visible among Native people and is

perceived as most suited to Two-Spirit people.

Early in the epidemic Andy and Mick began working to create awareness

among the mainstream gay communities, and eventually turned their efforts toward

indigenous gays and lesbians.

> Andy: Back in the early 80s when I began looking at how we were going to get the prevention message out to the gay community, I realized that there wasn't really a community, because the only thing they have in common is attraction to the same sex. What I realized was that in the indigenous community, we already have a community. Then the question became how we move within the indigenous community to create change.

Through my conversations with Andy and Mick it became obvious that making

indigenous people aware of the risks and issues involved with HIV/AIDS is

incredibly more difficult than doing outreach among the gay community. The first

obstacle is addressing the issue of sexuality in public Indian contexts, particularly

same sex relations. Mick detailed to me numerous occasions of encountering

hostility toward gays, lesbians and individuals infected with the disease during his

presentations. Mick found that many of his initial contacts with tribal health

organizations focused on the "morality" of the issue or surrounded its association with

same sex relations. Ron Rowell speaks to this issue from one of his consultants

among the Navajo (1997: 89):

> ... the Navajo Nation is generally homophobic and as a result, people have a difficult time coming out of the closet. There are places on the reservation where this is not so, especially among traditional elders, but among younger people there is a lot of ridicule and intimidation ... He says seventy to eighty percent of the time people will oppose

having two-spirits present to speak at AIDS conferences on the reservation. Younger gay Navajos think of AIDS as a problem only of older gay men or of urban Indians, not something that affects rural/reservation younger people...

Nonetheless, Mick and Andy made it clear that by the early 1990s, HIV/AIDS was taking a toll in both gay and non-gay indigenous communities and it was their role to address it through public action.

Ben, Mick, Phillip, Andy, and Roberto all were employed in positions that required HIV/AIDS outreach to indigenous communities with mostly a rural or reservation focus. The clinic that Ben and Mick worked for required that they run the Eagleton Two-Spirit group, do public outreach at powwows and other events, and travel to conduct training and information sessions at tribal headquarters. Mike worked for a local interfaith Christian organization that provided public outreach and counseling for Native and non-Native individuals who were at risk for or had contracted HIV. Andy mostly worked within the Two-Spirit community writing grants and organizing retreats and other Indian activities to help in the prevention education effort. Roberto worked for his tribal health agency, and did public outreach on and off the reservation. The public outreach work usually required some level of self disclosure and all of the people I knew who did this kind of work were "openly gay" and often forthcoming about related issues.

Mick is one of the first people to have done public outreach to tribal health workers and communities in reservation and rural areas. He had numerous anecdotes about the homophobia and misunderstanding that he encountered on these initial visits. Most of his seminars were in the form of day-long workshops given for tribal health workers and youth counselors. These seminars included basic information on

HIV/AIDS, how it is contracted and who is at the highest risk of infection.

Inevitably, community recognition that the gay men in their communities were at the highest risk raised a certain amount of controversy. No one disputed that gay men were at the highest risk, but rather that there were no gay men in their communities. Any outreach event that Mick conducted included some form of discussion of the history of sex and gender diversity among historic Native American communities. Predictably, any discussion that Mick presented conflicted with popular opinion among attendees. Despite resistance, Mick has persisted in his outreach and awareness activities. In many ways, programs such as the Red Cross' or CDC's owe a considerable amount of gratitude to early Indian HIV/AIDS activists for opening the door while taking chances with alienation in their communities. Now that issues surrounding HIV/AIDS are starting to become "de-gayed," the presentation of workshops is less controversial.[46] Mick's early efforts no doubt made considerable strides in the acceptability of discussions of sexuality and disease in Indian communities. In fact, presentations and training on HIV/AIDS at tribal headquarters occur frequently with little incident and are required for anyone working in health and youth areas.

Roscoe points out: "The fight against HIV/AIDS is of necessity a fight against homophobia" (1998: 107). In similar ways, Two-Spirit efforts at making Indian communities aware of HIV/AIDS issues brings sex and gender diversity to the public discourse. Through their efforts at creating awareness about HIV/AIDS they are also speaking out on behalf of differences in the Native community. All of the

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[46] Roscoe (1998: 107) and Two-Spirit informants have pointed out that the "de-gaying" of HIV/AIDS issues has the potential to counter the work done to create awareness in gay and non-gay communities.

people I know who did HIV/AIDS related outreach included gender diversity in some component of their presentation. They were using the public space provided by communities as a way to create awareness of their presence, but also as a way to show their concern with Indian peoples. Roberto's effort at HIV/AIDS outreach within his own reservation community is often recognized as some of the "most dangerous." Working in his own community puts Roberto at a certain disadvantage that other people working in HIV/AIDS may not encounter, in that, he is making himself more vulnerable to community biases and homophobia which could result in alienation or violence. When we were all sitting around discussing this issue, Roberto felt that it was his duty as a member of the tribe and as a Two-Spirit person to make the community aware of the risks. He also felt it was important to reach out to the Two-Spirit people in the community and "let them know they aren't alone." As in Roberto's efforts, most HIV/AIDS work among Indian people involves some aspect of outreach to Two-Spirit people. The goal is not only to help them remain healthy, but also an attempt to relieve a sense of isolation surrounding their identity. Roberto, as well as many other people, felt that isolation on reservations and rural areas led Two-Spirit people to live secret sex lives in cities and other places. Many also felt that this secrecy and isolation was a major factor in HIV/AIDS infection among Indian gays and lesbians. Roberto brought HIV/AIDS and sexuality issues to the people in his workshop through stories and by using traditional methods for the teaching of knowledge. Using the components of oral tradition, he would tell stories about the importance of individuality, respecting one another, and respect for oneself, as well as sing songs about Two-Spirit people and staying healthy.

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Two-Spirit people were the first to address issues of HIV/AIDS in Native communities, and much of the burden of the early work fell on their volunteerism. By asserting themselves through public outreach efforts, Two-Spirit people have become the "experts" in the area of HIV/AIDS work. It is often assumed that an individual who goes to a tribe or other Indian organization to present a workshop or training on HIV/AIDS will be a Two-Spirit person. One non-Two-Spirit person I know who works with HIV/AIDS in Indian communities is often assumed to be a lesbian. Ben was quick to point out that Two-Spirit people made the best counselors for issues of sexuality since they could relate to both genders and multiple sexual orientations. Now many tribal governments who are expected to provide some kind of HIV/AIDS training for their workers and awareness for their youth are turning to the people who are recognized to have the required knowledge for the work. As a result, there are more openly gay individuals working in Indian hospitals and clinics, as counselors and in non-profit organizations catering to Native communities.

The clinic where the Eagleton group is based always has a booth among the craft and food booths at major powwows in the area. Ben and Mick spend a considerable amount of time sitting in the booth during the events, handing out brochures on safe sex and distributing condoms from a small basket on a table. The selling of crafts and food is a major aspect of powwows, and people spend a considerable amount of time browsing that area during events. A clinic booth handing out condoms would previously have been a considerable disjuncture within the world of Indian crafts and frybread stands. However, young people are often the ones who stop and pick up condoms and brochures. The distribution of condoms

does occasionally bother some people, but as Ben said, "that doesn't keep us from going through two, four hundred count boxes per powwow." At one particular powwow, I noticed a youth organization had began handing out "snag bags," containing condoms and a brochure with information on sexually transmitted diseases and birth control. When Ben and I walked past the booth, he commented, that "We were the first to do that" but also that he was glad other people had taken up the effort, as well as catering to the youth through the play on snagging. Accordingly, it is often recognized by Two-Spirit people and non-gay Natives that the early work on HIV/AIDS by Indian gays and lesbians (and their families) helped make awareness efforts such as handing out condoms at powwows acceptable.

In order to understand how recognized differences can be used strategically as a vehicle for resistance, I have illustrated the ways Two-Spirit people use social and discursive opportunities in an attempt to make their identity intelligible. Exploiting "openings" in the social structure provides an opportunity for Two-Spirit people to make performances of their identity part of the public discourse. For example, Two-Spirit people use their knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention to fulfill a need in the community. By fulfilling the need they are making their identity part of social relationships and their by making Two-Spiritedness a recognized social identity. In arguing that Two-Spirit people resist social alienation by exploiting dominant ideology, I have attempted to show how "Two-Spirit" has the potential to be recognized as an aspect of "Indian." In examining the ways Two-Spirit people exploit dominant ideology, I also wish to demonstrate that "discursive" forms of resistance compliment other forms of resistance to challenge alienation and structural

inequality. The idea that structural inequality frames the dialectic between power and difference, as well as representation and social belonging, weighs heavy in the concluding remarks in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Difference and Social Belonging in Indian Country

As the members of the Eagleton and Modelo groups would agree, Two-Spirit people do not represent an "alternative" form of Indianness. Rather, they are and see themselves as committed to formally accepted community standards of social behavior and moral responsibility. Nonetheless, Two-Spirit people represent a contradiction with dominant perceptions of a masculinity that is inherited from historical constructions of Indian men. Two-Spirit people, however, perceive Indian societies' endorsement of the masculinist standard as a contradiction with the "traditional" values that emphasize the social acceptance of all differences. As we have seen, Two-Spirit identity is in part an attempt to reconcile inherited and "traditional" attitudes toward difference within communities. Notions about difference are enfolded into the ways all Indian people distinguish themselves from "white" society as well as make distinctions between each other in tribal traditions, religious beliefs, blood quantum, politics, economics, social class and sexual orientation. In this way, Two-Spirit identity is representative of the on-going struggle between multiple forms of difference.

In an effort to reincorporate their uniqueness into contemporary Native communities, Two-Spirit people strategically emphasize their cultural sameness with Native communities, while de-emphasizing sexual orientation as a personal defining characteristic. In doing so, they make use of community recognized historic and contemporary tribal and generic Indian traditions. The use of these traditions acts to

insure a recognized connection with the Native communities in which they grew up or seek participation. The incorporation of dominant Native ideology into notions of what Two-Spirit represents creates a reliance on specific traits recognized as "Indian" within multi-tribal notions of race, gender, and cultural practice. Despite their "perfection" of Indianness, Two-Spirit people assume that any indication of their sexual orientation will not go unnoticed and as a result any gendered or sexual transgression will generate hostility from their respective communities. Two-Spirit people perceive that acceptance in Native communities hinges not only on the fulfillment of ideal "Indianness," but also on how communities perceive their sexual orientation. In this way sexual orientation as a socially recognized difference becomes the single greatest alienating factor for Two-Spirit people in perception and reality. As we have seen, members of the Eagleton and Modelo groups employ several strategies in dealing with alienation, which include 1) remaining "in the closet," 2) changing rules governing performance out of dominant community view, 3) outright public displays of performative resistance, 4) making oneself useful in Native communities through HIV/AIDS activism and caring for children. While these strategies have differing results, and are somewhat contested among Two-Spirit people, they represent ways of finding a place in communities. While finding a place in a community is crucial to what it means to be Two-Spirit, it is also an example of the ways identity is actively constructed at the intersection of difference and social belonging.

Notions about individual and group difference in the construction of identity can be seen in the various ways Two-Spirit people interact with each other and Native

communities. Difference as a personal attribute is manipulated as a way to emphasize a sameness with the larger Native community, while it is also used to signal individual uniqueness. Individuals may at one time define themselves as generically Indian, while drawing on representations of distinct tribal traditions. By using individual differences as both an incorporating and exclusionary device non-gay Indians and Two-Spirit peoples unwittingly invoke power relationships. That is, differences take on social meaning and are given the power to include and exclude individuals based on a constant comparison to ideal types of "Indianness," "Creekness" (as a tribal example), or "Two-Spiritedness." As we have seen, ideal types of Indianness range from dominant masculinist standards to Two-Spirit perfection of "women's work" and from tribal membership to social participation. Whether we are speaking of the dominant Indian community or the Eagleton and Modelo groups, representations of difference – racial classification, masculinity and femininity, individual and collective behaviors – come to determine individual understandings of social belonging.

These complexities of social belonging become embodied in Two-Spirit people through what I have called critical self-knowledge. As Two-Spirit people construct ideas about their Native, gender, and sexual identities in relation to dominant ideological standards (self-knowledge), they also critically engage the several crucial contradictions in Indian cultural identities. For example, many Indian communities perceive a loss of culture practice and values among their people, while they are preventing and regulating the participation of individuals eager to commit themselves. This contradiction remains the most frustrating for Two-Spirit people

who spend a considerable amount of time perfecting Native practices and living according to Native values. Accordingly, many people who identify as Two-Spirit realize that they are not wholly prevented from social participation, yet perceive that participation is dependant on adhering to dominant expectations of male bodied persons. As a result, Two-Spirit people's identity embodies dominant expectations, but also the contradiction they represent with community standards. They may perform an expected role, but their personhood remains a difference from dominant ideology. As Glen pointed out after winning second place in men's straight dance competition, "If they knew I was a queen, they'd take away that honor." In this way, we can understand Two-Spirit frustrations of continually riding the edge of acceptance and alienation. Also, we can come to see that acceptance and alienation become a set of experiences that are dependant upon individual difference.

Epidemics of Difference

"On a run into town" to get more flour for frybread, Zach, a Two-Spirit person I was not very well acquainted with, told me a story about the ways his community has reacted to his HIV status.[47] Zach began by telling me that he had been in a coma and almost died several years before when his T-cell count hit a devastating low. While in the coma he was staying in a reservation Indian Health Service hospital near his community. Zach's family held ceremonies in his room throughout the ordeal. As Zach tells it, the ceremonies resulted in his eventual recovery and return home. He had spent several months resting at his parents house and came into very little contact with other people on the reservation. It was not until someone refused to

shake his hand at a wedding that Zach realized that the nurses at the hospital had broken confidentiality and revealed his status to others in the community. Out of fear that it would upset him and cause a decline in his health, the family did not tell Zach that they had experienced ridicule from other people in the community. They also did not want Zach to know that many nurses and other workers would not care for him and that during his stay in the hospital, Zach's family had to bathe him and change the sheets. By the time Zach discovered the talk surrounding his "status," most people in the community had already heard. I asked Zach, how he felt about his HIV status changing his "status" in the community. Holding back tears, he responded that he was very angry at the people in the hospital for telling everyone and not caring for him, but he was mostly disappointed in "his people." He pointed out that whenever someone is seriously ill in his community, that people, even professional health workers in the hospital, come to the spiritual and physical aid of that person and their family. Zach said that he knew of only two community members not related to him that attended ceremonies or cooked meals and took care of children for his family while they were attending to him in the hospital. For Zach, the community's attitude about his illness was contrary to traditional values of helping out community members. Also, Zach perceives the social stigma that he and his family are suffering due to his illness is the result of a breakdown in "traditional" values and in his words "making them no different than white people."

As we see with Zach's story, homophobia and the stigma of HIV/AIDS challenges community notions of care. In many cases, once individuals are infected

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[47]Due to the nature of "Zach's" disclosure, I am not identifying him as a member of a particular Two-Spirit group. Also, for further confidentiality, I am not including any identifying factors here or listing

they return to their reservation communities to seek help and rely on the notion that they will spend "their last days with their families." However, I heard of multiple occasions where individuals returned only to be ostracized by their families. Although, some families take care of their HIV infected family members there is a considerable amount of "shame" in the form of public social stigma. Fearing public shame leads many individuals to isolate themselves to the family home and limit their community participation. When communities become aware of a person's declining health, HIV is referred to by family members as "having cancer" or "the doctors aren't sure what it is." As Ben, and other HIV/AIDS workers pointed out, disguising illness may save individuals and families from experiencing additional grief, but it further perpetuates social stigma as well as the silence about HIV's effects on Indian people.

Also as Zach's story illustrates, seeking care in tribal hospitals poses a further problem related to community perceptions of HIV/AIDS. Patient confidentiality is a significant problem at tribally run hospitals. Fears about their HIV status being revealed and resulting social stigmas make it even more unlikely that infected individuals will seek care in tribally run facilities. Outside of traditional healing, for many infected Natives, tribally run facilities are their only health care option. Therefore, there are few opportunities for infected people to get treated without coming into contact with community members. Furthermore, due to the lack of funding in tribally run clinics and hospitals, physicians and administrators are often placed in the position of having to choose between outrageously expensive HIV maintenance drugs and other more widely used medications. Inevitably, an

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him in the Appendices.

institutionalized homophobia and judgmental attitude about the "acquired" aspect of HIV also become a force in treatment availability.

Homophobia has played a significant role in the spread of HIV world wide as well as within the smaller communities of Native peoples. I briefly touched on the ways in which gay and lesbian Native Americans are alienated by their communities due to homophobia. Also, I briefly touched upon the fact that the majority of gay and lesbian Natives leave their communities and reservations to seek acceptance and tolerance for their differences. Many of the people who leave the reservation experience the sexual and social freedom that large urban gay communities provide. In their quest for sexual and social liberty many Native peoples become involved in the "gay scene" which is well known to involve a considerable amount of substance abuse. Substance abuse combined with a longing for sexual freedom can lead to "risky behaviors," and potentially to HIV infection. Many people are thought to leave the reservation and rural communities with very little idea of sexually related risk factors more prevalent in urban areas. Furthermore, they are also thought to spread sexually transmitted diseases among a naive reservation population upon return visits.

The lack of open communication about sex, much less same sex relations and gender difference, among Native communities is consistently recognized as a major factor in the spread of HIV among heterosexual, gay, bisexual, and lesbian Indians. Furthermore, the framing of HIV as a gay "white man's" disease has had a considerable impact on Native community perceptions. It is often noted that reservation and rural Native communities, because of their size and general

geographic isolation, see themselves as immune to a disease explicitly associated with urban white gay populations.[48] I would suggest that the denial of differences such as same sex relations among Native communities is explicitly tied to the lack of recognition for Native people's risk of HIV infection. That is, if there are "no gay Indians" then there is no risk of Native exposure to HIV.

The stories of those infected with HIV/AIDS is similar to many people who have experienced alienation from their tribal communities based on sexual orientation and gender difference. Some of the life experiences I observed centering around individual difference included people coming out to their families, families and friends accepting sex and gender difference, individuals learning of their HIV positive status, and public acts of discrimination. However, I was most affected by the struggles of those who live daily life on the margins of death, and dealing with the alienation and uncertainty of their disease. During the course of my research, a couple of Two-Spirit people I knew died from complications due to AIDS, and a few others became critically ill and almost died. Infection, illness, and death are common topics of discussion, and in many ways become a part of Two-Spirit culture. Yet, I came to learn that despite the localized nature of Native attitudes toward the HIV infected, the socio-economic and political aspects of HIV infection is involved in broader groups of individuals, and perpetuated by larger perceptions of difference.

Important about examining community reactions to HIV/AIDS, as well as sexual orientation, is to recognize the ways difference becomes a set of experiences that can shape quality of life. Difference as a shaper of individual and collective

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[48] Baldwin et al. 1996, Greeley 1995, and Weaver 1999 all point to images of the white urban gay males as the ethnic stereotype for HIV infected individuals.

experience can be seen across cultural, sex and gender, class, and racial boundaries. Inevitably we have to ask how do experiences of difference affect quality of life? Also, how does difference determine structured relationships in the contemporary world? As I have attempted to demonstrate here, difference is in fact a structuring quality about more than representation, but acts to socially, politically, and economically structure peoples' lives. Where there is no tolerance for difference, individuals suffer certain consequences. Two-Spirit people would remind us that the consequences they face by identifying as Indian, tribally affiliated, gay, mixed blood, and transgender, also have consequences for Indian peoples in general. That is, Two-Spirit people perceive the lack of acceptance for multiple kinds of difference among Indian communities as negating the continuation of Native culture as well as individual survivability.

After long conversations on issues of race, health, tribal politics, social participation, and just about anything Indian, Ben would always say in almost the form of a prayer, "We need to take care of our people." I came to figure out that behind Ben's statement was a desire to emphasize the multiple differences among Indian peoples as a political and social strategy; difference as solidarity. In this way Two-Spirit people are actively engaged in a complex negotiation of social, political and personal desires, much like mainstream Native society. They want the same things as other indigenous peoples such as equal opportunities to self-determination, maintenance of their social relations, and freedom in religion. Despite perceptions of alienation, are Two-Spirit people representative of Native Americans as a whole? Two-Spirit people would say yes. Although, Two-Spirit people have no illusions

about the recognition of same-sex relations or gender difference as solving all of Native America's problems. They do however see it as part of a larger solution, one that involves self-determination in re-evaluating what it means to be a contemporary Indian person. The solution for them also involves challenging the hegemony of representations of Indians, as well as resisting the ways representation is used to create policies that affect the basic human existence of indigenous peoples.

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Appendix A:
The Interviewees

Informants

Ben: Late forties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Jeff: Early thirties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Todd: Early thirties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Carl: Mid-thirties. Male. Plains decent. Eagleton.

Glen: Late forties. Male. Southwest decent. Modelo.

Andy: Late forties. Male. Southwest decent. Modelo.

Mick: Early forties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Matt: Late thirties. Male. Woodland decent. Eagleton.

Robert: Mid-forties. Male. Woodland decent. Eagleton.

Sean: Early twenties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Ken: Early sixties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Paul: Late forties. Male. Plains decent. Loosely affiliated with Eagleton.

Jay: Mid-thirties. Male. Southwest decent. Modelo.

Phillip: Late thirties. Male. Southwest decent. Eagleton.

Mike: Late thirties. Male. Southwest decent. Modelo.

Sheila: Mid-thirties. Man living as a woman. Plains decent. Modelo and Eagleton.

Stuart: Mid-thirties. Male. Southeast decent. Modelo.

Abeque: Mid-thirties. Man living as a woman. Plains decent. Modelo.

Istahiba: Late thirties. Male. Plains decent. Modelo.

Juan: Late thirties. Male. Plains decent. Belongs to Northern US Two-Spirit group.

Timmy: Early twenties. Male. Southeast decent. Eagleton.

Roberto: Mid-forties. Man sometimes lives as woman. Southwest decent. Eagleton.