Fighting for Life: War Trauma, Healing, and Ritual Communities in the American Pacific Northwest

by

Christopher M. Webb

Department of Cultural Anthropology
Duke University

Date:_____
Approved:

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Harris Solomon, Supervisor

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Rebecca Stein

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J. Lorand Matory

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Zoë Wool

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the complex connections between violence, trauma, healing, and medicalization in North America. The project connects to conversations in medical anthropology and American studies, and intersects with science studies, postcolonial studies, the anthropology of militarism, and Native American studies. The central innovation in this dissertation is its focus on veterans who suffer from both the violence of war and the limits of trauma's conventional treatments. I track their experiences through a therapeutic system designed by and for Native people, and argue that questions about suffering and healing from war are inextricable from discourses and practices of gender, race, and territory.

Since the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis was codified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980, the object of combat trauma has grown to occupy significant space in popular culture. In the contemporary world, PTSD serves as the primary lens for translating military experience to both the public and veterans themselves. However, the diagnosis and all of its clinical appurtenances fall short of contextualizing the full range of traumas associated with military service and its treatments often fail to relieve sufferers of their symptoms. An early example of this was observed in American Indian veterans of the Vietnam War, who demonstrated marked “treatment resistance” to novel PTSD therapies that were

developed in the 1980s. In response to this, a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in southern Puget Sound responded to requests by local tribal leaders to make indigenous healing and purification rituals available for American Indian veterans. Noting the efficacy of these rituals, a ritual community of indigenous veterans became established there who continue to practice their ceremonies today on a piece of sacred land adjacent to the VA hospital.

The clinical PTSD diagnosis has evolved in accordance with medicalizing trends in the four decades since its recognition in the DSM. However, the social construct of combat trauma that is often known discursively as "PTSD" has grown and become increasingly entangled with various sociopolitical projects associated with war, gender, and racial/ethnic identity. In the 21st century, veterans increasingly prefer the signifier "warrior" over the civil term "veteran." The warrior signifier conjures a more mythical notion of timeless, transcultural castes located in martial societies. At the same time, this warrior identity is being embraced by many outside of the military, including police and civilian defense contractors. Warriors are seen as a distinct kind of person who experiences war, suffering, and healing differently than civilians. Within this context, the combat trauma construct that is often generalized as "PTSD" becomes the fundamental marker of legitimate warrior experience.

When the VA approved of making space for indigenous ceremony in the 1980s, it was because indigenous veterans were seen as denizens of "warrior cultures," and

understood to be ontologically distinct from non-indigenous veterans who were expected to heal best in a clinical environment. Until relatively recently, the ritual healing community was almost exclusive to the indigenous veterans it was created for. However, the ceremonies increasingly appeal to non-indigenous veterans and are now being seen as a therapeutic option for treatment-resistant veterans of all ethnicities. This situation creates the conditions for the complex intersection of several socioepistemological projects, including medicalization, race, indigeneity, militarism, and "warrior" identity among many other things.

As a combat veteran with a PTSD diagnosis, my fieldwork centered on extended participation in the ceremonial life of this ritual community. Over a period of 36 months I made several trips to the site, including seven months of continuous fieldwork in 2019. I became close with the Elder Council, the team of experienced Native chaplains who officiate ceremonies in the ritual community. Drawing from several tribal traditions, particularly from Lakota/Plains traditions, these elders conduct sweat lodges, "talking circles," and other ceremonies. These rituals serve a dedicated cohort of regular attendees, a segment of patients from the hospital's inpatient PTSD program, and periodic visitors who are seeking healing after the failure of clinical therapy. My findings detail two developments: First, the ritual community exposes the limits of the 20th century process of medicalizing trauma associated with war/military service. For instance, ritual participants draw on the Lakota concept of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, "the

sickness one acquires from fighting others and the self" as the therapeutic object at stake, in contrast to "PTSD". Ceremonies directly address this sickness by highlighting Native experiences of colonization, the unique ways that trauma was experienced by Native veterans (particularly from the Vietnam War era), and the connections between violence and masculinity. Second, the site shifts the ways “warriordom” connects concepts of violence to concepts of culture. The notion that warriors are a unique kind of person who both suffer and heal differently from civilians may account for the increasing appeal of ritual therapy among non-Native veterans. However, the ceremonies compel veterans to confront warrior identity as a feature of white settler violence, and effectively turn healing into a process of social critique.

Dedication

For Diane

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Acknowledgements

The list of people who contributed to this dissertation in some way is not possible to put here. I will do my best to acknowledge as many people as I can, but I will certainly miss people who contributed in various, priceless ways. I appreciate all of you.

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First and foremost, the work necessary to conduct this research would not have been possible without the extraordinary sacrifice of my family. My spouse Bekah has stood by me and encouraged me since the very beginning, committing to stand by me throughout my journey through this crucible and the countless episodes of precarity that seem to be deliberately woven into doctoral study. In spite of the bad behavior of academics and administrators, my nights of tears and depression, putting the kids to bed solo while I read and wrote tomes, and the wealth of her siblings who married businessmen instead of academics, we are still married and she is still my greatest supporter. My children, Colin and Maggie, have also endured so much. This system is

built under the assumption that the people undertaking doctoral study either don't have children or have the wealth/resources to have their children taken care of for them. I do have a family and don't come from the sort of background that makes these things easily accessible to me, so my family had to absorb some stress and challenges that they should have never been subject to. They are beautiful souls whom I adore, and I pray to all of the gods and spirits that they will grow to forgive me and that their lives won't be haunted by early memories of their father, weeping over his desk at night, telling them he needs to be left alone so he can complete another grant application.

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There are family who have moved on from the material world who I want to mention. My grandparents, Grandma and Grandpa Busch, were tremendous figures in my life, through darkness and light. My father succumbed to his illness just before I went to the field. Our relationship was troubled and complicated, but I'm glad we reconnected in the end.

I wish Janet was still here. She was a tireless supporter of her children and grandchildren and there aren't words for the magnitude of loss that we all feel with her gone. Professionally, Janet was the one person in my family who was able to advocate for me and translate the things I was having to deal with to a world of people who really don't (and can't) understand what doctoral study entails. Personally, she was simply one of the best people I have ever known, who always believed in me and us, and I can't express the regret I feel that she can't be here to witness this.

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If I had it to do all over again, I would still have Harris Solomon as my advisor. We got through some early lumps and bumps and developed a working relationship that far too many graduates do not get to have with their advisor. I never doubted that Harris was committed to my success. Harris always responded to my

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I don't know where to start with Diane. Diane Nelson is/was a legend and losing her is a catastrophic tragedy. When we lose someone, I think we become vulnerable to hyperbolically representing our relationships/and regards for them. However, much that I have to say here about Diane was written not only before she died, but before she fell ill. I don't think that there is another anthropologist who has had as significant of an impact on my scholarship. From conducting the interview that led to my admission to Duke, through meetings at coffee shops to discuss the direction of my research, to helping me navigate the anxieties and concerns associated with job markets and dissertation completion right up until her terminal diagnosis, Diane was a continuous presence in my development as a professional scholar. Since we lost her, there have been many outpourings and public expressions of love for Diane. Most of these, for good reason, have focused on her as a person; she was that memorable and effervescent. I want to take a moment though to give credit to her tremendous intellect and the labor she undertook in her role as a mentor to graduates like myself. These details could be obscured by the sheer size of her character. I struggled with Diane in the classroom; we were very different thinkers and didn't always see eye to eye in that environment. I would then meet with her one on one in her office, or walk laps around campus together (I really miss these walks) and she would say things that completely changed the trajectory of my approach to anthropology. No single person ever did this. Diane did it multiple times. All the while, she always stood up for what was right

and, in the midst of an academic model that is intrinsically abusive to graduate students, Diane was always on our side as a group, and on each of our sides as individuals. There were times in the development of my research that my gut (and my mind, for that matter) was leading me in a direction that troubled many of the other faculty advising me. Diane encouraged me to follow those leads anyway, and she was right. I can't say enough here. I miss Diane terribly and this collection of words called a "dissertation," for whatever it is worth, is dedicated to her.

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career as an anthropologist that anyone else. Even through my final year of graduate school, I continued to consult with Heidi about my writing, pedagogy, and other things.

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As a parent with small children doing doctoral research in the middle of an apocalyptic global pandemic, I can't say enough about all of the teachers and caregivers who provided care to my children during this time. I will certainly forget some names but will do my best. Janet, Kristie, Jenn, Allison, Hannah, Leah, Sue, Wilhelmina, Cheryl, Mrs. Mitchell, Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Land, Jasmine, Reecie, and others whose names I can't recall are all heroes.

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(including myself) require careful, nuanced leadership in the most complicated situations. Ceremonial Elder Mike Lee is a strong and wise leader of our thiyóšpaye. Mike is a gifted wičhasa pȟežúta who stepped up to his calling as wičhasa wakȟáŋ. I am better because of the time we spent together.

I'm grateful for the Nisqually people, who blessed their ancestral lands for this healing community, and for the time I was welcomed there.

1. Introduction

The very first time I walked onto the sacred ceremonial grounds at American Lake, I was worried as much about the appropriateness of my presence as the reasons that had brought me there. I was white, and this was Indian space. I know the problematic cliché of the white man who goes to the native looking for magic. Just as well, I know the history of anthropologists who invade indigenous space in the name of "science." A less-known, but quite real, story that I know is that of the colonizer who seeks healing from the colonized…. I came nevertheless, having reached out to Marty, a member of the elder's council whose name I found on the public directory. When I first contacted him, he put me at ease. I shared my concerns and he responded kindly that any veteran with a PTSD diagnosis was welcome. "Our belief is that if you are here, it is because creator brought you here." I remained anxious, nevertheless, that I might be doing something wrong.

That first morning, I turned off the paved road to the VA Medical center, onto a dirt road marked by a small sign that said "Sweat Lodge." There, a dirt road goes through an open gate; the sacred grounds are fenced off from the public and, as I would learn, the gate is only open when services are being held. I followed the path, turned left at the first fork, then left again at the next one, following the small signs. I came into a clearing and parked my rental car in a clearing by the grounds, next to the half-dozen or

so vehicles that were parked there. I opened my door and immediately smelled smoke and felt heat, on that unusually hot day in Washington state. At a second open gate, which cordons the sacred grounds, a man with long black hair and a T shirt that read "American Lake Sweat Lodge" introduced himself as Marty. When I told him who I was, he remembered our communication, hugged me, and enthusiastically welcomed me to the ceremonial grounds. Asking me to turn in a circle, he used an eagle's wing to fan me with sage smoke, purifying me so I could enter the sacred space .

On the other side of the clearing was American Lake and a view of the great volcanic mountain Tahoma, which white settlers renamed Mt. Rainier. The pȟéta wakȟáŋ (sacred fire) was already burning and was the source of the smoke I smelled. I met Steve and Preston, two regular attendees of ceremonies at American Lake, and they explained to me basic decorum and some important ritual behavior I should observe. Marty talked me through some formal bureaucracy, including papers I was required to sign that acknowledged the risks inherent in a sweat lodge ceremony. People showed me how to make *prayer ties*, which are tiny pouches filled with tobacco that represent different kinds of prayers. The category of prayer is indicated by the color of the wrapping cloth (for example, a prayer that involves “giving something away” will use yellow cloth). More people trickled in and received the same

instructions. A van arrived, carrying a small number of men (perhaps four or five) from the PTSD inpatient clinic at the VA medical center.

As the pȟéta wakȟáŋ burned, heating stones for the ceremony, Marty gave teachings, sometimes to the group and sometimes to individuals (including me). He taught me about the spirits around us and the connections between them and humans. He also gave some history of the ceremony (including how it came to be that a Plains Indian ceremony, conducted in the Lakota language, was being held in Washington state). I was given a copious amount of water to drink, being advised that the environment inside the lodge could be "harsh" and demanded hydration. At the same time, elders reassured me that in spite of the intensity of the environment in the lodge, I should expect to be cared for and treated with compassion. If it became "too much," any person could call for the door at any time and would be helped out, treated with care, without any fear of stigma or being viewed as weak.

When it was time to enter the lodge, we all dressed down to our shorts and lined up at the entrance to the lodge, in reverse order of age (this was an all-men's group, although gender-segregation would end later in my time there). As we each entered, we gave thanks to the four directions, and sat, tightly, in a circle around a small pit in the center of the lodge. Several red-hot grandfather stones were brought into the lodge and ritually placed in the pit; the fire keeper pulled them from the fire with a pitchfork, one

by one, as an assistant welcomed each one and placed them in the pit with a pair of deer antlers. The door was closed and the interior became completely dark. We would be there for hours, and would discuss, pray, and sing about many things, including highly personal things I cannot repeat due to the confidentiality agreement and I would not wish to anyway.

Very soon, it became overwhelmingly hot. The heat was almost unbearable and simple tasks like speaking and drumming on the ground with my ičábu (red willow drumstick) became arduous. In the absolute darkness of the lodge, flashes of color began to dart in front of my eyes and it became difficult to discern where the thunderous oscillation of my pulse in my ears ended and the beat of the actual ceremonial drums began. Two (maybe three?) other participants called for the door and were helped out of the lodge. I felt that I couldn't last any longer either, that sweat lodge ceremonies were not going to be a viable part of my healing path. When an opportunity was given, I stepped out of the lodge to urinate, planning to return and instead lost consciousness.

I awoke, facedown on a pile of gravel, confused and disoriented. Steve, who had been tending the fire, came to help me and I slowly realized where I was. He escorted me to a shaded, grassy spot near the sweat lodge and informed me that would be enough. He gave me water and provided first aid to my bleeding forehead and shoulder. Steve kindly, firmly cautioned me:

> Don't forget, you are still in a sacred place. You are still in ceremony, even if you aren't in *there* (he gestured towards the lodge). Drink your water, let your body recover, and don't get up for a while…. but don't lose your sense of respect for what is happening here. Important things are happening. Spirits are here. Look!

Steve pointed and I looked. Behind me, several animals were standing at the edge of the forest, watching us. In my still-altered state of consciousness, I saw that some of the animals standing there were raccoons. A bald eagle flew low over our heads and right over the sweat lodge, before disappearing into the sky.

> You see, you called the spirits with the songs you sang. You can hear everyone singing in the lodge now, giving a prayer. Eagle comes and carries the prayers, your prayers, to creator. Stay in prayer, focus on your prayer, you're still in a sacred place and your relatives (referring to various human and non-human beings around us) are here to help you.

I felt moved; changed. My ephemeral, volatile consciousness still mediating my relationship with the world around me, the trees that were towering over me seemed both taller and greener. The dirt and grass in my recovery spot felt benevolent; all of my surroundings seemed vivid and, somehow, affirming. An unfamiliar sense that I was truly sitting in a sacred place washed over me as I listened to the songs reverberating from the lodge and meditating on my relationship to the things around me.

After the ceremony ended, I was cared for, showered with kindness, and given good food to eat. When the community was convinced that I was sufficiently well, they allowed me to leave. When I left, I believed that they did not actually expect to see me again, though they said otherwise. I went to bed sore, exhausted, and unsure of whether

to return to the sacred grounds. The next morning though, I woke refreshed, with new hope and energy. In spite of the pain/injury to my head, shoulder, and foot (I would spend several weeks in an orthopedic boot due to spraining my toe when I fell), I knew I would come back. That was the beginning of a long relationship with the healing community at American Lake that continues today.

1.1 This Dissertation

This dissertation works at the nexus of contrasting sciences of affliction. My research explores the intersection between the history and contexts surrounding the 20th century development of Indigenous postcolonial spirituality, the possibilities and limits of contemporary PTSD therapy among veterans, and the construction of "warrior" identities in postcolonial society. At its center, this dissertation focuses ethnographically on an Indigenous spiritual community (a ritual thiyóšpaye) practicing Pan-Indian faith in Washington state. Its central innovation is its focus on the usage of a therapeutic system designed by and for Native people to heal veterans who suffer from both the violence of war and the limits of trauma's conventional treatments. I argue that questions about suffering and healing from war are inextricable from discourses and practices of race, gender, and territory.

In the contemporary world, combat trauma (primarily in the form of the PTSD diagnosis) has become the primary lens for interpreting war and war violence to greater

society. Historically, this has served to negotiate tensions between war politics, biomedicine, and the bodies of people harmed by war. In the 21st century, the combat trauma concept has become more dynamic, as it has increasingly become the site of negotiation between new parties. These include the process which Adele Clarke called *biomedicalization*, which has been taking place in the years since the 1980 codification of the PTSD diagnosis. This also includes increasingly complex concepts of *warriors*, which are rooted in racialized old colonial constructs that have had different impacts on different peoples through history. I argue that one product of this negotiation is the emergence of a new kind of identity, which I call *bioarchetypes*. Bioarchetypes are a nascent redistribution of racialized, gendered constructs throughout society, using concepts and terminology produced in the era of biomedicalization.

1.2 On World History and My History

I had come to American Lake in search of healing, both for myself and my society. In its infancy, my journey was inspired by my personal and academic opinion that something significant is lacking in the clinical approaches to describing, diagnosing, and treating trauma. The history that I have with the military and war affords me a vexed yet privileged relationship with *combat trauma* in particular. Combat trauma, as an ontological object, has a history. This history, braiding sociopolitical and biomedical projects, runs through my own body as I try to understand and heal from war. As an

anthropologist, I am inspired thus by Claude Levi-Strauss's definition of anthropology, as the intersection of *world* history and *my* history.

1.2.1. My History

My history begins in southern Appalachia, in the same community where the film *Deliverance* was made. Raised by poor evangelical conservatives in a double wide trailer, surrounded with alcohol and domestic abuse, I was on a prototypical track into the military. My parents were not educated, there was no money for college, and my high school grades were not good enough to win scholarships for me. The GI Bill was extraordinarily attractive to me two years after I graduated from high school, staring down at a life that looked like it was tracking toward a dead end. September 11 happened, my country went to war and, honestly, I believed at the time that it was justified.

A few months after I walked into a recruiting station, I was on my way to the Infantry School at Ft. Benning Georgia, where I would spend 16 weeks in specialized basic training, being molded into an Infantryman. At the time, Infantry was an all-male MOS (military occupational specialty) with elevated physical requirements and tasked with conducting violent combat operations. After I completed my training, I was assigned to the 10th Mountain Division and more specifically to a specialized "weapons" company. There, I developed a special expertise in crew-served weapon

systems like heavy machine guns and portable wire-guided missile launchers. On occasion, I was tasked to train other units on the usage of these specialized weapons (which are not taught in basic training).

My skepticism towards the military machine began to grow exponentially in 2005, when a friend of mine was killed during a "live fire" training exercise. Though most training involving maneuvers is conducted with blank ammunition, periodic advanced training requires coordinating maneuvers over terrain with live rounds, shooting real bullets at targets. Though the tedious details are beyond the scope of this dissertation, the circumstances surrounding this friend's death made me question not only our mission but the military apparatus as a whole.

In 2006, my unit deployed to Afghanistan. Though we would conduct missions over an area that ranged from Helmand to Kabul, the majority of our time was in Zabul and Ghazni provinces. During this deployment, my skepticism grew stronger and I started to dissent over the behavior of some of my peers. Though I had a reputation for reliability and competence and had previously been a well-liked soldier in my Company, I began to make enemies when I made a formal complaint about another soldier's abusive behavior towards Afghan civilians. My complaint led to the soldier

being disciplined. In the view of some people, I had become a "Blue Falcon." (military slang for a betrayer, snitch, or somebody whose individual actions harm the group).[1]

One night, as my platoon was responding to an attack on an Afghan police outpost, we were ambushed. It was a long, miserable, terrifying night that was so bad at one point that I believed that my own death was inevitable. I was wounded during the fight but, in the end, I lived. The military medically retired me due to my wounds; sending me "home" with a disabling ulnar nerve injury and a PTSD diagnosis. The politics of my discharge divided my Company. Some people defended me and others were happy to see me go, having decided that I was a dissident malingerer and a bad fit for the Army.

Nevertheless, my identity as a veteran has come to define my life; perhaps more so than any other part of my identity I wear. My first couple of years out of the Army were a disaster; I found myself in a state of personal ruin, in a life that felt like a bad dream. Everyone, clinicians included, interpreted my affliction (or more accurately,

[1] The coded term "blue falcon" is common in the military and is a euphemism for "buddy fucker." Someone accused of being a "blue falcon" is someone who gets their peers in trouble, either directly or indirectly. A hazing ritual I witnessed a number of times in my initial training at Fort Benning occurred when Drill Sergeants would demand that someone provide information that implicated peers of wrongdoing. To incite this, the entire group would be punished en masse, until someone would eventually "break" and call out the behavior of a peer who had gotten away with breaking some rule. At this point, the Drill Sergeants would suspend the mass punishment and restrict it to the person who broke the rule AND the person who called them out, for being a blue falcon. Sometimes, only the "blue falcon" would be punished. The message was clear: it is bad to break the rules but one must always cover the misbehavior of one's peers because being a rat is worse

bundle of heterogeneous afflictions) as "PTSD" resulting from my combat experience. At that time, late in the first decade of the 21st century, PTSD had become a household term; something everyone was aware of, particularly in the context of war trauma. This was the product of a thirty year journey by the term, beginning with its recognition in DSM III in 1980 (CITE DSM)

1.2.2. World History

That fighting in war causes many people to suffer was well-documented long before the label of PTSD had ever been invented. Until and through the Vietnam War, suffering soldiers were seen as weak, cowardly, or of otherwise poor constitution. This attitude was famously documented through General George Patton's physical assault of hospitalized "shell-shocked" soldiers during WWII. In 1943, Patton disavowed the validity of shell-shock and ordered these men "not sent to the hospital but dealt with in their units." (CITATION). On multiple occasions, Patton was documented going through hospitals and beating soldiers suffering from the condition, accusing them of weakness and threatening to have them shot for cowardice. While this behavior resulted in Congressional calls to have Patton relieved of duty, as well as General Eisenhower's decision to remove Patton from combat duty (contrary to common belief, Patton did not actually serve in any combat after 1943), his popularity increased and a substantial percentage of the American public enthusiastically approved of the behavior

and wrote letters in support of Patton's promotion. This general attitude of dismissing the legitimacy of combat trauma continued through the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War, the trauma of veterans became very visible to the public. Backlash in the form of right-wing protests against returning Vietnam War veterans, accusing them of treachery and cowardice, was mobilized by groups of WWII veterans. This was exacerbated by the relatively high number of Vietnam War veterans who expressed antiwar sentiments and opposition to the war after coming home.[2]

The recognition of PTSD as a real malady was, thus, welcome to the multitude of veterans (and other trauma sufferers) whose suffering was now sanctioned by the biomedical establishment. The institutionalization of PTSD did several things. Most importantly, it medicalized the experience of trauma, turning the manifestation of trauma symptoms into a disease. By turning PTSD into a disease, war was transformed into an amoral contagion. If PTSD was a disease, acquired through proximal exposure to an amoral war contagion, it could be possible to discuss, diagnose, and treat combat trauma without placing any burden of moral responsibility on the sufferer. Because many Americans opposed the Vietnam War and veterans believed that the public held

[2] Sociologist Jerry Lembcke's controversial book *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* investigated claims of Vietnam War veterans being assaulted by leftist protestors upon their return from war. Lembcke, himself a Vietnam War veteran, found no reputable evidence of such incidents having happened, but did discover protests against Vietnam War veterans by right-wing groups. This, as well as his finding that the number of U.S. POW's left in Vietnam had been greatly exaggerated by pro-war propaganda, has drawn considerable backlash (Lembcke 1998).

them responsible for the war's atrocities, this biomedical framing of war trauma also served as a form of absolution.

In the 1990's, clinician and classics scholar Jonathan Shay recognized that the PTSD discourse, sterilized of ethics/morality concepts, was unable to account for all of the suffering experienced by his patients, who were primarily Vietnam War veterans. Seeing parallels with the description of war in the Homeric epics, Shay coined the term "moral injury." The term was meant to capture the sense of institutional betrayal that occurs when one's leadership does not follow generally agreed-upon standards for what is "right." As an archetypal example, Shay highlights the suffering of the ancient Greek army under King Agamemnon's corrupt leadership (noting his egregious behaviors such as misappropriating undeserved war honors and desecrating religious temples).

During the 21st century set of conflicts known as the "Global War on Terror" or "GWOT," the moral injury construct was appropriated by a group of clinicians working with veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, these clinicians mobilized the term to refer to an experience of suffering related to *personal* wrongdoing/guilt. Like the Vietnam War, the GWOT became unpopular and also became associated with atrocities committed by American soldiers. Unlike the Vietnam War, however, the

GWOT was fought almost entirely by an "all volunteer force" (AVF).[3] A series of sociopolitical phenomena, which will be discussed later in this dissertation, made possible a recruitment strategy based on the lionization of individual "warrior ethos." Perhaps more so than with the Vietnam War generation, GWOT veterans experienced a greater sense of personal responsibility for war violence, necessitating this reconfiguration of moral injury's definition (CITE ETHNOS ARTICLE). At the time of this writing, moral injury's epistemic fate is not settled. Nevertheless, anthropologists have noted that its application increasingly serves to medicalize (and de-moral-ize) the experience of personal guilt after war, maintaining the status quo moratorium on criticism of war.

1.3. On therapeutic and ontological regimes

The emergence of indigenous ritual for the purpose of treating war trauma for veterans of all ethnicities, points to biomedicine's continued struggle with contextualizing this form of affliction. Combat trauma's very existence as an object has been overdetermined by a history of medical and militarized structures' sequential attempts to deal with both the sociopolitical projects of the day, as well as the consequences associated with previous framings for combat trauma. Most significant

[3] During the GWOT, there were a few remaining draftees from the Vietnam War era who were still in uniform and participated in the conflict.

among these has been the tension between the material reality of war-related suffering, and the powerfully institutionalized war-making apparatus with its commitments to the projects of nationalist imperialism, war-profiteering, and statebuilding. That is to say, the social forces that profit from making war in our society are inconvenienced by the fact that doing so harms the apparatus's own agents. The turn towards indigenous ritual, in this case, could be seen as an attempt to go to a decidedly non-Western ontological framework to resolve problems caused by the West's failures. This proposition will animate and serve as the underlying "connective tissue" throughout this dissertation.

1.4. Ethnographic Considerations

This body of research is fundamentally shaped (and in many ways, made possible) by my status as a war veteran. I participated actively in a war that most anthropologists, generally speaking, consider an egregious and horrific display of racialized colonial violence. I share this perspective and, hence, the sometimes overwhelming experience of personal guilt that I carry is a factor in my interactions with the healing spaces I study as a researcher. Especially during my earliest days at the American Lake ceremonial community, I was treated primarily as a suffering person who was seeking healing. I was. I made it clear from the beginning of my time there that I was also an anthropologist trying to do formal research but for a while, every

attempt that I made to discuss research ethics with my interlocutors was shut down by them. In time, I figured out that they, as elders and professionals skilled in the healing arts, were concerned that I might not feel welcome in their ceremonies and they did not want my concerns with research ethics to get in the way of my own healing. In time, we finally managed to discuss these matters in full. As Native Americans, the elders have a strong and personal sense of the complicated and problematic history that anthropology/anthropologists have with indigenous peoples around the world. I explained that I sometimes struggled with my own sense of guilt, both as a white anthropologist participating in their ceremonies and as a white military veteran being healed by a colonized people. As healers, committed to the healing of my spirit and of every spirit they can touch, they would occasionally express anger and frustration that I live in a world that makes *me* feel guilty for receiving the good things they have been able to offer me. As the ceremonial elder once said, somewhat indignantly to me, "This isn't about Indians helping heal white people! This is about spirits helping heal spirits! You have a spirit that deserves to be healed and you deserve to be allowed to live life in a good way." Nevertheless, these elders are acutely aware of the racial dynamics that I am concerned with and all of them knowingly carry their own trauma not only as veterans but as colonized people. I choose to receive and appreciate the gift of their generosity towards me, which has been a wonderfully powerful force in my own

life. Nevertheless, I will always maintain a critical perspective towards my own subject position and do not know how to exist otherwise.

My project engages with America's indigenous people in a realm that is highly vulnerable to falling victim to exhausted and problematic tropes. Not only am I a white man going to the native for a healing experience, but I'm approaching a brutally colonized indigenous people who have been themselves bombarded throughout their lives with a problematic and romanticized narrative of Indianness and what it means to properly perform it. Comanche scholar Paul Chaat Smith has noted that Indian identity, "being Indian" as he calls it, was unknown to Indians before visual media told them what they were supposed to be (Smith 2009).

This site has a history that is entwined with the inpatient PTSD clinic at the American Lake VAMC. The inpatient clinic (known emically as "the Dom") is referenced throughout this dissertation and is the source for many people who participate in the indigenous healing ceremonies. Responding to my writing, anthropologists often want to read/see/hear more about "the Dom." However, there were limits to my ethnographic access and this is one of them. The elders at American Lake are fiercely protective of the people who come to them from the inpatient clinic, describing them as "deeply troubled people" and noting that many residents "are people with significant addictions and/or are people who have hurt themselves and/or

others." Though I interacted with and got to know many Dom residents, and these people do appear in this ethnography from time to time, references to them will be limited and decidedly anonymous. I never conducted *formal* interviews with inpatients and I never did anthropological research in the Dom. This was the request of the Elder Council and I adhere to it.

At the beginning, I understood my project to be a study of trauma and healing. The common format of contemporary ethnography suggests that this work should be, primarily, a collection of stories of people who have experienced healing at this site. However, my relationship to the subject, the nature and experience of fieldwork at this site, and the wishes of the elder council have changed this through time. Early in my fieldwork, I was asked to exercise extreme caution with my interactions with the vulnerable population of attendees who cycle through the ceremonies (particularly the occupants of the inpatient program). Discussing my project with anthropologists, I have had at least a few suggest that I should press this issue a bit with the elders to try and gain more overt access to these people. I did *not* press this issue with the elders (doing so would have been very disrespectful) and for that reason, even informal interviews with identifiable dom residents will be absent from this dissertation. However, these people were a significant part of my experience at American Lake and they will appear in different ways. I have spent countless hours

sweating, suffering, and rejoicing with these fellow spirits and their impact on me and my journey is significant. At times, I will use composite characters to represent interactions with vulnerable individuals I encountered during this journey.[4]

The elders had a developed sense of what I was doing as a researcher and of the kinds of terrains and audits I would have to navigate to translate my experiences in the ritual community to an academic audience. One elder told me: "Your supervisors are going to want you to break all of this down into something recognizable…. but you need to show how things relate. It is a circular relationship rather than a linear one; there is a larger collective issue here." Early on, I understood that the Elders appreciated my project and supported my attempt to come to their community to pursue answers to the questions that vex me so deeply. With that said, they communicated to me their own vision of how that interaction should look: I would integrate into their community and they would be there to help me learn the things that I needed to know. There was a story to be told and they would help me learn how to tell it. I was a student and they

[4] This method, called "masking," is controversial for understandable reasons. Alexandra Murphy and Colin Jerolmack argue that the primary issues with masking are that A: important data gets obscured from future researchers and B: masking can aid researchers in cooking their data; presenting people and places in ways that support their own arguments (Alexandra and Murphy 2016). However, in the same article, the authors acknowledge that while masking may be neither justified nor necessary most of the time it is used, there are some cases where research is impossible without masking. My project is one such case, as the elder council insisted on the protection of this particular group of people. I only use masking where necessary and I refer to elders and established members of the community by their real names.

were my teachers. Thus, in the end, this ethnography is at least as much about the Elder council, the teachings they shared with me, and my growth in that community as it is an account of people who cycled through the community and found healing (though those people are certainly very much there). The afflictions treated in that community expanded my "sample" from just veterans with a PTSD diagnosis to include people suffering from substance-addictions and various forms of social trauma (with virtually all of the non-veterans being Native American). As the Elders informed me, I would need to do a deep dive into the study of colonialism and indigenous trauma to really understand what was happening in their community. Early in my fieldwork, this shift *did* alarm my committee a bit (in retrospect, I might summarize the argument from my committee to be that I needed "more clinic and less Indians"). However, as I spent more time at the site and over time became deeply captured and remade by the spiritual practices there, I agreed with the Elders and followed the path that they suggested. Today, at the end of the journey of my graduate studies, I think my committee agrees with them too.

As a medical anthropologist, my work is animated by a set of concerns that I have with regard to the "work" that is done by the PTSD diagnosis in society. I am not the first scholar, by some margin, to speak to the ways in which the PTSD diagnosis has been socially constructed. However, my personal history with the diagnosis and my

status as a military veteran accords me a voice in places where academic scholarship is not always "heard." For this reason, I feel a particular burden of responsibility with regard to how I represent this situation and I want to be clear and explicit about a few things.

The codification of the PTSD diagnosis created the vehicle for the legitimization of trauma-related suffering for millions of people in the world who would not have been taken seriously before. This was accomplished by framing the suffering that a person experiences after a traumatic event as a disease, describable and treatable through the scientific apparatus of biomedicine. Unfortunately, this speaks to the reality that it is very difficult for a person to have their suffering taken seriously, and addressed with economic resources, if it is not classified as biomedical in origin. This creates ripe conditions for what is called "diagnosis-creep;" the process of a diagnosis's definition constantly expanding to include symptoms that were not originally accounted for. I believe this has happened with PTSD. However, I am concerned that this argument could be misinterpreted or deliberately abused for the purpose of invalidating the very real forms of suffering that the PTSD diagnosis has expanded to include. While I aim to show the ways in which the PTSD diagnosis was shaped by sociopolitical contingencies, my greater goal is to emphasize the extraordinary reality of the kinds of suffering that PTSD's biomedical framing obscures.

In its original form, the PTSD diagnosis described a condition where a person who survives a terrifying event pathologically experiences "fight-or-flight" symptoms in inappropriate situations that subconsciously remind them of the event. I believe that this is something that can happen to people who have such traumatic experiences and I might consider this experience to be "real PTSD." However, the decision to codify that sort of experience as a "disease" was a strategic one and it was one that excluded a significant amount of other forms of suffering that can manifest in the worlds of violence and trauma. I thus do not wish to deny the reality of PTSD but I hope, ultimately, to show that the experiences of trauma, suffering, and healing are more complex that the traditional PTSD discourse allows us to imagine.

1.5. On Pre-Existing Conditions

Some people have attributed the high rate of PTSD in the military to the high rate of people in the military with pre-existing mental conditions.

Today, the idea that profound distress or emotional trauma might accompany the experience of going to war is not particularly controversial. On the contrary, it could be argued that contemporary discourse has inappropriately conflated military experience with psychiatric diagnoses, particularly posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It has not always been this way though. Various cultures of audit, including American military masculinity and hegemonic institutions of capitalism are historically

responsible for many of the hurdles and labyrinths that shaped the PTSD diagnosis as it exists today.

The following list, taken from several of my veteran interlocutors, describes severely traumatic events that were experienced either as civilians or in a non-combat related military context. This is a mere cross-section of the traumas I recorded during my fieldwork:[5]

-Kevin was threatened by his drunken father with an axe

-Tara was treated badly by her parents and raped by a member of her church

-Lola was lured into a notorious and abusive cult

-Sophia was abused by an uncle and sexually assaulted on a domestic military base

-Jonathan accidentally ran over/killed a pedestrian while working as a garbage truck driver

-Darren was molested by a babysitter and disbelieved by adults when he reported them

-Mark was sexually assaulted by a police officer on a hike as a teenager

[5] With the exception of a small number of regular members from the sweat lodge community, I use pseudonyms for the majority of people referenced in this dissertation.

-Michael carried several psychiatric diagnoses prior to his enlistment but a recruiter helped him falsify his medical record to gain entry to the military

-Sarah was sexually assaulted by a leader in her unit

-Kyle accidently shot/killed a friend during a domestic training exercise

-Barry was molested by his parents

-James was the mechanic who cleared a helicopter for flight, which crashed and killed everyone on board (due to a mechanical flaw that Jerry claims he should have identified)

-Several interlocutors experienced racialized violence, as non-white members of U.S. society

-Several interlocutors have struggled with drug addictions, particularly addictions to opioids that were prescribed for service-connected injuries

The role of "pre-existing conditions" in this context is threefold: First, the concept of pre-existing conditions has become an important part of contemporary North American discourse on healthcare practices. Second, North American cultures of audit stand to use evidence of pre-existing conditions as support to divest resources from VA mental healthcare that are invested to treat PTSD (which is very expensive).

The third context is theoretical and speaks to something that, perhaps, most overtly distinguishes the epistemological underpinnings of the ceremonies at American

Lake from the biomedical basis of clinical PTSD therapy. The experiences deemed "pre-existing conditions" by the biomedical establishment comprise a constituent part of what anthropologist Austin Duncan calls *tethering* in his important work on traumatic brain injuries (TBI) (CITE DUNCAN). Duncan observes that successful, holistic treatment for people who suffer from TBI requires treatment of the greater network of life-experiences, many of which might be traumatic, that precede, surround, and follow the TBI "event." However, Duncan shows how biomedicine struggles immensely with this, as it can only understand/treat TBI as a specific, bounded physical injury that occured at a particular space and time.

Likewise, clinical PTSD therapy can only diagnose and treat a condition that is bounded by very specific parameters that are outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). In other words, a biological neuropsychiatric response to a frightening event. In reality, the suffering experienced by people bearing a PTSD diagnosis is often the result of multiple life experiences that are tethered to the diagnosable trauma. Unfortunately, in the overlapping space of biomedicine and socioeconomic audit, tethered events, counterproductively, can be used to *deny* care (due to the complexity such events bring to a diagnostic process that demands an unrealistically non-complex narrative of affliction). The ceremonies at American Lake are different. Once in ceremony, the therapeutic object is not referred to as PTSD but

rather as *iwáyazaŋ azúyeya*. Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, in the Lakota language, references "the sickness one acquires from fighting others and the self." Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya includes all of the experiences tethered to the diagnosable trauma and participants are not expected to isolate combat-specific experiences from other sufferings. "Fighting" can include nearly any experience that upsets one's balance, including physical violence, racism, colonialism, emotional abuse, substance addictions, eating disorders, and much more. Ceremonial Elder Mike Lee calls this "the sickness of the world's people," designating it as a greater, more general condition of the contemporary world that has to be managed, rather than a curable disease.[6] It is from this concept that my dissertation derives its title: *Fighting for Life*. In this perspective, tetheredness is understood to be categorical, and its presence is intrinsically woven into the ceremonial healing practices.

1.6. Methods

For this research, my primary methods have been participant observation, interviews, archival research, and study of the Lakota language. These are conventional anthropological research methods but the process has been "deeper" for me in some

[6] Postcolonial Indigenous philosophies are often highly resistant to the notion of "curing," which can be seen as Western construct analogous to and derived from Christian concepts of salvation (which many view as toxic).

ways. As a combat veteran with a PTSD diagnosis, I engage in these ceremonies as a full participant. While I do hope to produce a worthy scholarly work, my research is mediated by priorities I must observe while on site. This means when I go to lodge, talking circle, or anywhere else with the thiyóšpaye, I must focus on healing praxis, lifting my community with my presence through song and prayer, and respect of everything sacred. Referring to the sacred, this includes the generosity and grace of the elder council who have showered me with immeasurable kindness, patience, and community from the time I first walked onto the ceremonial grounds years ago. My respect and attention goes first to all of these things. The scholarly work comes later and must be done in deference to the community and soul work.

My first visit to American Lake was in early summer 2016. Over the next couple of years, I visited as often as possible, usually with several months between visits. During summers, I could usually visit 2-3 times. I made repeated visits in fall 2018, before moving to live there full time at the beginning of 2019. From February to September 2019, I lived in various locations up and down Puget Sound. I commuted weekly to ceremonies, as well as engaging in other activities with members of the community. I rarely employed a notebook or voice recorder during ceremonies, as these were inappropriate for the nature of our social relations. I wrote as often as I could, though delays between encounter and writing were inevitable. As I grew closer to the

community, I became more involved with the ceremonies, occasionally being asked to sing a song or lead a prayer. However, the fact that I was always going to have to return to Durham to write my dissertation prevented me from engaging in some activities, like tending fire, which is a responsibility that may have come with my development in that community but would have required a longer-term in-person time commitment than I could offer. My friendship and correspondence with the American Lake Tiospaye continues, and we continue to pray for each other.

To explore the themes of this dissertation, I cite archival sources and ethnographic encounters from the site. I also engage with my own history, which creates many of the necessary conditions for my immersive and personal relationship to this site. I engage with this history sometimes through the use of narrative, describing scenes (usually from my time in the military) which are relevant to the subject at hand. These narratives can also represent personal experiences that manifest as memories or visions during my time in ceremony. It is important for me to include these, as it is often inappropriate for me to relay similar experiences that my interlocutors have and describe while in ceremony.

The ceremonies themselves, in many cases, compel a degree of respect by my careful judgement about what should and should not be said. In other words, I cannot repeat many things that are said during a sweat lodge ceremony, and it is inappropriate

for me to reveal many of the things I witnessed at the Sundance ceremony. This is done out of respect for the community that invited me to commune so intimately with them, and the promise made to sweat lodge participants that their words and stories would be safe and protected. This reality was frustrating to some anthropologists I spoke to during my fieldwork. One unnamed anthropologist asked me if I brought a sound recorder into the sweat lodge with me to record the songs, etc. When I explained to this anthropologist why this was inappropriate (the ceremony is intimate and confidential, and the presence of such electronic equipment can disturb helpful spirits), I was pressured to push back against these norms and find a way to get them to allow me to bring recording devices into the ceremonies. "You've got to do this….. How can you be an anthropologist in a setting so ethnographically rich and not record those voices and songs and drums?". This would have been horrifically disrespectful, even if I had been successful in convincing the Elders to allow me to do so. I only used recording devices/took notes in real time when I was conducting formal interviews away from ceremonial space.

To account for the ceremonial detail that I am compelled to hedge through my own personal observation, I follow Vine Deloria's example and lean on extant works by scholars who were allowed to observe these ceremonies elsewhere, with explicit permission from Indigenous nations for that purpose (Deloria 1997). My ethnographic

research in this study is of healing that takes place in a postcolonial space, where biomedicine, militarism, and Indigenous spirituality meet; not of the ceremonies themselves (though these ceremonies do often provide the ethnographic setting). Rigorous studies of these ceremonies have been published. *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge* by Raymond Bucko is a detailed study of the Inipi ceremony, very much like it is conducted at American Lake (Bucko 1999). *Sundancing: The Great Sioux Piercing Ritual* by Thomas Mails similarly describes the Sundance ritual (Mails 1997). Lakota religion/spirituality in general is described in David Postumus's *All My Relatives: Exploring Lakota Ontology, Belief, and Ritual* and his forthcoming *Lakhota: An Indigenous History* (Posthumus 2018; Andersson and Posthumus 2022). This subject is treated in even greater detail in his thorough dissertation, which he kindly shared with me (Posthumus 2015).

Often, when describing aspects of the rituals I participated in, I cite descriptions by these authors, who were authorized by the Lakota people to publish them for this purpose. My experiences with these rituals was with ceremonial practices that were profoundly similar to what is described in those books. What does differ, for the most part, are events that are of exactly the sort that I am obligated to protect. While the ceremonial context is profoundly important within the scope of this dissertation, the

purpose of my project is not to describe the details of an Inipi sweat lodge ceremony or a Sundance. When appropriate to do so, I will cite the scholars who have done so.

1.7. Chapter Summaries

A major goal in this dissertation is the investigation of how discourses and practices of trauma and healing structure a range of sociocultural phenomena in contemporary society. My fieldsite is the location for a uniquely heterogenous assemblage of dynamics which come together under the banner of "healing." Starting in this tangled and knotted root ball in the center of my inquiry, I endeavor to untangle a few threads from this "healing" knot and follow them where they lead. I divided these threads into chapters, which each gesture in a different way towards this central bundle of ideas which is, among many other things, the necessity of using medicalized schemas to structure, discuss, justify, and process complicated matters in our society. A particular friction, to use Anna Tsing's term, occurs at the encounter with Indigenous ways of thinking and acting, which brings to the surface deep complexities and contradictions that are rooted in the reverberations of the Colonial encounter (Tsing 2005). Tangled within this, there is an efficacious healing path that provides goodness and healing for diverse peoples. These include individuals like me who arrived with more questions that I could even quantify, but somehow managed to leave with more than I was initially seeking.

These chapters are exploratory; in some ways leaving me with more questions than answers. I conclude that the medicalized PTSD discourse is profoundly inadequate for addressing the range of afflictions called "trauma" in Western society. The biomedical framework lacks (or consciously excludes) wholly human and timeless approaches/tools for living well in and with this world, which is filled both with incredible danger and astounding beauty. This raises questions about the nature of science itself and its ability to manage concepts such as "balance" and "good."

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I recollect my arrival to the healing community at American Lake, raise questions that contended with me throughout my fieldwork and writing, and visit the geographies and histories that structure the place where my fieldwork occurred.

The first chapter turns toward archival resources to develop a sense of how the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder came into being. Though seen in the DSM as an objective biomedical illness that affects people across cultures and circumstances, the PTSD diagnosis came into existence amidst a historical, contested politics of atrocity and legitimacy. In the late 20th century, and moving into the 21st, the concept of combat trauma was repeatedly re-invented to account for evolving sociopolitical contexts. During the 21st century, in the wake of what Adele Clarke calls "biomedicalization," people increasingly understand historically pathologized psychiatric diagnoses as

socially normative traits determined by natural selection (distributed heterogeneously within populations). I call these schemas "bioarchetypes." This creates a notable situation as it occurs with PTSD, where the diagnostic symptoms can include anger, hypervigilance, irascibility, and a number of "anti-social behaviors." The social prestige afforded to these behaviors is addressed by an Elder's reflections on how Colonial European notions of violence and masculinity have created an illness that afflicts perhaps every person in Western society. This condition, *Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya*, is the object of the ceremonies at American Lake, rather than PTSD.

The second chapter returns to the fieldsite for ethnographic engagement with the rituals performed at the American Lake grounds. There is a history to sweat lodge ceremonies. The Ínípi sweat lodge ceremony, as well as the Čhaŋnúŋpa pipe ceremony can be traced directly to the Lakota people. The question of how it came to be that a tribally diverse group of Native American veterans are now practicing these ceremonies on Salish land in the American Pacific Northwest is complicated. After the Indian Termination policies of the early-mid 20th century moved thousands of Native Americans from their ancestral lands and reservations to urban areas, the first generation of Urban Indian youth were identified as having disproportionately high rates of substance dependencies, incarceration, and suicide. Involvement in the Vietnam War exacerbated these problems. The manifestation of Native American solidarity

movements in the late 20th century encouraged the development of pan-Indian identity. Prominent Lakota leaders, including Frank Fool's Crow and Stanley Looking Horse encouraged the practice of Lakota faith and ritual in this group, hoping that this would be beneficial to Indian youth (and non-Native allies) who had become separated from their ancestral cultures. Social programs dedicated to Native Americans drew heavily from this. The community at American Lake is a product of these events. By the 1990s, after appropriation and abuse by the (mostly white) New Age community, the practice of Lakota religion and ritual by non-Lakota became controversial. This begs difficult questions about the exclusivity of ritual practices and who can/can't claim Indigenous identity.

The plants used in the ceremonies are central to the practices at American Lake. In this chapter, I look at each plant as an actant involved with the treatment of Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya. Sage is a purifying medicine which drives away malevolent spirits and cleanses people for participation in sacred ceremonies. Sweetgrass calls the attention of spirits so they will listen to the rituals favorably. In the discussion of sweetgrass, I engage with Potawatomi scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer and Métis scholar Zoe Todd to consider the concepts of "braiding knowledge" and "Indigenization," as they have been taken up by science to deal with Indigenous knowledges. Bear root is a sacred plant used by both humans and non-humans to treat illness. In this chapter, I use bear root to

consider encounters with Wakȟáŋ in ceremony. Cedar is used for healing physical ailments, protection from bad spirits, and the caustic properties of its oils when they burn. In this section, I use cedar to discuss the painful parts of the ceremonies, as well as the discomforts that can be associated with healing. Lavender is a medicine used in matters of gender. Gender relations at American Lake have been complicated at times, for a number of reasons. Different Indigenous groups, as well as Western society, have disparate ideas about what gender even is. There are gendered elements to the ceremonies, which can conflict with the gender norms that exist in the various cultures that participants come from. The experience of non-men in the military can be different from that of men, creating special needs for veterans who are non-men. At the same time, non-men can encounter the same traumas encountered by men in the military, which can be overlooked when the service of women is seen as something else than the service of men. The impacts of toxic masculinity are a significant component of Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, and are directly addressed in the ceremonies.

The third chapter is the most theoretical and takes the notion of warriordom as its object. Historically, the word warrior was used to describe non-modern, non-Western peoples, with connotations of social, and temporal (regarding Europeans) primitivity. Warriors were seen as others, governed by irrational beliefs and often racialized. The belief that soldiers in modern industrial armies are rational agents that

act on the behalf of the needs of the nation state contributed to the idea that ceremonial acts and prohibitions (which could include restrictions on the number of enemies who one is allowed to kill in battle) traditionally followed by "warriors" were unnecessary in modern armies. This can produce militaries that are both more destructive to others, and less capable of addressing the emotional/psychological wounds of its own soldiers.

In the 21st century, it has become increasingly common for veterans, soldiers, police, and others to identify as "warriors." Rather than industrial laborers who conduct contracted labor on the behalf of the nation state, self-identified warriors consider themselves to be the inheritors of an ancient, mythical bioarchetype. Thus, they believe that the hypervigilance and violent tendencies associated with PTSD are normative traits that contribute to the security of the group as a whole. The affliction of combat trauma is seen as something more profound than "PTSD," which can be experienced by a civilian who survives a car accident (which can be terrifying and deadly, but may be seen as banal when compared to combat by "warriors"). Importantly, this creates a unique "self/other" formation. Historically, the soldier "self" identified with their nation and waged war against an external enemy "other." For the contemporary warrior "self," the agonistic other is not the warrior enemy, but the civilians in the warrior's own society. In Dave Grossman's "sheepdogs, wolves, and sheep" analogy, the "sheepdogs" (warriors) actually spend the majority of their time policing the

behavior of the "sheep" (civilians who constitute the vast majority of society). The sheepdogs should expect the sheep to dislike them for their disagreeable temperament, but the sheepdogs know that the sheep are too naïve and soft to realize that without the sheepdogs, they would all be consumed by the "wolves" (enemies, terrorists, criminals, etc).

This schema is deeply interwoven into contemporary warrior identity. The result is a contemporary warrior who believes that it is normative to be violent per se, and who may consider the naïve, peace-loving civilians in their own society to be as great of a threat to the security of the group as enemies from the outside. Belief in warriordom contributed to the development of the community at American Lake, as VA officials believed that Native American warriors might need healing interventions that are not provided by biomedicine. I hypothesize that identification with warriordom has led to the dramatic increase in non-Native participants in the rituals at American Lake in recent years. I see evidence of this, but Elders teach participants that their own Indigenous ancestors, fetishized as "warriors" in popular culture, were not what society thinks they were and they would not have been able to conceive of the extraordinary carnage of modern war.

The fourth chapter focuses on my experience of the Sundance ceremony during my fieldwork. The Sundance is the most sacred of Lakota rituals and is not something

that I expected to attend, and would not have asked to do so. After being invited by the Elders in my community, I agreed to attend. The Sundance has been dramatized in Western society, with disproportionate focus on the extreme corporeal suffering endured by the sundancers. This has made many Native Americans, including the prominent Lakota spiritual leader Arvol Looking Horse, to become suspicious of white people at Sundance ceremonies. Going to the Sundance forced me to reckon with my own identity as a White man, as well as the deep anxieties that I feel about the place that I occupy in the world as both a White man and the veteran of a colonial war. After agreeing to cross lines that I had drawn for myself, I had a profound spiritual experience that shook me as a person and as a scholar. I end the chapter meditating on the concept of sacredness, and thinking about its place in human experience. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I meditate on an event that I attended while I was in the field; a coming together of veterans and Native Americans who participated at the protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock. The event was billed as a public strategy session to consider ways that veterans and Indigenous peoples can continue working together in the future for the betterment of humanity. I was initially drawn to this event (on top of being invited) by the discourse of "healing" that was prominent in promotional materials, as well as the concept of "resistance" as an act performed by different people with different relationships to power. While there though, I was taken

by an unexpected focus on the concept of "science" by the Indigenous people hosting the event. As different participants spoke, I noticed that White veterans and Native Americans spoke about their experience at Standing Rock very differently. When veterans spoke, they described their experience at Standing Rock as healing for them and contemplated participation in such events as therapeutic for the biomedical illness of PTSD. When Native Americans spoke, they described the experience of the Standing Rock protest as having been traumatizing itself and noted that the PTSD discourse that has become normalized in veteran society has not been offered to them and they often have to process their own traumas alone. The Native American man who had been officiating the event gave closing remarks and critiqued Western society's relationship to science. He implored the audience to decolonize their thought if they couldn't understand that non-Western peoples "have been doing science since time immemorial." However, the science he spoke of is different in some ways than the "science" that is taught in most North American schools. I conclude this chapter, and dissertation, struggling with this conflict, which underscores so much of what concerns me in my research. The PTSD diagnosis is constituent to science, as are the bioarchetypes that represent our society's pressing need to account for social phenomena in biomedical terms. Is the quest for knowledge inherently good? Is it possible (as suggested by Indigenous people I cite in this dissertation) that science tries

to go places it shouldn't and lacks the ability to recognize where those places are? As suggested by Zoe Todd, is it possible that the analytic of "braiding knowledge" is so ethnocentric that it is bound to reproduce the very problems it ostensibly aims to transcend. Can a real and good science of sacredness exist?

1.8. The Site and its History

The American Lake VA Medical Center sits in southern Puget Sound, between the cities of Tacoma and Olympia, near the large military installation, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). American Lake itself is a crystalline body of water and is the largest natural lake in Pierce County Washington. The lakeshore provide stunning views of Tahoma, the enormous stratovolcano (and most topographically prominent mountain in the contiguous United States).[7] The hospital hugs the shore of the lake, between a golf course and a forest. The forest wraps around the lake's western shore and then expands to Puget Sound, then southward to the town of DuPont. One of this forest's fingers juts out as a peninsula into the western edge of American Lake in two points. The southern, larger point is called Picnic Point. The northern point is the location of the sacred ceremonial grounds of the healing community. They are protected by a fence, locked shut when ceremonies are not being conducted and patrolled by police when open.[8]

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[7] Commonly known as Mount Rainier. Tahoma is the Indigenous name favored by my interlocutors.
[8] Police work to keep non-participants off of the sacred grounds. They stopped me on a couple of occasions, early in my fieldwork there, in what is probably one of the few places in my society where a person can be marked suspicious for appearing as a white man.

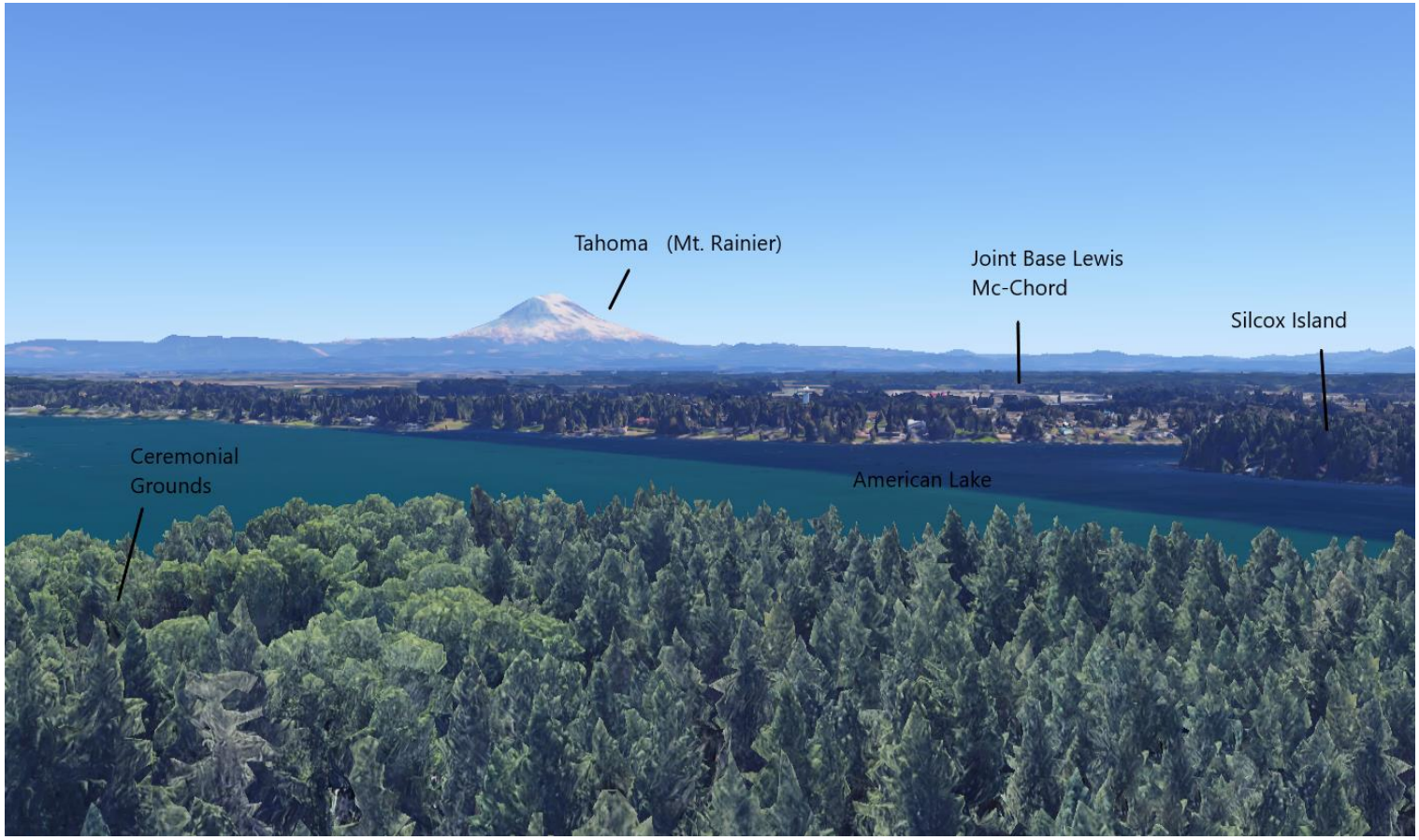

Figure 1: View of Tahoma from Peninsula

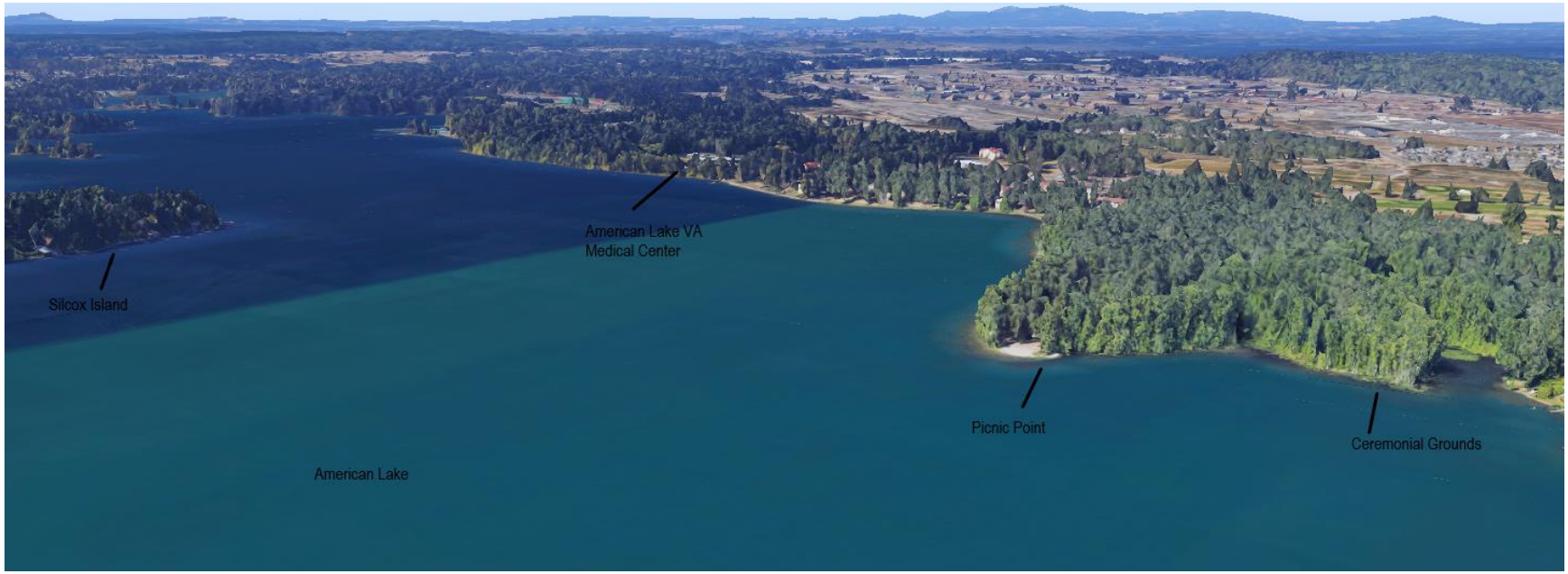

Figure 2: View of Peninsula from American Lake

Figure 3: Overhead View of Hospital Campus

1.9. The Deeper History

There is a deeper history to the place, however. People have lived there for thousands of years. Animals, plants, and other non-human beings have lived there for millions of years. This community of life emerged and hypostatized amongst a geographic landscape dramatically shaped by glaciation and the plate tectonics of the Cascadia subduction zone. This deep, transcendental history of these interacting forces are an animating power in the ceremonies at American Lake; sometimes invoked in ritual and plainly visible most of the time. I have stood at the water's edge near the sweat lodge and watched waŋblí (the eagle) dive down from the tall cedars to take a fish from the glacial lake, pulling it from the upside-down reflection of Tahoma in the water as if taking it off the slopes of the mountain itself. In atmospheric contrast, I have also encountered anglers on motorboats on the same shore, launched from the boat ramp in the park on the other side of the lake, as well as seaplanes landing to carry passengers to Silcox Island, a small inhabited island at the lake's center. I remember one such incident when an elder man of the Crow Nation was singing an old song in his language, to the beat of a drum in the middle of a lodge ceremony. This was a particularly hot ceremony, and the drum beats reverberated through my head amidst kaleidoscopic lights gripping and engrossing my brain in the searing heat. The sound of my heart pounding in my ears seemed in sync with the drum's rhythm and I could not tell which

was which. I felt for a moment that I was touching the spirit-realm and even wondered if I was still conscious/in my body. At that moment, the roar of a motorboat engine, powering a fisherman's vessel at the point of our little peninsula, penetrated the blanket-and-willow frame of the lodge and reminded me exactly where I was on the map of the physical world. This confluence of old and new, traditional and modern, and nature and culture are emblematic of the sociopolitical dynamics at play at this site. These dynamics, such as war and peace, trauma and healing, epistemology and ontology, and science and spirit can both trouble the sensibilities of onlookers and, in their own unique way, ease the suffering of people burdened by the weighty contradictions of our society. Oftentimes, it is afflictive encounters with the incongruent that portend journeys to the healing lodge. Threads of these incongruencies are congenitally woven into the fabric of the site, as they are throughout every social formation in our society. Successful healing journeys understand this.

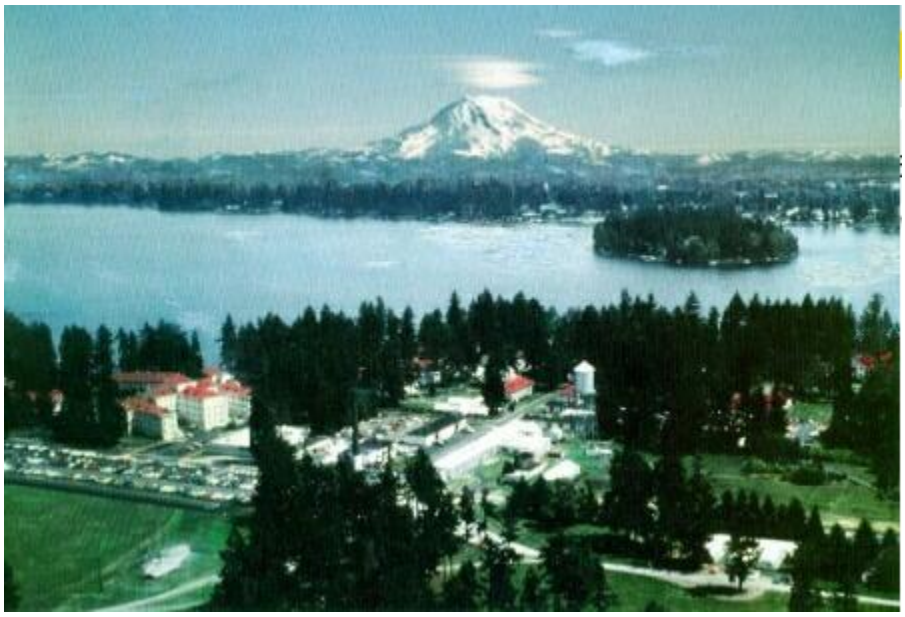

Figure 4: View of Tahoma from the American Lake VAMC, with Silcox Island Visible

People have lived in Puget Sound for a long time, since (as the native people there tell me) time immemorial. The 3,000 foot thick Cordilleran Ice Sheet receded from Puget Sound between 14,000 and 11,000 years ago, leaving behind a complex waterway of Fjords, islands, and land spotted with glacial lakes. People immediately populated the region, developing a distinct maritime culture and socioeconomy that is recognized by anthropologists as having been the most complex of all known hunter gatherer societies. When Europeans arrived in the 18th century, the region was occupied by Lushootseed-speaking Salish people including the Nisqually, Puyallup, and

Muckleshoot.[1] These people still maintain a strong cultural presence in the region and have official ceremonial authority over the healing ceremonies at American Lake today. My interlocutors, who mostly adhere to the spiritual traditions of the American Great Plains, commonly refer to these people as "Coastals" in vernacular speech.[2]

Figure 5: Approximate Range of Indigenous Populations Prior to Colonization

[1] Salish people have told me that they prefer to describe their peoples as "nations" or "people" but they avoid the word "tribe" outside of a necessary legal context due to the lack of an equivalent term in their own language.

[2] When referring to animals and objects, my interlocutors use Plains language but favor Salish terms to describe local places, mountains, or bodies of water.

European disease arrived before European settlers. Racing out in front of the settlers who brought it, a smallpox epidemic swept through western Washington in the mid-late 18th century, killing approximately ⅓ of the people there. When British Officer George Vancouver explored the region in 1792, he observed that the majority of the indigenous people were covered in smallpox scars and that entire villages were empty, having been deserted several years earlier.[3] In 1833, Fort Nisqually was built just a few miles from American Lake. A "fort" only in name, Fort Nisqually was a fur trading post operated by a diverse group of indigenous people, Metis, European immigrants, and various people of color who were fleeing intensifying racial persecution in other states. In 1853, the declaration of the region as an official part of the United States triggered an influx of white American settlers. This marked the beginning of the era of American settler colonialism in Puget Sound, with the associated racialized and

[3] By the (admittedly low) standards of his day, and in paradox to his official mission of claiming land for Britain, George Vancouver had a reputation for treating the indigenous peoples he encountered around the Pacific with dignity and for opposing cultural colonialism in general. This reputation derived from his forbiddance of people under his command violating the customs and sacred sites of the peoples they encountered, as well as his ethical opposition to the practice (by his contemporaries) of encouraging warfare between tribes to increase demand for weapons. Vancouver was a master navigator and the maps he drew of the islands and inlets of Puget Sound were so accurate that they were used into the satellite positioning era. People have long puzzled over how the detailed maps he drew of the Pacific Northwest, which featured tiny/obscure islands and inlets, omitted the large and navigable Columbia and Fraser Rivers. It has been speculated that he deliberately omitted them from his maps to abate the colonization of the region.

genocidal conflicts indelibly affiliated with western expansion and the philosophy of manifest destiny.

The 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek established indigenous reservation lands for the various Salish peoples in the area, including the Nisqually people. The treaty claimed the best farmlands for white settlers and pushed indigenous people onto land that was considered unproductive. The 1855 Puget Sound War resulted when a group of Indians led by Nisqually Chief Leschi fought to get their land back. Leschi was captured and held at Fort Steilacoom, a military installation that was built in response to settlers' demand for protection from Indians. Local settlers and government officials demanded that Leschi be charged with murder and executed. Resisting the local sentiment, the military refused to charge Leschi with murder. The military considered Leschi to be the leader of an enemy element in a formal war and held him thus as a prisoner of war. As such, the military regarded all of the deaths Leschi was responsible for to have been legitimate (and in a sense, justified) acts of war. Thus, the military did not consider Leschi to be a "murderer" in the conventional sense of the term. At the conclusion of the war however, the local civilian government tried Leschi for murder and sentenced him to death. When the military refused to execute him, and the county Sheriff allowed himself to be arrested in refusal to conduct the execution, Leschi was taken outside by another group of civilians and civilian government officials. This group of civilians quickly executed Leschi before anyone else was able to intervene. In

the aftermath of this, thousands of Indians who had not been involved with the war were forced into internment camps, many of them starving to death.[4] .

In 1917, the United States government confiscated part of the Nisqually reservation to build the military base Fort Lewis (known today as Joint Base Lewis-McChord or JBLM). The presence of JBLM dramatically reconfigured the sociopolitics of the region and became the area's economic center. The traditional lifeways of the local indigenous people were severely disrupted and many of them began to move off of the reservation. The United States Government implemented an assimilation policy and invested in a concerted effort to urbanize the indigenous peoples of this and other regions (I will discuss the Indian termination/assimilation policy later in this dissertation). These events produced both a significantly militarized economy in the region and a large population of *urban Indians*, exemplary of the term.

[4] In 2004, the state of Washington repudiated the execution of Leschi and retroactively exonerated him of any wrongdoing.

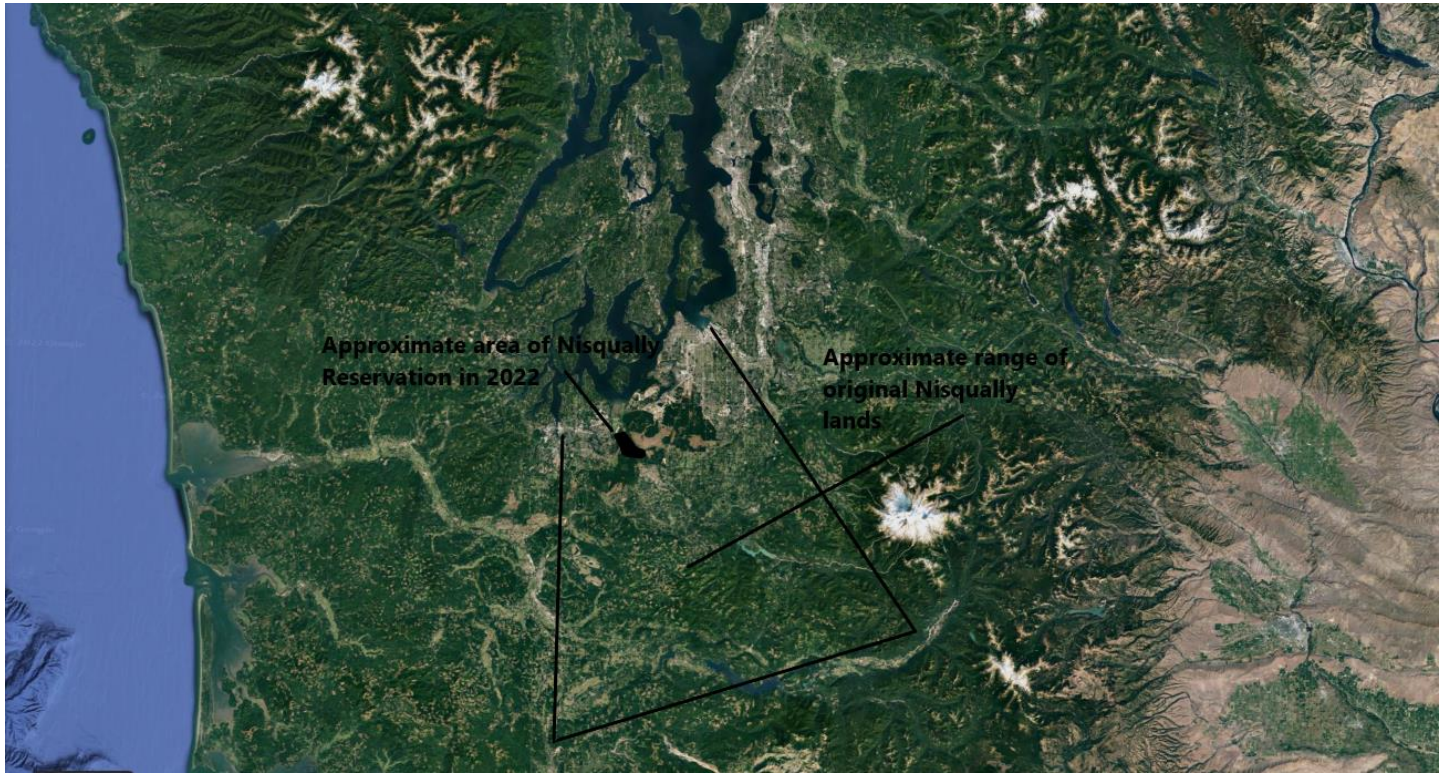

Figure 6: Comparison of Historical Nisqually Lands with Present Reservation

1.10. The Healing Community

In 1923, 377 acres of Fort Lewis were set aside for the construction of a hospital campus to provide care for WWI veterans. The buildings of the VA medical center were built in a beautiful Spanish terracotta style; many of them are now on the National Register of Historic Buildings. In 1924, the hospital was dedicated and was immediately designated as a psychiatry-focused institution. While the American Lake VAMC later became a multi-care hospital, its mental-health focus remains a core part of its identity. In the 1980's, after the PTSD diagnosis was recognized in the DSM, the American Lake VAMC began its PTSD inpatient program for severe PTSD. American Indian-specific programming at the American Lake VAMC, which is now much more of a "stand-alone" entity on that campus, originally grew out of the inpatient PTSD clinic.

Figure 7: American Lake VAMC

The very existence of the healing community that exists at the American Lake VA is the product of numerous intersecting histories, many of which came together in the 1980's. One of these is the volume of American Indian veterans, the majority of whom live in the western United States. The Seattle area, in particular, has a significant population of urban Indians, including many veterans among them. Urban Indians, moved to Seattle by relocation programs in the early-mid 20th century, comprise the largest population of American Indians in the United States. American Indians, across tribes and the urban/rural divide, serve in the military at a rate higher than any other demographic and also utilize VA medical care at the highest rate of all veteran groups.

After PTSD was recognized in the DSM in 1980, VA medical centers began working to address the PTSD "epidemic" that had been identified, very publicly, in Vietnam War veterans. This included the establishment of the unique PTSD inpatient clinic at the American Lake VA. This inpatient clinic subsequently became the site where a significant amount of early research on PTSD was conducted, particularly with regard to the responses of veterans to various forms of therapy. The uniqueness of this clinic resulted in "severe" cases of PTSD from several western states being sent to American Lake. This included many veterans who were reservation Indians, as well as several veterans from the Seattle urban Indian population. Shortly afterward, clinicians, social workers, and tribal leaders collectively observed that for unknown reasons, the response

of American Indian veterans to PTSD therapy was markedly poor in comparison to other groups (some clinicians were documented as saying that they no longer wanted to work with American Indian patients, whom they considered difficult). Tribal leaders and VA officials consulted with each other to address this issue and identified several disjunctures between clinical therapy and indigenous culture. The combination of hundreds of years of colonial violence and "top-down" power structures intrinsic in western clinical practice doomed "Doctor/patient relations" from the beginning. Furthermore, it was determined that American Indians belonged to a "warrior culture" context that was ontologically distinct from the culture that modern biomedical practices were designed to operate within (Scurfield 1995).

During a series of meetings with American Indians, where hospital staff traveled to reservations and indigenous cultural centers to discuss these issues, clinicians and other hospital staff observed profound differences between their own "presentation" style and the way that American Indian groups facilitated public events and meetings. For example, meetings hosted by American Indians ordinarily involved ritualized exchange of objects, gifts, and food, while speakers utilized a more conversational approach with audiences (in contrast to the lecturing style used in "western" meetings). These staff recognized this as a mechanism to establish a more egalitarian social structure prior to accomplishing any sort of "business." In reflection,

these clinicians realized not only that their presentation style had made Indians feel like they were being “talked down to" but also that their claims to exclusive medical expertise were being coded as “overpromising,” which was received badly after centuries of being lied to by the U.S. government.

Ultimately, American Indian veterans wanted to use their own purification and healing rituals, as a VA service. VA officials were at first opposed, fearing that embracing indigenous ritual would set a precedent that would necessitate individualized therapy for all ethnic groups serviced by the VA. But ultimately, the VA granted this request, after determining that American Indians were a special category, apart from the majority of other, non-indigenous veterans. Unlike other veterans, American Indians were labeled “warriors,” which was seen as something distinct from “veterans.” As “warriors,” it was believed that American Indians would heal best in a “warrior culture” context, in contrast to the clinical therapy that was seen as most efficacious for non-indigenous veterans.

In its earliest iteration, this option was explored through the admission of an all-American Indian cohort in the inpatient PTSD clinic. Though “cultural activities” were incorporated, this cohort was held to a therapeutic regimen that was built around the same three-month PTSD program that was already established within the clinic. Originally as an addendum to the established PTSD program, sacred ceremonial

grounds on the property were designated for the construction of a sweat lodge. The sweat lodge was built to support the cohort by making purification rituals available on an as-needed basis.

Though the program was being developed to serve a multi-tribal group of veterans from nine states, elders agreed that the ceremonies would be neither legitimate nor appropriate without the blessing of the people who were indigenous to the land being used. For this reason, the local Nisqually people were asked to conduct the ceremonies that established the grounds as sacred for these ceremonial purposes. They did so and the Nisqually continue to maintain formal ceremonial authority over this property. However, the ceremonies conducted on the property often derive from non-Salish traditions and the medicine men who conduct the ceremonies have diverse tribal backgrounds.

The separateness of the sweat lodge from the first cohort's official therapeutic regimen derived from concerns held by VA officials about seeming to endorse a particular religious practice. Cohort members had to request use of the sweat lodge and it saw the majority of its use during this period before and after "official" therapy hours.

Significant tensions developed during the cohort's journey through the 3-month inpatient program. These included tensions between American Indian patients and

hospital staff (who were all either white or African American) and between different groups of Indians in the program. Hospital staff were frightened by the American Indian cohort and there was significant turnover among these staff during the cycle. Unexpected conflicts also developed between urban Indians and the reservation Indians who were brought in from other regions, often over matters regarding ancestry and "real" Indianness (urban Indians were accused by reservation Indians of being "assimilated" and being culturally too "white"). After experimenting with an all-Indian cohort, the program experimented with having it only half Indian, with the same structure as before. While hospital staff reported feeling much more comfortable with this arrangement, the greatest benefit seemed to go to the non-indigenous veterans who participated with that group. Non-indigenous veterans reported significant reduction in PTSD symptoms and responded very affirmatively to participation in American Indian community events. However, witnessing the volume of investment that the surrounding Native American community had in the success of this cohort, through ceremonies and performances given at their graduation, struck a bittersweet chord in the non-indigenous veterans who participated in that cohort (as well as staff members). As one participating clinician said:

> The bittersweet aspect was the recognition by non-native veterans that we never have had or would have this depth of mutual affinity with, let alone such support and recognition from, the communities in which we had been raised.

Though relegated to the sidelines early on, it is the sweat lodge that is now the center of American Indian programming at the American Lake VA. During the initial two cohorts that were observed in their movement through the inpatient PTSD program, the usage of the sweat lodge stood out as the most efficacious and useful intervention. During the all-American Indian cohort, the sweat lodge was available on an as-needed basis. This was physically taxing for the individuals conducting the ceremonies, which led to the decision to hold one structured sweat lodge ceremony every other week. Though there has been some slight variation over the years, this continues to be the general pattern for sweat lodge ceremonies at American Lake. In alternating weeks, the community meets for "talking circle" ceremonies, which are held indoors in the American Lake VAMC's campus chapel.

2. Combat Trauma

Introduction

This chapter illuminates a history of conceptualization and classification of suffering associated with being in combat. I refer to the bundle of concepts associated with this suffering broadly as "combat trauma." While negative psychological responses to battlefield experience have certainly always existed, the idea of combat trauma as an ontological object is something that is relatively new. While it emerged in the clinicalization of the modern era (the same moment that is Foucault's object in *The Birth of the Clinic*), combat trauma went through a major set of transformations in the late 20th century (Foucault 1994). Concomitant with the era of *medicalization*, activists and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) worked together to generate the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis (PTSD) (DSM-III-R, 247). Consistent with the medicalizing project, this involved the reclassification of phenomena that were previously thought of as "social" as being "medical" in nature. In the 21st century, social backlash against the violence of medicalization has produced new ways of conceptualizing combat trauma. These range from new semi-diagnoses such as "moral injury" to the emergence of entirely new ways of conceptualizing psychological otherness. One such form, which I call *bioarchetypes*, describes the back-migration of medicalized phenomena into the social realm. However, even as people are trying to

claim autonomy from the violence of the clinical gaze, bioarchetypes still carry the residue of medicalization. Outside of mainstream European/American society, indigenous modes of understanding trauma involve explicitly non-medical modes of understanding and addressing this suffering. These exist in a postcolonial context and remain subject to the negotiation of biomedicine and its modes to reach the people who need healing.

After Action Review

In the contemporary world, the PTSD diagnosis is indelibly entwined with war in all of its manifestations. The social force of this diagnosis is such that its influence arguably begins *before* soldiers even experience "trauma" in combat. I observed this social reality in motion when I was deployed as a soldier in Afghanistan in 2006:

As my company maneuvered into our positions to cordon off the village in southern Afghanistan, the sun's emergence commenced, peeking over the tops of the mountains, flooding with light the valley we had infiltrated under the cover of darkness. When contacts occurred, it was often at this time in the daybreak. I peered over my own machine gun from the hilltop at the northwest of the village, accompanied by my squad leader and my assistant gunner. Other American fire teams positioned themselves at strategic points around the village, as two Infantry squads prepared to enter the village to search for the HVT (high value target, or militant leader) who was supposedly hiding in the area. It was late spring, and the frequency of hostile encounters was increasing from the relative quiet of the Afghan cold season.

The unmistakable sound of AK-47 fire suddenly filled the valley as fighters in the village retaliated against our cordon/search mission. The burst of AK-47 fire was immediately answered by American 240-B and M-2 machine guns, soon followed by the popping of American M4 rifles. A rhythmic series of explosions close behind my team shook the ground under us. We ducked and scanned our fields of view, trying to identify where the attack was coming from. My squad leader's radio burst to life, as our platoon leader yelled at us to get down, informing us that one of the American machine gun teams on the other side of the village was attempting to fire at the Afghan militants with his MK-19 machine gun (a heavy machine gun which fires 40mm armor piercing grenades at a rate of 350 per minute) but was overshooting and his rounds were coming towards us. We ducked and the rain of grenades stopped shortly afterward, as the American MK-19 gunner realized his error.

Below us, two armed Afghan men could be seen running side by side, one of them carrying an AK-47 and the other an RPG (rocket propelled grenade). Behind them, an American gun team was in pursuit. Outnumbered, one of the two men threw his hands into the air, giving up and prepared to surrender. At the same moment that his hands went up though, his companion turned around and, without any attempt to actually aim, fired his RPG at his pursuers (missing badly). As the rocket was flying 30 meters over the heads of the Americans who pursued him, they returned fire and killed both of the men.

Later that day, my Company gathered together at our fire base to conduct our debriefing, called an "After Action Review" or AAR, where leadership and subordinates meet together as soon as possible after a mission to discuss "what happened" and learning points. As we were grouping, I overheard a raucous conversation involving the Lieutenant in charge of another platoon in my company with some members of his platoon and a soldier named Specialist Adams, who was one of the two soldiers who had fired the fatal shots into the two armed men. At this moment, the other of the two soldiers was standing away from everyone else. He stared blankly at the ground as he smoked a cigarette, emotional and visibly shaken from the experience of having killed a person. Specialist Adams cast a very different kind of countenance. He was still hyped up with adrenaline and ecstatic as we prepared for the AAR, rapidly retelling the story of his part in the firefight earlier in the day. Taking part in this manic, rapid-fire conversation with Specialist Adams, the Lieutenant retold the story of a battle we were in the previous week, when Specialist Adams was knocked unconscious by a rocket propelled grenade blast that had left no visible wounds. The Lieutenant then slapped Specialist Adams on the back approvingly and announced to everyone: "I hereby nominate Specialist Adams for 'Most Likely to Develop PTSD' after we go home." Most of the people present, including Specialist Adams, laughed at this joke, which was really intended to inspire the approval of Specialist Adams by his peers, through this validating acknowledgment of the high rate of violent combat that he had been involved with at

that point in our deployment. The jovial, celebratory atmosphere and beaming smile on Specialist Adams's face, in the aftermath of our deadly mission, suggested that he had succeeded.

On that battlefield in 2006, I witnessed soldiers employing the object of combat trauma; waging it for social status and fantasizing about it as a possibility in some abstract and, perhaps, aspirational future. Today though, the material notion of combat trauma is a prominent fixture in public culture. Common quantitative framings of the combat trauma story will note that approximately 20% of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD, before noting that surveys have also suggested that double that number *believe* that they have suffered from post traumatic stress (Pew Research 2011; Richardson, Frueh, and Acierno 2011; Roehr 2007). Statistics like these have generated public and institutional alarm, while impacting basic structures and functions within the military and civil society. Critical scholars, on the other hand, note that veteran-centric military trauma discourses like these can serve to obscure the suffering of the largest population of this war's victims, the civilians of Iraq and Afghanistan, including over 244,000 who were violently killed (Macleish 2018; Costs of War 2019). Between these very different analyses, discourses of combat, combat trauma, and warriordom are solidifying in ways that reflect changes in how contemporary society imagines war and the people who fight in it.

The PTSD diagnosis itself has a history. Something like "combat trauma" has been imagined for a long time; perhaps millennia. However, it has been distilled through the 20th century process of medicalization into something distinct, while the process of *biomedicalization* has carried it into the 21st century as perhaps something else. This chapter will analyze this history of combat trauma in two parts. The first section will look at the history of combat trauma's complex negotiation with biomedicine, which culminates in the publication and public acceptance of the PTSD diagnosis. During the 21st century, backlash against medicalization has combined with sociopolitical movements to produce a new framing for combat trauma, which I call *bioarchetypes*. The second section will look more closely at my fieldsite where trauma is addressed as *iwáyazaŋ azúyeya*, the sickness that one acquires from fighting with others and the self. Addressing iwáyazaŋ azúyeya requires the negotiation of histories of colonial violence

2.1 The Medicalization of Combat Trauma and the Emergence of Bioarchetypes

> *The essential feature of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events….. The clinical presentation of PTSD varies. In some individuals, fear-based re-experiencing, emotional, and behavioral symptoms may predominate. In others, anhedonic or dysphyoric mood states and negative cognitions may be most distressing. In some other individuals, arousal and reactive-externalizing symptoms are prominent, while in others, dissociative symptoms predominate. Finally, some individuals exhibit combinations of these symptom patterns* (DSM-V, 274).

In this (current) version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, printed 33 years after PTSD appeared in an earlier version of the DSM, the posttraumatic stress disorder diagnosis describes a heterogenous bundle of symptoms that express differently in different people. However, the introductory chapter of DSM-III, where posttraumatic disorder first appeared in the 1980's, reads differently:

> The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of unusual human experience (i.e., outside the range of such common experience as simple bereavement, chronic illness, business losses, and marital conflict). The stressor producing this syndrome would be markedly stressing to almost anyone, and is usually experienced with intense fear, terror, and helplessness. The characteristic symptoms involve reexperiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event or numbing of general responsiveness, and increased arousal. The diagnosis is not made if the disturbance lasts less than one month (DSM-III-R, 247).

In DSM-III-R, PTSD was thought of as a set of involuntary responses to stimuli that remind a person of their experience in a horrific traumatic event. Later in the disorder's description, the DSM explains that PTSD can be understood as something that manifests when a stimulus triggers a person's body/nervous system into believing that they are either re-experiencing the trauma or encountering a similarly threatening scenario. As an example, the DSM suggests that a woman who has been raped in an elevator may experience a physiological response when entering any elevator (251).

The story of how PTSD came to be, along with the changes the diagnosis has undergone in the 4 decades that have passed since its DSM genesis, is both constitutive of and concomitant with the stories of suffering and healing in today's veterans.

The term "shell shock" grew out of WWI and had been coined by British physicians before the United States entered the war. Noting that veterans were being psychologically "damaged" by the war (with confused and disassociated states the most prominent symptom), physicians theorized that the condition was physiological in nature, caused by chronic exposure to the concussion of artillery blasts (Scott 1990, 296). When it was observed that soldiers who were not regularly exposed to explosions displayed the same set of symptoms, many military leaders dismissed the diagnosis in its entirety, preferring to ascribe the condition to cowardice and personal weakness. However, Sigmund Freud argued for a psychological basis to shell-shock, notably when he was consulted as an expert-witness in cases where veterans had been mistreated by physicians (Danto 2016). However, Freud's perspective did not find favor within military culture until the second half of the 20th century.

The first edition of the DSM (DSM-I) was published in 1952. DSM-1 designated "Gross Stress Reaction" as a mental diagnosis and noted exposure to war as a possible cause. In DSM-I, Gross Stress Reaction was listed as something distinct from neurosis and psychosis and explained that the symptoms should be expected to fade away in

time, after the sufferer is no longer exposed to the traumatic situation. However, concurrent research done by Roy Grinker and John Spiegel concluded that the symptoms associated with Gross Stress Reaction could manifest long after combat exposure and could also become chronic (Grinker and Spiegel 1945). When DSM-II was published in 1968, it eliminated Gross Stress Reaction and no longer attributed any mental diagnosis to war exposure. This was in spite of two prominent studies published by Herbert Archibald and Read Tuddenham that argued, after following up with WWII veterans and Holocaust survivors 15 and 20 years after the end of WWII, that Gross Stress Reaction could persist for years and perhaps indefinitely (Archibald et al 1965).

The situation of the Vietnam War created many of the conditions that led to the adaptation of the PTSD diagnosis in DSM-III. In September 1969, just before the news of the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam became public, a social worker named Sarah Haley met with a Vietnam War Veteran on her first day at work at the Boston VA hospital. The veteran was visibly in a state of extraordinary distress and told hospital workers that he feared for his life. While meeting with Haley and other hospital staff, the veteran described the My Lai massacre in detail, including how his unit had slaughtered a group of civilians in the My Lai village. He claimed that he had refused to participate in the massacre but that members of his platoon had threatened to kill him if he ever told anyone what he had witnessed (Bloom 2000; Schaller 2012, 94-95). The clinicians in the

Boston VA hospital did not believe the veteran's story and they diagnosed him with paranoid schizophrenia. This horrified Haley, who believed the story, and she began a campaign to both take the stories of war veterans seriously, and create diagnostic language to describe their suffering (Scott 2017).

Haley introduced the veteran to Robert Lifton, a psychiatrist and war veteran who had become known as a war critic in his study on atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima (Lifton 1967). Chaim Shatan, psychiatrist and director of the psychoanalytic training clinic at NYU, also reached out to Lifton to invite him to speak at NYU. Shatan's father had been deeply troubled by his experience in Poland in WWI; Chaim translated his father's war stories into English from Yiddish and became committed to both antiwar causes in general and the development of psychoanalytic tools to treat war-trauma. Haley, Lifton, and Shatan began working together and became involved with the organization VVAW (Vietnam Veterans Against the War). In 1972, Shatan published an article titled "The Post-Vietnam Syndrome" in the New York Times, which attracted mass attention to the psychological suffering of Vietnam War veterans (Shatan 1972). In early 1973, Lifton published his book *Home from the War* which included the personal story of the veteran that Sarah Haley had introduced to him (Lifton 1973). In 1974, Haley published the impactful "When the Patient Reports

Atrocities" in *Archives of General Psychiatry,* drawing attention to the distinct challenges faced by clinicians working with veterans of the Vietnam War (Haley 1974).

For an updated version of DSM-II, the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove the "homosexuality" diagnosis from its list of mental disorders in 1974 (Drescher 2015). This update contributed to the construction of the PTSD diagnosis in two important ways:

1. With DSM-III already being planned, the fact that such a prominent diagnosis could be de-medicalized inspired clinicians and activists with belief that unrecognized diagnoses might be legitimized for inclusion in DSM-III. When a judge denied a "traumatic war neurosis" defense used by a veteran in court, due to the fact that there was no such listing in the DSM, the Lifton/Shatan team doubled down and committed to having combat trauma recognized in the upcoming DSM-III.

2. The manner in which homosexuality was removed from the DSM powerfully shaped the methodology used by people working on the combat-trauma project. The removal of homosexuality from the DSM was controversial and divided the APA. Removal of the homosexuality diagnosis was criticized by APA members who believed homosexuality to be a diagnosable and potentially treatable disease; these members argued that removal was a triumph of "politics over science." In corollary, when advocates of the homosexuality diagnosis managed to replace it with "Sexual

Orientation Disturbance," which pathologized non-heteronormative sexual orientation *in cases that are disruptive to one's life*, antagonists of the diagnosis argued that the inclusion of Sexual Orientation Disturbance was a triumph of "politics over science" (Spitzer 1981, 210). The President of the APA, Robert Spitzer, supported the de-listing of homosexuality. However, the complexity of psychiatric nosology and the scale of the controversy borne of the delisting of homosexuality led Spitzer to insist upon the usage of a rigorous scientific approach towards the DSM's classification of mental diagnoses. Spitzer's scientific method was a major factor in how combat trauma would ultimately be framed for DSM-III.[1]

Spitzer declared that DSM-III would be written using a task force free of anyone who had worked on DSM-II, utilizing an entirely new intellectual inspiration, derived from the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (Bayer and Spitzer 1985, 188; Millon 1986,

[1] As the president of the APA, the role he played in the development of the DSM, and the social impact of his de-listing of homosexuality as a diagnosis, Robert Spitzer has been called the most influential psychiatrist of the late 20th century (The Associated Press 2015). His impact on psychiatry is complex and controversial and is emblematic of many of biomedicine's daedalean and paradoxical contributions to contemporary society; through his passionate attempts to distill psychiatric diagnostics of problematic value judgements, Spitzer may have contributed more to the biomedicalization of mental health (and health in general) than any single physician in the late 20th century. His work in de-pathologizing non-heteronormative sexuality made him a hero in the LGBTQ community; in contrast, his work that aimed to demonstrate the plasticity of human sexuality was appropriated and cited by gay-conversion therapists. This led to a formal rebuke from the APA and Spitzer being labeled a traitor by the LGBTQ community. Two years before his death, Spitzer requested that these studies be retracted but the journals they were published in refused. At the same time, he published a letter in *Journal of Sexual Behavior* apologizing to any person who had been subjected to conversion therapy due to his work (Spitzer 2003; Arana 2012; Carey 2012; Rattigan 2012).

29). In his study on psychiatric nosology, Allan Young has characterized the psychiatric approach of Emil Kraepelin as being based on three primary concepts:

1. Mental disorders are best understood by analogy with physical diseases. Kraepelin's view was that medicine's progress against infectious disease took off only after received ideas about generic causes and processes were rejected, and researchers redirected their attention to discovering the specific causes of specific syndromes. Medicine's historical first step consisted of classifying the different kinds of diseases. Psychiatry must begin here also, if it is going to progress beyond its present undeveloped condition.

2. The classification of mental disorders demands careful observation of visible phenomena. It is only by systematically recording, collecting, and comparing case histories that it is possible to identify the clusters of symptoms that go together from case to case, follow a discernible course over time, and lead to a predictable outcome. Inferences based on etiological theories that lack solid empirical evidence or that invoke the operation of invisible mechanisms have to be rejected.

3. Empirical research will eventually show that the serious mental disorders have organic and biochemical origins. While relatively little is known about these causes at the present time, this presents no obstacle to classifying mental disorders. On the

contrary, classification is a necessary first step to uncovering these etiologies. (Kraepelin 1974; Spitzer and Williams 1980; Young 1996, 95-96).

The Kraepelinian method thus represents the adaptation of a disease model of mental illness, rooting psychiatric symptoms in testable, biological defect/disorder (the reference to "invisible mechanisms" signals the psychoanalytic notion of mental illness being rooted in unconscious internal conflicts). This model also assumes that the cause of legitimate mental disorder will be consistently observable and recognizable across multiple patients, much like a physical ailment with a known biological cause. Likewise, legitimate treatments for mental disorders would be identifiable through randomized trials, with consistent and repeatable efficacy.

In 1975, the Lifton/Shatan team approached Spitzer and requested that a subcommittee be formed to consider "post-Vietnam Syndrome" for inclusion in DSM-III. Spitzer initially responded by rejecting their request. However, he eventually reconsidered and said that he would consider forming a new subcommittee if compelling scientific data could be produced that showed that "post-combat disorder" met the standards of Kraepelinian analysis (Young 1996, 109). Spitzer noted that work by other contemporary psychiatrists argued that the suffering experienced by Vietnam War veterans could all be classified appropriately under other extant diagnoses (Helzer

et al 1976; Scott 1990, 305). Spitzer challenged Lifton and Shatan to prove, scientifically, that this premise was incorrect.

An important part of the working group's strategy became to expand the diagnosis beyond combat to include trauma more generally. The group recruited Henry Krystal and William Niederland, who had researched trauma in Holocaust survivors, as well as Nancy Andreasen, who had worked with severe burn survivors (Andreasen 1971; Krystal and Niederland 1971). In 1976, Shatan and Haley published their recommendation for DSM-III, naming the potential entry "Catastrophic Stress Disorder" which distinguished between traumas related to "man-made" and "natural" disasters (Shatan et al 1976). After feedback and revisions, the group made a presentation to the APA in 1978. Spitzer recommended that they eliminate the distinction between "man-made" and "natural" disasters and re-name the diagnosis "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (Scott 1990, 307). PTSD appeared in DSM-III when it was published in 1980.

In 1987, DSM-III was revised into DSM-III-R and with it, the PTSD diagnosis. There was concern that the original 1980 listing was still too unscientific, listing miscellaneous symptoms and not sufficiently demonstrating their biomedical connection to the traumatic experience (Young 1996, 114-115). The 1987 revision made it explicit that PTSD symptoms other than flashbacks and avoidance behaviors must be

understood as derived from an autonomic arousal response to triggers. Likewise, though guilt was mentioned as a diagnostic criterion in the 1980 version of DSM-III, the 1987 revision deemed guilt an "associated feature" and no longer listed it as a symptom (115).

The demands of the APA, along with the particular sociopolitical contexts of the Vietnam War, constructed a PTSD disease that could only be legitimately understood as a cluster of symptoms connected to a specific traumatic event through neurological pathways. The extant diagnoses that post-war suffering were attributed to prior to the establishment of the PTSD diagnosis (such as depressive disorders and substance abuse disorders) were considered non-compensable because they could not be proven to be service-connected.

Today, PTSD acts not only as a diagnostic-product but also as the primary lens through which military/combat experience gets translated to both the civilian world and soldiers themselves. In this way, PTSD is both a gateway to legitimacy and the necessary sign to communicate any form of post-military/combat distress.

For my first sweat lodge ceremony at American Lake, it was my own PTSD diagnosis that granted me access to the site. I was told that any veteran with a PTSD diagnosis was welcome to participate. On the sweat lodge community's webpage, a list of positive impacts of sweat lodge participation are listed, with each of them correlated

to a PTSD criterion (via DSM-IV). They are presented as follows:

-Criteria: *Depression, search for meaning, identity diffusion*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Reformation of the self, positive mood, enhanced sense of centering and identity*

-Criteria: *Physical symptoms, memory impairment*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Tension release, relaxation, awareness focused on internal states, ability to concentrate*

-Criteria: *Stigmatization/alienation*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Sense of unity, bonding, community, and continuity*

-Criteria: *Anger/Rage*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Inner calmness, acceptance of fate, release of destructive thoughts*

-Criteria: *Sensation Seeking/Hyper Arousal*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Creative channeling of need to enhance feeling of vitality*

-Criteria: *Intrusive imagery/affective flooding*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Reformation of reason to enter ritual, transformation of imagery in less distressing direction, emotional calm*

-Criteria: *Intimacy conflict*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Strong physical, psychological, and spiritual bonding*

-Criteria: *Isolation*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Enhanced sense of unity, bonding which contravenes isolation and loneliness*

-Criteria: *Emotional construction/avoidance*

-Change in Symptom Cluster via Purification Ritual: *Emotionally expressive, reduced numbing, counter phobic tendency reduced, interpersonal trust*

(Veterans Sweat Lodge 2013)

The overt connection of sweat lodge benefits to individual criteria from the DSM is an artifact of the medicalization process that reified combat trauma as PTSD in DSM-III. Sweat lodge ceremonies at the VA hospital began as an alternative to clinical therapy for Native American veterans, based on the assumption that ontological differences rendered them external to the clinical/medical context of PTSD. This has changed. The generation of the PTSD diagnosis in 1980, which produced the clinical therapies that American Indians were not responding well to, was a key product of the 20th century process of medicalization. The 20th century medicalization project re-classified several phenomena that were previously thought of as social in nature, as

medical. In the late 20th century, as observed by Adele Clarke and others, this process intensified exponentially, transforming into a phenomenon that they termed *biomedicalization* (Clarke, Shim, Mamo, and Fosket et al 2003). Under a biomedicalized regime, the notion of suffering/healing modes that are external to biomedicine is not thinkable. For this reason, the praxis taking place at the sweat lodge *must* be connected to biomedical criteria to be regarded as legitimate.

The continued influence of biomedicalization in mental health is well represented by the decision to remove "culture bound syndromes" from the DSM with the publication of DSM-V in 2013. In DSM-IV, several examples of suffering/psychological distress (primarily from outside of Euro/American society) that were not accounted for by DSM diagnoses were acknowledged and listed as culture-bound syndromes. DSM-V removed them, replacing them with the notion of "cultural concepts of distress" and an explanation of the logic to de-list culture bound syndromes:

> Specifically, the term *culture-bound syndrome* ignores the fact that clinically important cultural differences often involve explanations or experience of distress rather than culturally distinctive configurations of symptoms. Furthermore, the term *culture-bound* overemphasizes the local particularity and limited distribution of cultural concepts of distress. The current formulation acknowledges that *all* forms of distress are locally shaped, including the DSM disorders. From this perspective, many DSM diagnoses can be understood as operationalized prototypes that started out as cultural syndromes, and became widely accepted as a result of their clinical and research utility. Across groups there remain culturally patterned differences in symptoms, ways of talking about distress, and locally perceived causes, which are in turn associated with coping strategies and patterns of help seeking (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 758).

In essence, the APA affirms the belief that *all* legitimate forms of psychological/psychiatric suffering absolutely must be accounted for by conventional DSM diagnoses. While the 1980s allowed indigenous ritual to be considered as a form of healing for suffering external to medical ontology, contemporary psychiatric nosology asserts allopathic medical ontology as universal (Hughes 1998). For indigenous ritual to be seen as legitimate, it must overtly address codified DSM criteria. The DSM maintains that it *is* important to be familiar with cultural concepts of distress, for several reasons:

1. Familiarity with cultural concepts of distress helps to avoid misdiagnosis. Due to the variability that exists in how distress is understood and described, clinicians may misjudge the experience of their patient (the DSM gives the example that a patient describing an ailment as being the result of spiritual phenomena may be misdiagnosed as suffering from psychosis)
2. Familiarity with cultural concepts of distress helps obtain useful clinical information.
3. "Speaking the language of the patient" helps build doctor/patient rapport.
4. Greater therapeutic efficacy can be achieved through understanding how culture influences the psychological mechanisms of disorder.
5. Clinical research can be guided through the recognition of patterns of cultural concepts of distress.

6. Cultural concepts of distress, as opposed to culture-bound syndromes, provide more resources for clinicians to sort through variations in local cultural epidemiology (due to the fact that people within a "culture" may not all understand their distress the same way) (758-759).

The final point highlights the foundational difference between cultural concepts of distress and culture bound syndromes, also reflecting the role of medicalization in this distinction. The disorders outlined in the DSM are imagined to be ontologically "real," carrying a trans-cultural, trans-linguistic concrete corporeality. Culture bound syndromes are imagined to *not* be "real" in this fundamental kind of way. Thus, due to the correct assessment that cultures are not monolithic and people within a cultural formation may have diverse ways of understanding their experience of distress, the APA is cautioning against choosing a "non-real" concept to navigate unstable cultural terrains. Because DSM diagnoses are seen as "real," it is better to focus on them, as "culture bound syndromes" may or may not be the same thing in different arenas of the same cultural formation.

The DSM-V arranges several "cultural concepts of distress" in a glossary. Each listing provides the name and description of the respective concept, related concepts in other cultures, and the proper DSM diagnoses to consider when such concepts are clinically presented. For example, one listing is for the Haitian concept of "Maladi

Moun." Maladi Moun is described as the explanation for a range of illnesses and disorders that are attributed to harm sent by an envious or malicious other. Attractive, intelligent, or wealthy people are seen as particularly vulnerable to this "sent sickness" due to the likelihood of them causing jealousy in others. Psychological/physical harm is then sent, spiritually, by the malicious party. The Spanish *mal de ojo* or Italian *mal'occhiu* are suggested as analogous conditions in other cultures. At the end of the listing, "Delusional disorder, persecutory type" and "schizophrenia with paranoid features" are suggested as proper DSM diagnoses to consider when a patient presents with maladi moun (835).

The development of the PTSD diagnosis and its establishment as the necessary common denominator to numerous military/war-related traumas is exemplary of the medicalization project and it continues. However, numerous developments in the late 20th century/early 21st century, including social backlash against medicalization, have created new phenomena that are changing how people understand and relate to combat trauma.

2.1.2 Bioarchetypes

Adele Clarke made the observation that medicalization had evolved into something else (biomedicalization) in the first years of the 21st century. Biomedicalization is signaled by an intensification of medicalization, along

with (among other things) developments in medical technologies and targeted-marketing regimes that profit from illness. A notable example of this is the mass-diagnosis of ADHD in school-age children that began in the late 20th century. In accordance with this, pharmaceutical interventions like Adderall and Ritalin were prescribed en masse to millions of children. Phenomena such as this produce what Clarke calls "technoscientific identities," which can be understood as identities that are overwhelmingly shaped by the therapies, stigmas, drugs, disabilities, and bureaucracies that accompany biomedical diagnoses. By the time a child ADHD diagnosee reaches adulthood, the way that they understand themselves and relate to the world has been deeply inflected by this identity. Other such technoscientific identities are associated with, for example, menopausal women, HIV patients, diabetics, and many others.

After several decades of biomedicalization, the effects of this process are not lost on the people who have experienced it.[2] While the diagnosis of ADHD remains common, a significant public literature has emerged which argues that the diagnosis of ADHD in children can be understood as the pathologization of behaviors that should be seen as well within the spectrum of "normal." (Schwartz 2016). In some cases, these

[2]For example, I have nnoticed that autoethnographic term papers by undergraduates in medical anthropology courses often address medicalization and repeatedly cite experiences that they or loved ones had with the ADHD diagnosis as children. These students easily articulate their sense of the "wrongness" in diagnosing children who can't sit still in class with a disease and prescribing medications that might cause them problems forever. These papers are moving and this perspective compels respect.

diagnoses are being framed in popular culture as "superpowers" which could be channeled into lucrative and prestigious careers (Babakhan 2019; Diaz 2020). A similar phenomenon has been occurring with the autism diagnosis and the decision to condense many differentiated autism diagnoses into a single "spectrum disorder" in DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 50-59; Whitehouse, Cooper, Bebbington, Alverez et al 2017). However, the increased call to recognize such conditions as located within a spectrum of normative human behavior is concomitant with the insistence that these diagnoses do represent very real things that exist *a priori* and independent of culture (Posner 2020). As described by one prominent physician/scholar of ADHD:

> ADHD is not caused by the world today. The world today has just created a situation where people with ADHD cannot cope. It's true that technology has led to a modern life with more distraction, information, demands for multi-tasking, and higher academic and professional pressures than ever before. If we didn't have a world like this, maybe their symptoms wouldn't show as much, but the person would still have ADHD (Quinn 2020).

This argument is being made by professionals who aim to reduce the observed stigma against people carrying these diagnoses. However, this "backlash" against medicalizing stigma includes voices who argue that conditions such as ADHD and depression are created by the conditions of modernity and may not exist in, for example, hunter gatherer societies (Ilardy 2010). As signaled by the APA's removal of culture bound syndromes from the DSM, diagnoses absolutely cannot be thought of as contingent upon culture. Rather, assuming that Homo Sapiens came into being as hunter gatherers, the real-ness of diagnoses can be rooted in biology and evolution; a

product of the material conditions of humanity's hunter gatherer ancestors (Andrews and Thompson 2009). This produces a new kind of diagnostic identity that differs from the technoscientific identities described by Adele Clarke. While technoscientific identities describe an experience distinctly of pathologization, overdetermined by medicalization, pharmaceuticalization, and disability, this is something else. I call these identities *bioarchetypes.*

Medicalized technoscientific identities take diagnoses such as ADHD or depression to be a state of disease, marked by their difference and distance from the theoretical norm of the healthy body/mind. Recognizing the violence of medicalization, bioarchetypes emerge to frame psychological/psychiatric diagnoses as expressions of normative traits, produced by evolution and selected by Darwinian processes. Like the diagnoses of the DSM, they are understood as very real things that exist external to culture. Rather than being created by the culture of modernity, as some people argue, they simply appear pathological when modernity accommodates them poorly. The *disease* is depathologized but the *diagnosis* itself remains.

One place where the bioarchetype schematic is evident is in society's changing relationship with the autism diagnosis, which has resulted in attempts to change its framing. In *The Prehistory of Autism*, anthropologist Penny Spikins and psychiatrist Barry Wright argue that not only is autism inherited, but it is a trait derived from natural

selection. Defining autism as a trait that became inappropriately stigmatized as a *disorder* in the 1940s, during 20th century medicalization, Spikens and Wright argue:

> Depicting autism as a disorder encourages negative thinking about individuals with autism. It seems more appropriate to understand autism as *a difference*, bringing with it both strengths and weaknesses. From this perspective, the skills and talents associated with autism may have played a significant role in the survival of past communities. (Spikins and Wright 2016)

In *The Prehistory of Autism*, Spikins and Wright acknowledge that some cases of autism involve profound disability, but describe these cases as relatively rare and derived from spontaneous mutations. However, autism *without intellectual impairment* is something else. Importantly, it is framed as a normative inherited trait.

> Autism without intellectual impairment, AS, is widely prevalent in modern society. Research into population-wide variability of the Autism Quotient suggests around 2% of individuals within populations would be diagnosed with AS. Most however remain *undiagnosed*, despite their notable cognitive difference. In a study of 557 students at the University of York as part of the 'Lost in Translation: Autism and Material Culture' Project, 2% scored in the AQ range suggestive of AS for example, and in a similar study of 840 Cambridge University students, Baron-Cohen et al. found the same percentage, which also match the distribution of a control sample of the general. (Spikins, Wright, and Hodgson 2016, 294).

Noting that other scholars have made similar arguments about other diagnoses, such as bipolar disorder, Spikins, Wright, and Hodgson argue:

> Collaborative morality provides a catalyst therefore for different adaptive strategies to pro-sociality, and a widening of human personality variation. Nettle (2006) for example argues that selection for creativity drove a widening of personality variation to include schizotypy. Whitley (2009) argues for the significance of bipolar disorder in producing traits valued in shamans in hunter-gatherer societies. It seems likely that many of the mental syndromes that have been identified over the recent past for example as set out in DSM-5, have a genetic component and before these were identified as such they were often regarded in other ways by particular communities based on ongoing belief systems

(for example descriptions of obsessive compulsive disorder in Babylon: Reynolds and Kinnier Wilson 2012).

A number of works by these and other scholars develop this argument across multiple psychiatric diagnoses (Nettle 2006; Whitley 2009; Reynolds and Kinnier Wilson 2012; Ronemus et al. 2014; Iossifov et al. 2014; Baron-Cohen et al 2001; Grinker 2010; Ochs and Solomon 2010; Lomelin 2010; Reser 2011; Del Giudice et al 2010; Charlton and Rosenkranz 2016; Spikins 2009). At the core of these analyses is the belief that the collective social nature of humanity compelled that we evolve with the capacity for interspecies psychobehavioral diversity. In other words, our species carries multiple archetypes that are distributed among different individuals throughout our population. These are traits that are helpful to have distributed throughout the human population, because they create the conditions for the development of particular skills that benefit the group as a whole (as determined by the conditions of the Paleolithic world we evolved within). In the case of autism, approximately 2% of the human population inherits this archetype. The group as a whole benefits, as this 2% of the population possesses the capacity for extreme focus and technological skill, among other things. According to these scholars, the norms of medicalization failed to account for the inherent, normative neurodiversity of our species, resulting in the categorization of such diverse inherited traits as pathological. This differs significantly both from the medicalization model (suggesting that there is a normative healthy ideal, increasing

distance from which implies an increasing degree of sickness), and the relativistic model (suggesting thgat the very appearance of bounded categories of neurodiversity is an artifact of post-Enlightenment modernity).

The social impacts of this phenomenon as it relates to conditions such as ADHD and autism may be mostly positive, representing progress beyond the ableism inherent in modern medicalized society. However, the situation may be more complicated with other conditions, such as the PTSD diagnosis. This begs the questions: what happens when the harmful symptoms of combat-related PTSD start to be thought of as normative responses and what does it mean when we start to imagine that this presentation is distributed among some people but not others? This line of thought is being actively developed, particularly with regard to the study of war trauma.

In 2010, Charles Hoge, a physician, retired Army Colonel, and noted trauma scholar, published *One a Warrior Always a Warrior: Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home Including Combat STress, PTSD, and mTBI* (Hoge 2010). In the introduction to this book, Hoge argues "Society hasn't yet grasped that 'transitioning' home from combat does not mean giving up being a warrior, but rather learning to dial up or down the warrior responses depending on the situation" (x). Citing his experience deploying to Iraq as a physician soldier, Hoge goes on to argue that the current healthcare system is limited in its ability to address the concerns of warriors returning from war. Nearly

everything called a "symptom" by mental health professionals, according to Hoge, is actually a necessary survival skill for warriors. Though he is a practicing physician, Hoge argues against the medicalization of combat trauma, which he frames as a kind of battlefield maturation of warrior skills, while lamenting that civilians have unrealistic expectations of returning soldiers but "have no clue what it means to be a warrior" (xii). "They are not the same person they were before, and this is part of what it means to be a warrior. They react differently after deployment. There is a strength of character that is sharp and direct, but one that may at times make others feel uncomfortable" (xiii).

The existence of significant distance between warrior and civilian experience is foundational to Hoge's argument. According to Hoge, the combat world of warriors has a fourth dimension, while the civilian world is only three dimensional (xiv). Unfortunately, tension occurs explicitly due to the fact that civilians who live in a three dimensional world are unable to comprehend the four dimensional world of warriors.[3] Hoge maintains that PTSD exists and is one of the afflictions that can burden veterans in the aftermath of war. However, he notes that the APA's universalization of the diagnosis for its inclusion in DSM-III in 1980 caused it to be "based largely on single

[3]This argument foreshadows Ken Macleish's 2018 argument that the mobilization of the moral injury quasi-diagnosis serves the purpose of carving out a more profound social/ethical space for battlefield experience (Macleish 2018).

episodes of trauma in civilian settings where the person is a victim of assault, rape, an accident, or a natural disaster (9). This distinction is important to Hoge, as he argues that much of warrior experience is transcendent of the criteria that define PTSD.[4] Speaking directly to the warriors who may be reading his book, Hoge cautions them that "If you view yourself (or your warrior loved one) as having a disorder according to what a professional (or society) says, rather than someone experiencing expected reactions from combat, if affects how you feel and think about yourself or your loved one" (9). Hoge goes on to call this a *negative* perception of oneself, which can negatively affect one's physiology as well as their psychology. Here, Hoge makes clear that while it is likely that a psychological diagnosis such as PTSD stands to make one feel broken, embracing warriorness can improve one's self-esteem and wellness.[5] In this same spirit, Hoge decries the overdiagnosis of mTBI (mild traumatic brain injury), which he argues to be another more contemporary tool for inappropriately medicalizing warrior experience.[6] [7]

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[4] ibid

[5] Hoge's broader work demonstrates that he is sincerely concerned with the stigma of PTSD and in this passage it is certainly not his intent to create additional stigma for PTSD sufferers. However, in this passage he attempts to rescue potential PTSD sufferers from the stigma of a mental health diagnosis by offering a venerable "warrior" status in the place of PTSD, which continues to be framed as pathological.

[6] This is exemplary of the bioarchetype phenomenon, re-framing stigmatized psychiatric diagnosis as a normative trait beneficial to the bearer's social group.

[7] TBI-related suffering is a concern that has been taken up by anthropologists on a number of occasions (Scandlyn and Hauzinger 2014; Zogas 2018; Wool 2020).

2.1.3 Moral Injury

At approximately the same time that Hoge published his work, a reconfigured form of the concept of "moral injury" began to gain the attention of clinicians and trauma theorists. The term is attributed to Jonathan Shay, a clinician and classics scholar who spent a period of time treating Vietnam War veterans with PTSD. The inability for the PTSD diagnosis to describe the suffering of his patients became a matter of great concern for Shay, who observed that the experiences described by his patients were well outside of the PTSD criteria described in the DSM. According to Shay, patient after patient described the experience of extreme distress, as result of egregious institutional malfeasance in Vietnam. Servicemembers were ordered to do terrible things by leaders who did not adhere to the social contract of war, as understood by the public at large. In his monograph *Achilles in Vietnam*, Shay coined the term "moral injury" to describe this experience of distress (Shay 1995).

To frame his theory, Shay referenced the Homeric epics. In one setting, Achilles and a group of Greek soldiers return from a campaign of pillaging villages for goods and find that the corrupt king Agamemnon is violating numerous codes of conduct (such as violating a religious temple). Agamemnon's conduct creates profound disorder

among the soldiers; an experience that Shay identifies as an early account of moral injury.[8]

For Shay, moral injury describes a form of suffering that occurs within the context of war, when someone in a position of authority violates socially agreed upon notions of what is "right." In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, this framing was efficacious for a cohort of veterans who felt attacked by the civilian populace due to their participation in the war.[9] While the veracity of this historical event (whether or not it happened and to what degree) is debated, the well documented presence of atrocity in Vietnam by American soldiers did become a major point of contention in popular culture, at the same time that PTSD was coming into being as a legitimate diagnosis. Shay's moral injury theory provided Vietnam War veterans with to process their complex trauma, while protecting them from the guilt associated with participating in a widely condemned war.[10]

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[8] It is worth acknowledging that the morally injured Greek soldiers in Shay's account were not morally injured due to pillaging the villages of civilians but rather due to the violation of socially agreed upon norms by authorities.

[9]See footnote 2 on Jerry Lembcke's controversial study on this trope. While it is impossible to prove that such encounters never happened, there is no trustworthy documentation of these events; if they did occur it was not widespread. Anecdotal accounts do not appear in the archive until this event started to be used as a plot device in fictional portrayals of the war and its aftermath, years after it ended (Lembcke 1998).

[10] While it may be possible to frame Shay's characterization of moral injury is inadequate in its condemnation of the powers of war, he suffered terribly for it. Shay was an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War. The Bush administration of the early 21st century resented Shay's attempt to blame the government/upper level officers for war related suffering and waged a character assassination of Shay's interlocutors. The popular movement against "stolen valor" (the impersonation of veterans by non-veterans or the claiming of decorations that one did not actually earn) and the subsequent "Stolen Valor Act of 2005"

For the 21st century, the moral injury construct was resurrected. Notably, a group of clinicians including Brett Litz, Shira Maguen, and William Nash mobilized the term to apply to veterans of the so-called "Global War on Terror" (Litz, Stein, Delaney, Lebowitz, et al 2009). They argue:

> Service members are confronted with numerous moral and ethical challenges in war. They may act in ways that transgress deeply held moral beliefs or they may experience conflict about the unethical behavior of others. Warriors may also bear witness to intense human suffering and cruelty that shakes their core beliefs about humanity (696).

This new configuration of moral injury is different from Shay's in several important ways. In Shay's theorization, moral injury occurs when transgression is committed by someone in a position of authority. Also, the norm being transgressed against is understood to be something that is socially agreed upon. The moral injury configuration mobilized in the 21st century, on the other hand, individualizes the experience of moral injury. Often, the experience of moral injury occurs when the unethical act is committed by the very person who will become afflicted. In some cases, simple exposure to the ethical violation may be enough to cause moral injury, regardless of who is responsible. Importantly, the thing being transgressed against is not a socially agreed upon norm. Rather, it is an individual value held by a person.

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that was signed into law by George W. Bush grew in part out of the attempt to discredit the accounts of the Vietnam War that were documented by Shay (Burkett and Whitley 1998; Doyle 1999; H.R. 3352 2005).

Since this 21st century remobilization occurred, the moral injury construct has drawn considerable attention from clinicians, theorists, and the VA itself (Bouma and Roundy 2017; Robinson 2017; Eastern Oklahoma VA Healthcare System 2018; Norman and Maguen 2020). Within this context, the VA's goal has been to develop standardized therapies for veterans, ordinarily utilizing a CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) approach (Resick, Monson, and Chard 2014). Some clinicians favor developing the moral injury construct into a diagnosable syndrome, listed in the DSM with standardized protocols (Jinkerson 2016). Others maintain that moral injury is not a diagnosable disorder but is rather "an internal experience that results from being directly involved or witnessing situations that violate deeply held beliefs or moral values (Held, Klassen, Zalta, and Pollack 2017). Others argue that moral injury requires a novel therapeutic strategy, as it is distinct from the disorders for which extant therapeutic regimens are designed (Steenkamp, Nash, Lebowitz, and Litz 2013; Litz, Lebowitz, Gray, and Nash 2016).

On the margins of the clinical arena, others have taken the object of moral injury, defining it differently yet. Rita Nakashima Brock, a theologian and feminst scholar, has taken the moral injury construct in a more universal kind of way, applying it to situations outside of a military context (Lettini and Brock 2013; Freedman 2013; Brock and Kansfield 2019; La Duke 2020).

When I was in the field in the spring of 2019, I flew to Los Angeles to attend a conference sponsored by Volunteers of America, dedicated to the subject of moral injury. Since 2017, Brock had been working as the director of the Shay Moral Injury Center at Volunteers of America (Volunteers of America 2020). The conference featured Brock, William Nash, as well as other prominent moral injury theorists. At the beginning of the conference, on the first day, all of the participants were told that we would be participating in a ceremony.

At the beginning of the ceremony, two senior staff were identified as "chiefs" and sent to the middle of the large ballroom hosting the conference. They held bowls of ashes, which they used to mark the foreheads of people who responded to a list of calls:

-If you have ever been hurt by child abuse, please step forward

-If you have ever been hurt by addiction, please step forward

-If you have ever been hurt by sexual violence, please step forward

-If you have ever been hurt by racism, please step forward

-If you have ever been hurt by war, please step forward

-If you have ever been hurt by a person in a position of authority over you, please step forward

-If you have ever hurt a loved one, please step forward.

These calls continued, dozens of them, until nearly everyone in the room was standing in a circle with our foreheads marked with ash. We stood there sharing in the experience of each other's traumas: the mutual sense of a thousand traumas spoken and unspoken. That moment of shared grief, and solidarity, was powerful. Many people cried; some sobbed.

Brock made a presentation later that day, outlining her own view of moral injury. She explained that moral injury can occur when people commit, witness, imagine, or fail to prevent harmful/evil acts and events. This includes surviving cruelty and harm. Unlike the other theories of moral injury, mobilized by Shay and by VA clinicians, Brock's theory introduces the concepts of "evil" and "cruelty." In this description, evil and cruelty exist, a prior, outside of the bounds of both socially and individually constructed notions of right and wrong. One can also become morally injured by being the *victim* of such acts. This framing for moral injury is thus distinct in that it views moral injury occurring as the result of things that are categorically wrong. For example, in Shay's account of moral injury, the injury occurs because a socially agreed upon norm has been violated. In the more clinical/VA associated account of moral injury, the injury occurs because an individually understood norm has been violated. In Brock's account of moral injury, the injury occurs because of an act that was fundamentally wrong.

The theory of "moral injury" in all of its manifestations, represents an effort to respond to the limitations of the PTSD diagnosis. In some ways, it is what PTSD was originally intended to be in its earliest iteration as Post-Vietnam Syndrome: a negative psychological response due to an encounter with wartime atrocity. Medicalization dictated that the notion of "morality" had to be stripped from Post-Vietnam Syndrome for it to be included in the DSM, though matters of ethics and morality are in fact a major part of war-related suffering. The moral injury construct emerged as an attempt to address the moral suffering associated with war that gets excluded by the medicalized PTSD diagnosis. However, anthropologists have noted that the moral injury construct can still work to erase (or at the very least, minimize) the full effect of wrongdoing in a wartime context (El Haj 2021, forthcoming). Ken Macleish, who describes moral injury as a "quasi-diagnosis" has written that "Moral injury valorizes war-fighting and military culture while casting war as a source of almost inevitable psychopathology" and "moral injury theory represents an effort to carve out a distinct domain of psychological expertise but also a negotiation of the tension between war violence's 'normal' practice and its excessive or morally hazardous manifestations – both of which link mental illness directly to the politics of war violence and post-war care" (Macleish 2018, 128). The argument waged by anthropologists is that the moral injury construct ultimately serves to move the analytical goalposts, centering the perpetrators

of wartime violence as its most significant victims, ultimately dodging meaningful critiques of the wars it occurs within. This framing (especially from the more clinical form of moral injury theory) presents war atrocity as inevitable and views the suffering of civilian victims as relevant only so far as it causes soldiers distress.

In all of its popularly recognized categories, the expressions of "combat trauma" are the negotiations of various modes and interests: medicalization, economic interest, military need, and the dominant culture of Euro-American society. People suffer after war but making sense of this suffering is difficult when:

1. The legitimacy of the suffering can only be formally established through biomedical processes
2. The interrogation of the trauma must not implicate aims of the military industrial complex
3. The negotiation of trauma and atrocity must not implicate the character of individual soldiers
4. Diagnostic (or quasi-diagnostic) categories must affirm traditional masculine paradigms

These negotiations all involve socially constructed realities that are specific to Euro-American society, though they ostensibly speak to a more universal kind of experience that transcends time and culture. How combat trauma (or something like it)

is understood outside of modern western culture deserves explorations and has been one of the primary objects of my doctoral research.

2.2 Iwáyazaŋ Azúyeya: The Sickness of Fighting

Each of these theories of trauma invoke theories of the mind and body or, in the particular case of moral injury, the violation of differently-defined social norms. What exactly trauma "is" has been contested. A set of debates between Ruth Leys and Cathy Caruth began in the 1990s on the nature of trauma. According to Caruth, the act of becoming "traumatized" occurs when an experience is so terrible that it transcends language. Essentially, the terrible experience does not make "sense," causing suffering in the realm of affect (Caruth 1996). In contrast, Ruth Leys argues that the traumatic event makes all too much sense, and the sense of being traumatized derives from recognizing how bad it really was (Leys 2000). Both of these theories place "trauma" in the realm of memory. For Caruth the trauma manifests from the memory's muddy ambiguity; for Leys trauma lies in its abject clarity. Jonathan Shay, who coined the term "moral injury" has strongly advocated changing the name of "posttraumatic stress disorder" to "posttraumatic stress injury" to emphasize the condition's status as a biological wound. In a letter to the American Psychiatric Association, co-authored by Dr. Frank Ochberg, Shay wrote: "To change PTSD to PTSI would mean we physicians believe that brain physiology has been injured by exposure to some external force, not

that we are just anxious or depressed by tragic and traumatic reality" (Ochberg and Shay 2012).

This negotiation of trauma as an object is a relatively recent phenomenon, though it has attained ontological reality in a remarkably short period of time. Fassin and Rechtman recognize this and frame it, convincingly, in Foucauldian terms as a "regime of truth" that has changed in in the discourse, dramatically reconfiguring (or even reversing) the very notion of "victimhood" (Fassin and Rechtman 2009, 4-5). However, even these critical readings of the construct frame "trauma" according to European epistemological/ontological assumptions about the mind and body and how these entities interact with external stimuli (which can include socially constructed norms). Even the moral injury discourse, which often frames trauma as the result of an individual's ethical decision-making, generally frames such psychological suffering as a "thing" that happens to a person. This limits the possibilities of healing to people and scenarios that can be understood in this way.

I have witnessed the tension this produces. While sitting through a VA Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) group session, it was obvious that sufferers could not always resolve their experience with the prescribed therapeutic model. CPT is a form of cognitive behavioral therapy which understands the symptoms of trauma as being expressions of "feelings." Feelings are understood as being, categorically, rooted

in "beliefs." Anytime a person has a feeling, that feeling is recognized as being dependent upon something that person believes about the world. As presented to the groups:[11]

Belief → Feeling → Manifest Trauma Symptoms

Figure 8: CPT Schema for Explaining PTSD Symptoms

The goal of CPT is to help the traumatized person associate their trauma symptoms with the feelings that produce them. From there, the therapist assists the patient in tracing their unwanted feelings back to their causative root beliefs, which are understood as categorically irrational. The therapist then talks the patient through their irrational beliefs, helping them correct mistakes when they find them. After correcting the irrational belief, it is expected that the unwanted feelings will necessarily disappear. For example, if a person with combat-related PTSD has an aversion to fireworks, it is understood that this aversion is related to the feeling of fear, which is dependent upon an irrational belief like "I believe that I am physically in danger when I witness or hear fireworks." By teaching the sufferer that it is very unlikely that a

[11] These graphics represent the CPT schemas as they were presented to the group sessions I participated in. Similar graphics can be found in multiple sources in both scientific and public literature (Pinciotti et al 2021; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Los Angeles 2020; McLeod 2015; Hudson Therapy Group 2022).

fireworks display will harm them, the feeling of fear will no longer materialize; nor will the trauma symptoms associated with that fear.

Corrected Belief → Different Feelings → No Trauma Symptoms

Figure 9: CPT Schema for Correcting PTSD Symptoms

This tension was made apparent during a groups session I attended. After a discussion of the underlying theory, group members began to push back against the idea that their trauma responses were irrational:

> *The therapist team asked the participants to volunteer their own "stuck points" so they could be written on the marker board, in list form. Stuck points were the irrational beliefs held, incurred during traumatic experience, which were understood to produce manifest trauma symptoms. A car accident survivor who experiences PTSD symptoms when driving on the road may be told that their stuck point is "I believe that I will die if I drive on the road." After gathering a list of stuck points, the therapist would then go through them and explain why they were irrational beliefs that should be abandoned. After writing a few volunteered stuck points on the board, one participant volunteered their extreme distrust of uniformed authority as a stuck point, noting that even seeing police officers in the civilian world could trigger an embodied trauma-*

response. Noting that "distrust of authority" was on the materials list of inappropriate trauma-responses, the therapist began working to deconstruct the stuck point:

Therapist: "So…. what you are telling me is that when you see uniformed authority, your stuck point is: "I believe that this person is going to abuse their authority."

Participant: "Yes."

Therapist: "Do you think this is a rational belief?"

Participant: "I mean…. I think it is rational to believe that there is a good chance that they will abuse their authority. I've seen it happen many times."

Therapist: "But do you believe that they absolutely will abuse their authority?"

Participant: "Maybe not…. But I think the odds are good enough that my response might not be entirely inappropriate."

Therapist: "Okay…. But you will continue encountering police officers in the world and your reaction to them is causing you distress and problems in your life. Maybe it would be helpful to realize that this belief that the police will abuse their authority is not helpful for you and is inappropriate?"

Another participant spoke:

Participant 2: "You know what? I've never had a cop do anything helpful for me. Never once. Not one time in my entire life. When I see cops, anywhere, I get the hell away."

Therapist: "Okay…. Our goal here is to try to find strategies to make our lives more livable…."

Another participant spoke out:

Participant 3: "Fuck the cops."

In this case, the therapeutic regime (which had been helpful for a number of people in other scenarios) was unable to resolve the anger, emotion, and hypervigilance of the participants with extant trauma theory; at least not in a way that provided a healing path forward.

At the American Lake ceremonial healing community, it is necessary to connect the work done there to clinical PTSD therapy through describing how the life improvements experienced by participants correlate with the relief of documented PTSD symptoms in the DSM. However, on site the notion of trauma is treated rather differently. At my very first sweat ceremony, one of my first conversations was with Steve, a regular participant, who told me that PTSD "isn't exactly what we're working on here." At that ceremony, as has been the case with all of the many I have completed there, it is common for elders to gather groups (particularly of new or first time

participants) and give them teachings that include both spiritual guidance and rules to follow to maintain respect. Marty was "pouring" that lodge (the term used for the elder who conducts the ceremony within the lodge).[12] Before the ceremony, Marty called the newcomers together for a teaching.

> This ceremony comes from the Lakota people. Some years ago, the Lakota generously gifted their ceremonies and language to Indians everywhere, to give us a common language and spiritual practice, especially to help those of us who lost our native language through colonization. The Lakota were experts in healing; they have been healing people for many, many generations. For this ceremony, what we are healing is called iwáyazaŋ azúyeya in the Lakota language. Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya means "the sickness one acquires from being in battle with other people, and the self." Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is a lot of what gets called PTSD today. But…. you have a mind, a body, and a soul. The mind and body….. they can do an alright job working on that over there (he gestured through the woods in the direction of the hospital) but the soul…. that is what we work on here.

This term, iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, has been referenced in perhaps every sweat lodge ceremony I have participated in at American Lake. In that first ceremony, I did not recognize the importance of the distinction between iwáyazaŋ azúyeya and PTSD but it became clearer to me through time. Much later in my fieldwork, having heard and used the term many times, I asked Mike Lee (Blackfeet) the ceremonial elder of the community there about iwáyazaŋ azúyeya.

> There is a lot they can do nowadays that wasn't even on the radar 30 years ago. Many years ago I was asked, often, " how I/we deal with PTSD in helping with veterans."

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[12] This term comes from the splashing of water on the hot rocks in the center of the lodge. This role requires extraordinary skill, as the pourer has to regulate the temperature of the ceremony. The temperature has to be raised and lowered at various times during the ceremony and the internal temperature of the lodge can exceed 200 degrees Fahrenheit. People sometimes die from heat injuries in sweat lodges, though invariably in lodges conducted improperly by unqualified pourers.

> Realizing PTSD was a diagnosis of symptoms, I felt "time" needed to be spent on an explanation of the difference between diagnosis of symptoms and sickness as a result of diagnosis. When I would go into lodge, I focused on what was the most common sickness we faced as people. To me that sickness is identified as "People being in battle with People" and "self." In the language of the Lakota people this would be iwáyazaŋ azúyeya (sickness as a result of people being in battle with people and self). This is the sickness of the world's people. As Native people,, and as people of the world, we have been caught up in following without question of why, instinctively, knowing something is wrong. We know the responsible thing to do would be to provide and protect our families. Yet we leave our families. The "question" is how far can we separate ourselves from our center place (our families, our friends our, community) before we are no longer recognized? We need to look at the root of sickness. PTSD is not the root. It is the result of being in battle. When we entered into the First World War was when we stopped asking "why?" We left our families to support our country, There were signs of sickness. This was the same for the Second World War. The sickness continued . The battle goes undiagnosed , leaving those in the military who have been prepared for battle ready to engage an enemy who lives next door or in the mirror. By attending Inipi ceremonies (Sweat lodge) or healing places such as the VA, (it) allows a place to return, share events, pain, experiences, whether spoken or not, without explanation , It is understood. Able to refocus, release the toxins, sharing time with those who have similar experience. Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya. War has drawn us into and away from our center place, and is a way, but it is not the way. Until that changes we need to cleanse our spirit, understanding we are Spirits having a human experience, and it is unnatural for the spirit to be in battle with other spirits, and we know it, and feel it.

I have talked to Mike many times about "PTSD" and, while I do not think that he is saying that PTSD does not exist, his reference to "sickness as a result of diagnosis" signals his attitude towards the mass diagnosis/conflation of suffering as PTSD in the contemporary world. On a number of occasions, I have heard a new participant in the ceremonies reference "their PTSD," before being cut off by Mike:

Participant: "..... my PTSD"

Mike: "Your PTSD? Where is it?"

Participant: ".... I…. um…. what do you mean?"

Mike: "Your PTSD. You just said 'my PTSD.' Where is it?

Participant: "Where is it?"

Mike: "Yeah. Your PTSD. Where is it? Can you hold it in your hand and show it to me?"

This joke, which *usually* makes the veteran laugh once they understand what he is saying, is both exemplary of Native humor in its form, in a way that I do not know how to put into words, and meaningful. Mike describes how people who go into the clinic and get diagnosed with PTSD are led to believe that they "have" PTSD, as if it is an object that they have to carry and nurture and feed. He does not believe that this is a healthy model, as it is one that takes a bundle of symptoms and gives it a name, presenting it to its owner as a disease that they now have to carry.[13] Conventional PTSD therapy, according to Mike, reinforces this belief and burdens sufferers with an object that did not exist prior to its codification in the DSM (segments of which Mike has memorized).

Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, as the object of the rituals at American Lake, is something else. Not only in the ceremonies themselves but also in my conversations

[13] This signals the influence of the Lakota word "yuhá." Yuhá, which translates most closely with the English word "carry" is the primary word used to indicate various forms of possession in the Lakota language. There is not a separate word for "own" or "have," thus to possess anything is to "carry" it. Variants of this are widespread in spoken English among many of the Native people I have spent time with, including those who speak English as their first language.

with members of the community away from the ceremonial site, the notion of "balance" is a constantly affirmed value. In contrast to "PTSD" which imagines that bodies/psyches have been wounded by an action which produces a describable medical disease, iwáyazaŋ azúyeya posits that the act of conflict per se creates imbalance in a person's soul. This conflict, which can be with the self just as much as with enemies on a battlefield, can derive from addiction, family strife, competitiveness with colleagues, toxic gender norms, and the experience of colonization (which I will describe in greater detail in a later chapter). This framing is fundamentally different from all of the other trauma theories, even the "moral injury" theory that was developed to address the inadequacies of the PTSD diagnosis.

A tendency in medicalization is to fragment; to create new diagnoses and sub-diagnoses which account for increasingly specialized things. This is a necessary consequence of the obsessive tendency in post-Enlightenment European society to name and classify things according to genera and regimented categories.[14] Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, which might have been classified as a "culture-bound syndrome" in a previous era, does the opposite of this. One of the APA's justifications in de-recognizing indigenous

[14] I am reminded of the revelation brought about by recent developments in genomic studies that many animal species that have long been sub-divided into numerous subspecies are actually the exact same species of animal, which had been inappropriately subcategorized due to unimportant phenotypic or region-based criteria. Of course, this is also reflected in the fallacious category of "race," which incorrectly subdivides the human species into non-existent biological types.

categories for distress is the argument that such categories often inappropriately lump different legitimate psychiatric disorders into single syndromes. The iwáyazaŋ azúyeya category *does* speak to the suffering associated with multiple DSM diagnoses (and others that are not recognized by the DSM) and treats them all the same way, as parts of the same condition. For that matter, my interlocutors do *not* consider iwáyazaŋ azúyeya to be "culture bound."

The APA's critique of the "culture bound syndromes" category assumes that there is one overarching ontology of psychological distress: biomedicine. This is the same overarching ontology of physical injury/illness, as per the Kraepelinian method. This domain of translating affliction and healing does not allow for alternative frameworks. According to DSM V, any condition understood to be a culture-bound syndrome is actually subsequent to extant biomedical diagnoses that are universal to humanity, and should be described in these terms (CITE). This model would view iwáyazaŋ azúyeya as a culture bound term that actually describes PTSD, a culturally universal biomedical condition. Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, however, should be regarded as a culturally universal condition that should be understood under non-biomedical frameworks.

"Balance" and "centeredness" are the goal in treating someone suffering from iwáyazaŋ azúyeya. Mike and other elders often teach that European society (especially

in the modern world) aspires to an unrealistic model of wellness, wherein people feel like something is wrong if they do not feel enthusiastically "good" all of the time.

> It shouldn't be your goal to feel good all of the time. You can't do that. That's why people go for that drug. . . . that high. . . . that dangerous experience. . . . they're trying to be up here (he holds his hand up above his head) and you can't do that all of the time. Your goal should be to have as many "okay" days as possible. You should have as many "okay" days as possible. . . . maybe some good days. . . . there will be some bad days but we try to have more okay days than bad.

In many ways, the "prescription" for iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is antithetical to many of the non-pharmaceutical trends in contemporary western society, which try to heal people through the usage of exhilarating experiences. Programs such as "Adventure Not War" take veterans to heal from combat trauma by participation in adventure sports such as mountain climbing (Lowe 2017). This approach cites an emergent field of research in the discipline of psychology which posits that both the experience of being in "nature" and the experience of "awe" can provide people with significant psychological healing, from numerous diagnoses (Agate 2010). In this context, "awe" experience is described as "when people encounter a vast and unexpected stimulus, something that makes them feel small and forces them to revise their mental models of what's possible in the world….. about three-quarters of the time, it's elicited by nature" (Abrahamson 2014). These "experiences that give you goosebumps" are almost always framed as requiring an escape from "civilization" and are tied to biomedical benefits associated with changes in hormones and neurochemistry (Reimers 2016; Bare 2016; Stone 2017). In

some cases, researchers are careful to emphasize the inherent differences between nature and culture, as well as arguing that the “best” such nature experiences occur in “real” nature, in untouched places outside of the influence of humanity (Williams 2017). Healing from iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, on the other hand, sometimes involves a decidedly more subdued approach to life per se. The romanticization of struggle (even struggle with the self to attain lofty goals) promotes imbalance, which is the fundamental catalyst of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya.

I encountered this dynamic myself, often, in my persistent concerns about my problematic status as a white anthropologist working within Indian space, as well as my guilt for participating in a colonial war. These concerns were frequently shut down by the elders, who sometimes expressed their displeasure with contemporary discourses about indigeneity in academia, which they felt to both place unfair anxieties in my head about how I should be interacting with them, as well as trying to shoehorn them into what their performances of indigeneity "should" be. "Let it go" was the usual response to me and these concerns. "You have a very scientific mind; trying to see all of the different sides of things" I was once told. "But sometimes you're hurting yourself. There's something good for you. A healing. Come and take it."

Mike in particular always emphasized his belief in a spacial dimension to iwáyazaŋ azúyeya. This is what he was referencing in the earlier quote, where he asked

"how far can we separate ourselves from our center place (our families, our friends our, community) before we are no longer recognized?" Traveling too far from "home," especially to fight in a war, is not healthy and threatens to drive wedges between people and their families/communities. This dimension of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is entirely absent from allopathic approaches to trauma, and it also explicitly contrary to the "adventure" approaches which endorse healing *through* the pursuit of struggle in far off places. This aspect of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya theory should be understood within the context it is rooted in. It derives directly from the experience of colonization, removals, and deployment of Native Americans to fight wars in lands thousands of miles from home. This is an overtly indigenous path to healing, as iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is seen as being compounded by the severance of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands and culture.

Perhaps most importantly, iwáyazaŋ azúyeya in contemporary society is seen as being, often, a product of toxic forms of masculinity projected by European society. The Red Road healing programs that emerged in the late 20th century observed that racialized tropes about indigenous manhood had wounded Native men and women. A significant part of the healing process involves recognizing the social constructedness of contemporary gender norms, so that Native men don't feel obligated to hold themselves to standards of wildness and violence. That this could be efficacious for non-Native men was more of a coincidental discovery by elders but it is one that they have

embraced. From a quote taken from my fieldnotes, after a conversation with Brad, a Metis elder and member of the elder council:

Brad told me that I need to adjust my research agenda somewhat. . . . what my project is really about, at the most fundamental level, is "the kind of violent, toxic masculinity that is cultivated in European culture, and the wreckage is sewn not only into colonized peoples, but into the bodies and souls of Europeans, particularly European men."

> The soldier and their trauma are something that we are allowed to talk about as a society but that we are forced to do so under inadequate terms. Getting at the real source of the problem is something that needs to be done desperately . . . . but there are interests that are determined to prevent those conversations from happening.

While expressing his belief in the efficacy of indigenous ritual for the non-native (but mostly white) men who need this healing, he also emphasized that it is necessary to understand this in the context of the unique trauma endured by indigenous people. "Generational trauma plays a role in all of this" he explained.

Why is our understanding inadequate? Brad explained to me that an important function of the sweat lodge is "you gain a worldview that allows you to reflect on your service." He explained that European modes of healing are often inadequate because they do not treat the whole person.

> What does the lodge do? Part of it has to do with the individual, regardless of their cultural background, and who they are as a human being. This isn't as a member of a tribe or a race or anything like that. The culture around the lodge, and much of Indian culture, emphasizes the relationships that exist between all things. This is why Indian

> prayers often begin with an acknowledgement to "all of my relations" "mitákuye oyás'iŋ."[15] You don't exist without these things around you: the air, the various beings, the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds. Once all of those connections are felt, as authentically part of your being, then a whole spectrum of your experience opens up for you, as the greater sense of belonging becomes more and more important. . . . the kind of connectedness with just being human.

Critiquing Western models (which he regularly refers to as "European"), Brad describes the shock of trauma as something that can disconnect humans from the bond with others that is necessary for healthy survival. However, the limitations of Western healing models do not allow for the recognition of this as a cause of suffering, but rather as a symptom of underlying biomedical distress.

> When a person becomes traumatized, the sense of being connected is lost. Once in that trauma spiral, you are alone in that experience. So, the isolation of injury is part of what the sweat lodge addresses from the very beginning. You are in a container, bigger than you, surrounded by other people, making prayers, connected to that greater belonging, which is 'all of my relations.

[15] The Lakota phrase *mitákuye oyás'iŋ* is common in Pan-Indian prayer and ritual and is conventionally translated in English as "all of my relations." Imagined in the English language, this phrase can act as a subject or object clause which, by itself, must be regarded grammatically as a sentence fragment if it is not attached to a modifying verb. However, it can operate as a stand-alone sentence in the Lakota language as all Lakota words are capable of implying action, depending on how they are grammatically framed. The phrase appears like "all of my relations" when observed in a Lakota-English dictionary, (*mitákuye* literally means "my relatives" and *oyás'iŋ* literally means "every single one"). However, when put together, I read them as having an actual meaning that is somewhat closer to (but not exactly) "we are all related" in which there is an action of us all being engaged in the process of being related to each other, with the speaker expressing their personal relationship to this action of relatedness. Due to the fact that this phrase has become commonplace in Pan-Indian culture, it has become contested and its "real" meaning is debated. For example, one argument is that *mitákuye oyás'iŋ* was originally intended as specific to Lakota identity and the inability for non-Lakota and even many contemporary Lakota speakers to recognize this is due to deep Lakota linguistic structures/cultural contexts that have been lost through time (White Bird 2018).

Carrying this analysis further, Brad recognizes the dynamics in play in the experience of trauma as correlating with the impact of violences endemic to Western society.

> Looking at the inadequacies of European culture and the Western healing message. They do not address these things overall. The person suffering from PTSD is up against this isolation and reminded of being alone. (As opposed to being just about combat soldiers) this is the state of the American citizen. Maybe it is an overstatement to say that…. to say that . . . . there is a sickness in the culture. Contrary to the message of European culture, there is a birthright that all humans have. It is: '<u>You belong no matter what</u>.' The sweat lodge allows people to reflect on this and all that is not working in their culture. The psychiatrists and the psychologists do not bring in the larger healing environment, which is that mental, spiritual, and biological truth, that 'you are not alone in this.

Brad emphasized how the healing act of the sweat lodge ceremony as practiced at American lake is an overtly decolonial practice. The colonial powers which are being resisted are:

1. The racist violence of whiteness

2. The influence of toxic European notions of manhood

> The first issue you need to be aware of is the trauma of being Indian. You need to understand that I am a refugee. My mother had to flee her hometown in Canada because of the harassment and attacks she was suffering from racist white people. This kind of trauma literally defines us. Without being clear about the trauma of Indian identity, it will destroy your life and the life of your family. This is serious and is why the sweat lodge is important to Indians.
>
> The second thing, which most people never talk about, is what happened to European men. Centuries of violently destroying people has destroyed European manhood. It means being aggressive, dominant, never being answerable to brutality, never apologizing for it. We are talking about a vast swing about what was, even in European traditions, a broader view of what a 'man' is. The American environment…. business culture with its 'take no prisoners' attitude…. the 'Second Amendment' debate and how people cling to it…. it is not just 'fear' but the mentality that being a man, or being strong, means that one HAS to perform violence, rather than just being

capable. This is the European, brutalized version of manhood, after centuries of brutalizing indigenous people.

Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is, in this sense, not just something an individual develops from being in battle (though it can happen that way) but can also be a statement of social condition. The word "battle" applies to multiple forms of strife and struggle, which is a reason that the suffering related to combat trauma is not seen as particularly unique in comparison to traumas experienced by other people. Just by being a member of Euro-American culture, almost by default, everyone has this sickness projected upon them that has been crafted through centuries of colonial violence. This has been experienced historically by Indigenous people all over the world, in cases where colonial society has projected violent notions of manhood onto Indigenous people as a group. It has also been projected, perhaps in its most severe form, onto European white men who are trained from birth to embody an archetype that has been shaped for them through centuries of curation.[16] Healing is possible but it requires a restoration of balance that involves both recognizing our mutually constitutive connectedness with each other (including all beings on earth) *and* a thorough recognition of and reckoning with the

[16] These phenomena have been explored by scholars working in indigenous studies. For example, the manner through which European white masculinity has been shaped through the conquest of indigenous peoples was explored by Scott Morgensen in "Cutting to the Roots of Colonial Masculinity." The impact of colonialism on the performance of masculinity by Maori athletes has been addressed by Brenden Hokowhitu and Phillip Borell (Hokowhitu 2004; Borell 2015; Morgensen 2015).

history of colonial violence that has been perpetrated by European society for hundreds of years.

Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is understood as a non-normative condition of being but something different from "sickness" as understood in biomedical ontology. The Lakota root phrase "wáyazaŋ" acts as a stative verb which connotes unwellness; the "i" prefix indicates that this unwellness is contingent upon something else (in this case, the act of fighting). However, the spatial metaphor underlying this unwellness is fundamentally different from the linear "up/down" metaphor that underlies allopathic medical ontology. This particular issue is addressed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 24). In this passage, Lakoff and Johnson explain that the western linear "up/down" metaphor which normativizes the "up" position is in stark contrast with other known cultural metaphors which regard the "center" as spatially normative. The center-place, which is defined by "balance," is viewed as the natural condition of humanity and all living things, rather than a lofty goal to be attained through struggle and the conquest of illness (which is rendered all the more severe in consideration of Joseph Dumit's argument that biomedicine increasingly frames illness as the natural condition of humanity) (Dumit 2012). This recalls Mike's frustration with the PTSD object that sufferers are given to carry; something that biomedicine can endeavor to defeat, while *still* failing to restore people

to a place of balance. Addressing iwáyazaŋ azúyeya means addressing a social mode. This social mode is at the root of both the violences of colonial society and the biomedical system that packages various social experiences into diagnoses of disease. At the most fundamental level, ceremonial therapy for participants is an exercise in reimagining one's experiences, traumas, and future according to decidedly non-European metaphysics.

2.3 Summary.

In this chapter, I described a history through which contemporary society, particularly in North America, developed a distinct concept of "combat trauma." The related processes of medicalization and biomedicalization negotiated a social reality which associated an increasing number of phenomena with medical conditions. Simultaneously, society increasingly required suffering (individual and social) be describable through medical metrics to be treated as legitimate. The event of the U.S. war in Vietnam/Southeast Asia further deepened the concept of combat trauma, aligning it with concomitant medicalized logics. This culminated in the production of the PTSD diagnosis. By the 21st century, a society fatiguing of biomedicalization began negotiating alternative systems of classification. A common schematic frames many psychiatric diagnoses not as medical illnesses but as normative, heterogeneously distributed and biologically inherited traits that are socially stigmatized due to their

incongruity with expectations of contemporary society. In the case of the PTSD diagnosis, this is expressed through the framing of diagnostic symptoms (anger, hypervigilance, antisocial behaviors, etc) as biologically selected traits that increase the safety and survival odds of the host's kin and social group.

In contrast, practitioners of a postcolonial healing religion rooted in the cosmology of the American Northern Plains identify flaws in systems that classify suffering in exclusively biological frames. Considering the impact of colonialism on Native Americans (especially Native American men), the Elders at a ritual healing site in the American Pacific Northwest identify the cluster of symptoms associated with PTSD as generated by a more general experience of conflict. They refer to this sickness as iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, "the sickness one acquires from fighting with others and the self." In Native American men, this was and is understood as being produced by the experience of colonialism and its projection of racialized notions of violence on them. Today, the condition of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is treated in multi-ethnic members of colonial North American society, including many White veterans who have participated as occupiers in colonial wars. This is recognized by ceremonial Elders as efficacious because the same conditions that cause iwáyazaŋ azúyeya in Native Americans harm all members of colonial society (notably the people tasked with the embodied practice of perpetrating its violences.

Ultimately, the healing practices at the American Lake site (and greater healing tradition in general) highlight a tendency in the otherwise exacting and efficacious practices of biomedicine to insufficiently recognize the influence of social phenomena in human suffering. In the case of conditions like PTSD (and other conditions like anxiety and depression) which manifest amidst violence, this tendency potentially exacerbates and perpetuates factors responsible for the suffering that medical practitioners aim to heal. In contemporary North America (and certainly much of the world), the patriarchal violence of colonial society continues to reverberate in the minds and bodies of all people. Recognizing and addressing this reality is a necessary measure in the healing of people who suffer from psychiatric distress, as well as society as a whole.

3. The Ceremony and its Plants

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the ceremonies and spiritual system observed by the American Lake thiyóšpaye. Using ethnography and archival analysis, the goal is to also show the work that this faith/way of life does in the people who participate. The ceremonies at American Lake trace their roots into the indigenous faiths of the Northern Great Plains, particularly from the Lakota Tribe. After a set of sociopolitical phenomena in the mid 20th century, the traditions of the Northern Great Plains spread across North America and were adopted by Indians across the continent, especially the diaspora who had been relocated to urban areas during the Indian Termination Policy era. The product is a postcolonial healing religion that is practiced by thousands of Native Americans today, often referred to as the "Red Road" in vernacular. The ceremonial community at American Lake follows this tradition and the rituals and traditions in action on the site are extensive. However, the ceremonial anchor of the community, including the bulk of ceremonial work that first-time attendees will encounter revolves around the ініpi sweat lodge ceremony, the čhaŋnúŋpa pipe ceremony, and work with five sacred plant medicines: sage, sweetgrass, cedar, bear root, and lavender. In addition, biweekly talking circle ceremonies alternate between "sweat" weeks.

Sweat lodges and sweat lodge ceremonies exist in various forms all over the world, notably in the Americas. However, the particular sweat lodge ceremony that is practiced in the American Lake thiyóšpaye has a genealogy that can be traced, through various routes, to the North American northern Plains. Describing this ceremony comes with some implicit complications, which I will do my best to address both thoroughly and sensitively. Some of these complications are:

1. The most common ceremony practiced at American Lake is the Inipi sweat lodge ceremony. This ceremony comes from the Lakota people, though it is practiced at American Lake on Salish land, managed somewhat by a government organization, by many people who are non-Lakota. There is a complex history through which things came to be this way (these are described in greater depth in another chapter). This is, not surprisingly, controversial to some people.

2. This is not a public ceremony. There is a confidentiality agreement that governs a lot of what is said and done on the ceremonial grounds and, especially, in the lodge. While the community is magnificently inclusive in their treatment of people, there is an exclusivity to the experience and indigenous people have, understandably, long made clear that they oppose people capitalizing on these ceremonies or representing them out of context. There are a lot of things said and done that I simply cannot, and would not want to, repeat.

3. The sacred nature of the space, and the requirements of navigating it in a good way, dictated that I could not use some common anthropological research methods while on-site. I never carried a camera, phone, recording device, or notebook onto the sacred grounds. This means that I was sometimes unable to write about things until hours or, in some cases, days after they occurred.

4. Though it was well established that I am an anthropologist conducting research, the community at American Lake embraced me primarily as a human being on the healing path. I remember academic peers/mentors talking about things like the accessibility of counseling and mental health resources "in the field" when I was leaving to conduct my field research. I had the thought: "my counseling and mental health support network in the field is actually my community of interlocutors." This is a manifestation of the fact that my "fieldwork" was something other than sterile, empirical data collection by an unbiased observer. A substantial part of my research is my sincere attempt to experience growth and healing in the aftermath of the violence of my own life. Though the community and elders were always dismissive of this concern (and sometimes overtly hostile towards it), I am aware that there is a justified tradition in anthropology of suspicion towards anthropologists who can be seen as inappropriately "using" their interlocutors. I admit that over the several years I have spent with this community, I have at times leaned very hard on them, asking them to help me live a

better life, be a better person, and process heavy emotions like grief, guilt, and self-hatred. The archetypal image of the anthropologist sitting at the edge of the ceremony, observing and writing field notes, does not really apply to my experience, which involved a much more visceral embodiment of participant observation. I am deeply grateful to my thiyóšpaye and everything they have given to me. Perhaps some might feel that they have given me too much, which is what I am trying to communicate here.

With these complications in mind, I have to be strategic in recreating the ceremony. Some parts of the Inipi ceremony have been published in other sources, with the blessing of the Lakota people. Raymond Bucko's *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge* is exemplary (Bucko 1998). Of course, the rituals at American Lake are, as is the case with all respective thiyóšpayes, distinct in some ways. My descriptions of the rituals will draw from my own experiences at American Lake, emphasizing the things that are not intended to be kept secret. Some things vary a bit from ceremony to ceremony but others are inflexible.

Genealogy

The genealogy of the ceremonies performed at American Lake traces ultimately to the American northern Plains and they are often described on site as "Lakota ceremonies." However, there are other indigenous influences as well and many of these roots have passed through the Pan-Indian tradition. A common manifestation of the

Pan-Indian tradition is a spiritual system and way of life that is often referred to in vernacular as the "Red Road" (sometimes the "Good Red Road"). This is due to the massive, national spread of Great Plains spirituality across reservations and Urban Indian populations during the 20th century. While practitioners earnestly endeavor to follow established Lakota parameters and consider sacred all things called sacred by the Lakota, this relationship is not universally seen as reciprocal from the Lakota side. For their part, Lakota people are divided over whether or not the Red Road counts as a legitimate expression of Great Plains spirituality. The debate over this has been public and profoundly emotional, with members of the Lakota people who passionately argue both sides of this. On the Red Road side (which is populated primarily with Urban Indians of multi-tribal ancestry), opinions are just as diverse, with some people feeling very hurt by their sense of being "rejected" by the Lakota, others who embrace the acceptance they receive from other Lakota, and others still who are personally committed to the practice of their faith and and do not care what other people think. By my observation, there is no question that the Red Road is just as "real" as any other faith/way of life practiced by anyone in the world and it is foundational in the lives of thousands of people. As was noted by Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. in the 1990s, the Red Road has indisputably brought a lot of good into the lives of a lot of people and has potential to do more. The real and legitimate anger that Lakota people feel is ultimately

against white New Age practitioners who have appropriated the system and made a mockery of it, through using it to gain status for themselves and trying to make money "selling" their religious services/items to paying clients (Deloria 1992, 37-38). This kind of behavior is very far from what I observed at American Lake, where there is no exchange of money and humility is embraced as a great virtue (a goal is to become ikčé wičháša, "just a common man").[17] With this in mind, I will generally refer to the faith/way of life at American Lake as the Red Road or Pan-Indian faith, for the purpose of acknowledging that some practices there are not Lakota in origin and there is a Lakota way of life that does not feature them. However, the influence of the cosmology of the Great Plains is enormous and understanding them requires some knowledge of their origins, which are disproportionately Lakota.

In this vein, it is also important to note that "Lakota faith" is itself a diverse set of things that vary through time and across different assemblages of people.

The Lakota language and its usage is a major part of this. Though I've never seen it described as such, within Pan-Indian/Red Road spirituality, the Lakota language functions as a liturgical language (I have heard it referred to, broadly, as "Indian

[17] During ceremonies and in other places, I often heard people use this term to refer broadly to values of simplicity and "ikčé" is translated as "common" and "wičháša" is translated as "man." However, it is noteworthy that the word "ikčé" can also be interpreted to mean something more like "unmarked" or "regular" or "standard." For this reason, Lakota people have historically used the phrase "ikčé wičháša" (regular people) to refer to Native American people as opposed to other ethnicities of people they encountered after colonization.

language" by a number of practitioners). The majority of regular attendees at American Lake, as well as adherents to the Red Road in general, are not fluent in Lakota. However, most know enough prayers and songs to participate actively in the ceremonies. When people attend for a long time and begin to attain greater responsibility in the community, they have to learn more of the language to take on more active roles. It is conventionally accepted that one cannot lead an Inipi ceremony or carry a Čhaŋnúŋpa (sacred pipe) without being able to competently pray/sing in the language. Lakota spiritual leader Arvol Looking Horse has declared formally that an Inipi or Čhaŋnúŋpa ceremony is only legitimate if the person leading it can do so in "Plains tongue" (Looking Horse 2003).[18] The language also serves an important role in structuring spiritual development in the faith as people follow the Red Road. Its unique grammatical structure (in contrast to English) serves as a metaphor for the ways that a person can live in a good way. Ideas and concepts that are presented in the Lakota language are taught in a way that allows the unique grammatical structure of the language to frame the ideas themselves as inherently different from European/colonial

[18]Arvol Looking Horse is the 19th keeper of the pipe given by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Though some people describe him as the "Chief of the Sioux," his role is as spiritual leader for the three Western Sioux bands (Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota) and bears closer resemblance to the role of the Dalai Lama in Tibet (with whom Looking Horse collaborates) than to the Western concept of a "Chief." As the keeper of the White Buffalo Calf pipe, Looking Horse's opinion on matters of Lakota spirituality is deeply influential; in 2003 he made a declaration sharing his position on the role of non-Lakota practice of Lakota faith. In spite of the high esteem that is held for Looking Horse by Lakota and non-Lakota people alike, his complex declaration remains controversial among people in and out of the Lakota nation.

ways of thinking. This helps people imagine future possibilities that were previously difficult to conceive of. As Lakota linguist and activist Albert White Hat said: "when you learn Lakota, you gain a new heart" (White Hat 1999).

This chapter will engage ethnographically with the ceremonies at American Lake, considering different aspects of the ritual through the plant medicines used there. The medicines, sage, sweetgrass, bear root, lavender, and cedar, are fundamental to the sweat lodge ceremonies at American Lake, and are understood to be spirits that engage with humans and other beings as active agents.

3.1 Sage (Pȟežíȟota)

In Lakota religion, the smell of sage smoke is offensive to evil spirits and drives them away (Walker 1991, 77). The burning of sage has become a cliché in "cleansing" rituals worldwide. However, it has been used for that purpose by Lakota (and other Indigenous tribes) since time immemorial. Sage is the first medicine an attendee encounters at American Lake and the smell of its smoke is noticeable before one walks onto the sacred grounds.

My day already felt long when I arrived for "Day Lodge." During a Day Lodge (as opposed to a Night Lodge), we enter the sweat lodge roughly at noon. However, everyone is encouraged to be on site by 9 a.m. This allows everyone to participate in the *full* ceremony, including being present for the lighting of the phéta wakȟáŋ (sacred

fire). On this day, I had been living in Washington full time for less than a month; my first residence of many during my fieldwork was in Seattle and required over an hour commute to American Lake. That morning, I got into a minor car accident (my first in many years) while driving to American Lake from Seattle. My sense of discouragement was so severe that I wanted to turn around and go back home. Though the circumstances felt dubious, I accepted responsibility for the accident, took my ticket from the police officer, and continued my journey south.

An hour later, I turned off of the road to the VA Medical Center, drove through the (temporarily) open gate, and made my way through the dirt road in the forest. I parked my van outside the fence that surrounds the sacred grounds and approached the entrance. I saw Marty working with Angel on the fire (which had already been lit), while Steve and Preston simultaneously saw me. They both came to the entrance to greet me. Both men hugged me, and Steve offered to smudge me with sage. I rotated as steve wafted sage smoke over my body with an eagle feather. I lifted both feet, allowing the smoke to cover the bottoms of my shoes before walking onto the sacred grounds.

Preston: "It's really good to see you. How was your drive in?"

Me: "It was frustrating. I got into a car accident; it wasn't a big deal but I hit a Tesla and their car was more damaged than mine. I didn't argue with the driver or the police and just accepted responsibility for the accident to get it over with."

Preston: "I'm sorry. You aren't the only one who had trouble coming in today."

Smiling, Preston opened his eyes wide and dramatically turned to face Steve.

Steve: "I got pulled over this morning for driving too fast in a school zone."

Me: "Uh oh."

Steve: "There wasn't any signage. I didn't even realize I was in a school zone."

Preston: (interjecting) "This is all just a sign that there are good things in store for us today. (emphatically) It's probably going to be a good lodge!

Me: "It is going to be a good lodge. That's a good perspective."

Preston: "You'll see!"

Me: "I'm still feeling a little 'off' from the police encounter this morning."

Steve: "Uh oh"

Me: "I mean…. I have USAA insurance.[19] *When the cop showed up and got my information, he totally lit up when he saw that I was a USAA member. The switch totally flipped and he was like 'hey man, did you serve?'*

Steve: "He was probably a veteran."

Me: "He was. The rest of our encounter was that cop trying to be cool and make smalltalk with me, asking me about my service and deployments. He literally apologized to me for having to

[19] USAA banking and insurance is exclusive to service members and their families. The option to be a lifetime USAA customer is often considered a benefit of military service. Being a member of USAA (or an analogue like Navy Federal) signals connection to military service to others who know this.

write me a ticket. He didn't interact with the other guy, the Asian man I hit, the way he interacted with me."

Preston: "Yes…. I see...."

Me: "It made me feel uncomfortable. I don't like it. I mean, the other guy was definitely acting angry, performatively so, but I still didn't like it."

Steve: "Well, you owned up to the accident right off the bat. The other guy was being a jerk and, whether or not it was actually your fault, you took responsibility for the accident right there. The cop could tell you were a good guy, I'm sure, and didn't want to give you a hard time."

Me: "eh……."

Preston: "Or, perhaps he needed to rehearse his oppressor material a bit mor.[20] *(redirecting the conversation) Let's go see if Marty needs some more help with the fire."*

The American Lake thiyóšpaye holds four ceremonies per month. On alternating weeks, they hold Sweat Lodge ceremonies like the one I was attending here, and Talking Circle ceremonies. The first sweat of the month is a "day" sweat and the second is a

[20] This term comes from United to End Racism, a group that Preston is affiliated with. Put simply, it references learned narratives of oppression that people in an oppressive society access to maintain power. In an asymmetrical-power situation, such as occurs in the presence of a police officer, the stereotype of the "angry Asian man" counts as oppressor material, waged by the police to reinforce their power in a society structured by systemic racism.

"night" sweat. The two ceremonies tend to be similar in structure; the night sweat often ends after dark, except on the longest days of the year.[21]

Underneath the idiosyncrasies of the day, this was a fairly typical "arrival" for a sweat lodge ceremony. Including and since my first lodge, I've been greeted every single time by somebody who recognized me. Like this day, the greeting is almost always effusive and warm, with a hug and earnest concern about whatever concerns are pressing at the moment. It is non-negotiable that every participant must undergo smudging with sage smoke before they can walk onto the sacred grounds. Sage is one of the five herbal medicines used in the ceremony, alongside sweetgrass, cedar, bear root, and lavender, and it is the first one a participant encounters. One of the first teachings a newcomer receives at the American Lake ceremonies is the role played by the different medicines.

Sage is used as a purifying medicine. For a new attendee, the smudging ceremony is the first ritual encounter. Its distinct and powerful scent will linger throughout the ceremony and after the participant leaves to go home. Smudging, the act of "cleaning" a person or place with a coating of sage smoke, acts not only as the

[21] When I first began attending ceremonies at American Lake, there were two seperate day lodges per week, segregated by gender (one for men and another for women). The night lodge was co-ed. After a major recofiguration of ceremonial gender relations, the gender-segregated day lodges were eliminated and replaced by a single co-ed day lodge. There are no longer gender-segregated ceremonies at American Lake.

gateway to the ceremony, but also acts as the first lesson. Participants learn that they are stepping into a place that is *sacred* and that being there requires continuous, concerted attention to this fact. If a person wanders too far from the grounds, or if they engage in any inappropriate behavior during the ceremony, they will be escorted back to the gate to be smudged again. Remaining attentive to the sacred, maintaining deference to the authority of the indigenous elders, and respecting established tradition is fundamental to "successful" ceremonial practice at the site. The purification of sage acts as both symbol and actant in the maintenance of behavior in accordance with that which is sacred. The first step to a successful ceremony is to table some of the things that are troubling us at the door, including the stress of car accidents and concerns about the subtle racism of police officers. I felt out of sorts driving in that morning, even through the brief back-and-forth with Steve. We left it at the gate though and I felt better when we walked onto the grounds.[22]

The elders are very patient, especially with newcomers, and are willing to work with people who demonstrate a sincere attitude of respect towards the sacredness of the grounds and the ceremonial authority of those who are regarded as elders there. People are allowed to make mistakes and even longtime members of the

[22] The act of smudging with sage, while it is still important in this and other indigenous ceremonies, is one of the most appropriated ritual acts by non-indigenous people attempting Indian practices.

community can expect generosity, patience, and even humor when honest mistakes occur (and when those who make mistakes demonstrate humility in their having done so). This cultural aspect of the community stood out to me and I have since seen it reflected in many of my encounters with American Indians. Throughout the culture of Europeanized America, I have always observed norms that require people to balance the need to do things "right" in a place with the fact that it can be considered tacky to ask for directions, rude to correct someone making a mistake, yet still subtly consequential for people who do things wrong. This mode can make it difficult for people to correct their own behaviors, even if they want to. This is intensified by the fact that people are stigmatized for admitting that they don't know everything. In the Native spaces I have moved within, it is not unusual for an elder or an experienced member of the community to sharply correct people who do things incorrectly. Likewise, it is ordinary for people to ask for directions when they are unsure about something. This can be a bit jarring to many people but one eventually recognizes that the sharp corrections are not mean-spirited and asking for help is not stigmatized. These act upon the good-faith assumption that people are approaching things with an attitude of respect. People are allowed to make mistakes provided that they are willing to take corrections and learn. However, there are limits and some things are not tolerated.

I was making prayer ties with another attendee when someone new approached the sacred grounds. A thin, bearded, red-haired man stood by the gate, holding a beaded leather bag. Marty went to the gate to welcome the man and he smudged him with sage. After smudging him, Marty talked the man through the waiver process and then brought the man over to the bench where I was making prayer ties and sat with us.

Marty: "Chris here is making prayer ties; we have all of the materials here. Tobacco. Different colored cloth. We can get started here, working on your prayers.

The man sat down and Marty demonstrated the prayer tie making process. As we worked, Marty asked him if he had ever participated in a sweat lodge before.

Man: "I spent some time with a community in the Southwest; we did sweats there."

Marty: "Oh! What tradition was that? Was it a Plains tradition or somebody else?"

Man: "It was (names the people) tradition. I did a vision quest and had encounters with (named spirit beings/deities in that tradition).

Marty: "Okay…. Just to let you know, I do have some ancestors who come from those people and you are pronouncing the names of those spirits incorrectly. The proper pronunciation of their names is (pronounces their names).

Man: "Okay."

Marty: "We do a Plains ceremony here and we will not be talking to those beings today, in this place. We don't mix medicines.[23] *However, you should remember, it is respectful to try to pronounce things to the best of your ability. That is a way of showing respect to the people who were good enough to share their medicine with you."*

We were soon joined by Blue, an indigenous regular participant who had completed the Wiwáŋyaŋg Wačhípi (Sun Dance) that year. As he and another indigenous man sat with us to make their prayer ties, they started a conversation about the loss of native languages among their people. He spoke a bit more loudly, intentionally projecting is voice in our direction, making sure he was heard when he emphasized the term "white man" when describing the harms his people have suffered throughout the colonial/postcolonial era.

We went into the lodge and the ceremony was long and especially hot. After the third round, I requested to exit the lodge and cool down for a bit and was joined by two others. We sat on the ground outside, drinking water, and the ceremony continued. Sometime later, we could hear wild screaming coming from inside the lodge. The fire tender opened the door and the thin red-haired man was helped out of

[23] The term "mixing medicines" refers to introducing elements from other traditions into the ceremonies. There is no stigma against people practicing other faiths or possessing sacred objects from other traditions in their personal lives. However, the ceremonies at American Lake are, generally speaking, conducted according to an established process that has been deemed canonical for the purposes there. Situations where people try to mix other elements (often Wicca, New Age, or Yoga-based) into the ceremonies are dealt with very quickly, as doing so is forbidden.

the lodge. He was completely naked (which is not standard for American Lake sweats, where participants are expected to wear a pair of shorts into the lodge) and was screaming, inconsolably. The fire tender poured water over the back of his neck as he wept. I could not understand all of his words, but I heard him yelling something about being unfairly judged because of his light skin tone. Shortly afterward, the ceremony ended and everyone exited the lodge. I overheard Marty giving instructions to the Fire tender and another elder:

Marty: "Take him to the gate and smudge him with sage. Smudge him up and down and all over. Make sure he's purified before he comes back onto the grounds. He needs it.

They started to walk away, to get the red haired man and take him to the gate for another smudging. Marty called to them.

Marty: "Oh, one more thing. When you're done with him, I want you to get Blue and take him to the gate and smudge him down too."

While I do not know what happened in the lodge while I was outside of it, and I never asked, it was clear that Marty felt that some behavior that was not appropriate for our sacred space had occurred. In this situation, another smudging with sage acts to purify the body and mind, preparing them to come back onto the sacred grounds. After the two men were smudged, we all sat down and ate a meal together. Everyone was

friendly with each other and we all progressed through the rest of the day in good spirits.

3.2. Sweetgrass (Wačháŋğa)

To introduce this discussion of sweetgrass, I'm going to fast-forward to the end of my extended fieldwork. At the conclusion of what was my final talking circle ceremony during that period of fieldwork, the community recognized me and expressed their appreciation for me as a member of their community during that time. They wished me well in my career and the process of dissertation writing that was about to begin for me, and they gave me some gifts. Among these was a cord of braided sweetgrass, bound with red yarn. An elder told me that I could keep it on my desk and that people would see it and would know what it is, and it would tell them something about me. I still possess that braid of sweetgrass and keep it in a sacred way, but I never displayed it for the public. I never felt comfortable doing so.

In Lakota religion, sweetgrass smoke is seen as pleasing to Wakȟaŋ Tȟáŋka and other spirits. Burning it at the beginning of a ceremony calls their attention and inclines them to listen with favor (Walker 1991, 76).

Before an Inipi ceremony begins, an elder who is designated to "pour" the lodge enters first.

When we line up to enter the lodge, we are asked to enter in reverse order of age (the eldest participants enter first, with the youngest participants entering last). Each participant gives thanks to the four directions, enters, and is placed in the lodge in a location determined by the pourer. When hot stones are passed into the lodge, the Elder who is pouring describes the different medicines and their purposes, and creates smoke by applying these medicines to the hot rocks. The very first plant medicine to fill the lodge with its scent is always sweetgrass. The elder draws a braid, just like the one I was given, across the hot stones, charring the tips and filling the lodge with the plant's distinct scent.

Like sage, the scent of sweetgrass smoke is not unfamiliar to people outside of Indigenous traditions. Braids of sweetgrass can be purchased not only from purveyors of New Age products, but also from popular internet shops like Etsy and Amazon. Its scent is pleasant and accessible and, even if I had never been taught anything about the ceremonial use of sweetgrass, I can see how its sweet, herbaceous essence would be pleasing to spirits and might incline them to listen to me favorably. Sweetgrass is a common and popular plant medicine, used by many millions of people seeking commune with the world of spirits.

Sweetgrass has attained cultural status not only for its medicinal properties but also for the symbolism intrinsic to its braids. The monograph *Braiding Sweetgrass:*

Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants by Potawatomi scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer has become a massive bestseller, taught in anthropology and Indigenous studies classes, and topping reading lists for people seeking greater engagement with traditional Indigenous knowledge, ethnobotany, and science by non-men (Kimmerer 2015). *Braiding Sweetgrass* is known for its readability and beautiful prose. Speaking of sweetgrass the plant/spirit/being, Kimmerer says:

> Our stories say that of all of the plants, wiingaashk, or sweetgrass, was the very first to grow on the earth, its fragrance a sweet memory of Skywoman's hand. Accordingly, it is honored as one of the four sacred plants of my people. Breathe in its scent and you start to remember things you didn't know you'd forgotten. Our elders say that ceremonies are the way we "remember to remember," and so sweetgrass is a powerful ceremonial plant cherished by many Indigenous nations. It is also used to make beautiful baskets. Both medicine and a relative, its value is both material and spiritual" (Kimmerer 2015, 5).

The beautiful writing, and the effective metaphor of *braiding*, has had an impact on the scientific community. The concept of "braiding knowledge," understood to mean the incorporation of Indigenous ways of knowing into scientific work, is the animating principle, and has been taken up by numerous scholars since the publication of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Hopkins et al 2019; Bowles 2021).

Métis scholar Zoe Todd addresses the relationship that science, and white society, have developed with this concept. Admitting that she frequently assigns the text to her students, she identifies a flaw in Western society's attempt to relate to it.

> Both books are beautifully written. Students uniformly enjoy them as assigned reading. They do a great job communicating to non-Indigenous folks the contours of basic Indigenous relationships to more-than-human beings. They're wildly popular with white readers.

Acknowledging the text as a great entry-point for non-Indigenous readers to Indigenous scholarship, Todd laments that it does not communicate the deep lineages of the concepts it mobilizes.

> As the popularity of 'Braiding Sweetgrass' has soared, I've seen more and more white folks wax on about 'braiding knowledge'. But they often don't know any of the lineages of these concepts beyond what is presented in this one book. They confidently run with this. Kimmerer does a commendable job of weaving in her own experiences, her family stories+nods to some very important knowledge keepers who deserve to be celebrated for their work. But Braiding Sweetgrass does not tend to the citational politics Sara Ahmed & others teach us about.

Considering the implications of this:

Without the citational politics that tend to these deep lineages of work, non-Indigenous readers are wont to imagine they have found the 'first' foray into Indigenous critiques of science. And to think that pan-Indigenous discourses can be forced onto all Indigenous contexts. White readers love Indigenous work that's not threatening. Why confront what Vine DeLoria had to say about white scholars in '69 when you can read something from 2013 that talks about reciprocity (but ironically without fully reciprocal citations of other native scholarship). I doubt this was intentional. But how white scholars — particularly scientists — read Indigenous scholarship should frequently be assumed to be extractive and, often, incurious. Indigenous folks have been publishing, advocating, vocalizing critiques of academe for centuries. White scholars love to import place-based knowledge from other Indigenous nations & drop this onto Indigenous societies in a weirdly imperialist way. That's why they love 'Indigenization' but often balk at addressing specific Indigenous societies whose homeland they occupy (Todd 2022).

Todd goes on to speak critically about "indigenization," which refers to the process of incorporating Indigenous ways into various social structures. Citing Sámi scholar Troy Storfjell, Todd notes that Indigeneity is not an identity (like Sámi or Lakota)

but is a relationship to colonial power (Storfjell 2021). Though she does not believe that Kimmerer was trying to do so, the way that *Braiding Sweetgrass* has been taken up by the scientific community flattens Indigenous knowledge into something uniform, aesthetic, and non-threatening. To engage with Indigeneity as a metric means reckoning with power and colonialism, and recognizing the diversity of cosmologies that animate Indigenous peoples worldwide.

In this section, my engagement with sweetgrass may resemble something more like an academic lit review than ethnographic engagement with my fieldsite. However, I made this choice deliberately. I recognize that the image of Indigeneity that troubles Todd looks a lot like many of the Indigenous practices that I witness at my fieldsite. There are reasons for this; not the least of which is the extraordinary influence that the cosmologies of the American Northern Plains have had on Indigenous communities worldwide. However, Todd has a valid concern, that there is a "flattened" imaginary of Indigenous cosmologies that can both erase the diversity of global Indigenous society, and give science an excuse to pick the least threatening Indigenous concepts possible, while congratulating itself for "braiding knowledge." In the ceremonies at American Lake, sweetgrass pleases the spirits and inclines them to listen to our prayers. Here, sweetgrass helps me consider the place of my own scholarship (which engages simultaneously with science studies and Indigenous studies) in reckoning with colonial

violence. At this time, writing this passage, I burn some sweetgrass given to me by my friends and I offer a prayer. I'm thankful for the resources that have helped me and the people who have given me their time. It is my prayer that my life and work will give back to the peoples whose lands and labor were taken without their consent and transmogrified into resources and privileges that fed and sheltered me through my time on earth. I was often told that things we gave to uŋčí makȟá can be recycled and given back to us as something good. These peoples didn't "give" their land and labor. They were taken. I pray that I can be an instrument that helps channel the goodness in wamákȟognakA back to these people, my relatives.

3.3 Bear Root (Matȟó Tapȟežúta)

Bear root (commonly known as *osha* outside of Indigenous communities, which is similarly named after the Spanish word for bear: "oso") grows in the American Southwest, particularly at high elevations. Osha derives its various names from the observed practice of bears eating and interacting with it in various ways, such as rolling in it or rubbing it on their bodies, for what appear to be medicinal purposes (Myhal 2017). Many peoples, including Indigenous as well as settler-derived people, include bear root in medicinal teas and salves for the treatment of various ailments (Kindscher et al. 2013). Associated with the healing of physical illness and injury, bear root is also considered a sacred plant, such that many Indigenous gatherers are unwilling to reveal

the locations from which they harvest it (Myhal 2017). During ceremonies, I have observed more excitement when bear root is used than with perhaps any other plant medicine. It is distinct and special, and helps to establish the marked sacredness of the ceremonies it is used within.

Out of respect for this medicine, I will not describe all of its ceremonial uses I have observed. While every plant medicine is a necessary actant in these ceremonies, I focus on bear root here for its distinct connection with the Wakȟáŋ; of visions, spirits, and divine encounters.

3.3.1 Encounter

We had a larger than average group for our talking circle ceremony at the O.K. Robin Chapel. It often seemed that a common theme (finances, physical illness, marriage/relationships, etc) would spontaneously and serendipitously materialize at each circle, tying together the assemblage of individuals who each brought their own personal struggles to the ceremony. This week the common theme was death. By "death" I mean the pain of surviving death. One attendee was mourning the death of a family member. Another recalled the death of a fellow soldier in combat. The elders themselves were actively mourning the recent death of an elder in their community (I didn't know him). People wept as they expressed the pain of their respective

losses. Mike, as was sometimes his manner, took control of the conversation and transformed it into a teaching, with him speaking and all of us listening.

Mike emphasized that core principle in the community, that the spirit is eternal and never dies. This is something that is repeated in nearly every (if not every) sweat lodge ceremony I have participated in. Many people bring grief/guilt associated with one's own survival; this is common in veteran communities within which people often feel guilty over the deaths of people they killed in combat, as well as the deaths of their own peers. Heavy emphasis is placed on the immutability of the spirit, not only of humans but also of other beings. Early in my time in this community, I admit that this was a principle I struggled with. The idea that my own guilt could be tempered by the knowledge that spirits live forever was not easy for me to accept; at times it felt overly optimistic or even dismissive. Nevertheless, this principle continued to act as a bedrock precept in the community's ceremonial repertoire.

Mike explained to us that the grief that we initially experience after a person's death, our sense of *missing* that person, is actually the sense of missing their body. Our connections with people are permanent; our relationship with their spirit does not cease when their body expires. Also, the way that we understand our relationship with a person is often shaped by their body, which can act at times as an obfuscation of their true spirit. For this reason, Mike warned, we should be aware that the extreme feelings

that we experience during the first year or so after a person's body dies are merely a consequence of our attachment to their corporeal, and non-permanent organic vehicle. After some time passes, Mike taught, the obfuscations of the body begin to fade away and we develop a greater sense of what our actual relationship to that person, with their spirit, is. It is possible that our relationship with the spirits of those who have passed can grow through time, as they continue to exist and fleshy barriers fade away.

Unexpectedly, while Mike was speaking, I began to think of my grandmother. My maternal grandmother was a major figure in my family; her tireless givingness towards us while I was growing up in a poor, single-parent household with an absent father was immeasurable. However, I often quarreled with her as a youth. She was old-fashioned and didn't understand me and my "kwar" manner.[24] I didn't resent her but I remember that at her funeral, after she passed away from Parkinson's disease, the hurtful things that she had said to me echoed through my mind during her (deserved) hagiographic eulogies. As the years have passed, however, I have found that those wounds have increasingly given way to memories of her inexhaustible dedication to all of us, as well as the simple magnitude of her presence in a place. I thought of my grandmother as a powerful spirit; whose power has become increasingly

[24] "Kwar" is a Scots-Irish term. It is similar to "queer" but does not necessarily connote sexuality and is not used interchangeably with that word. It references people who are strange, particularly due to not conforming to social conventions.

clear to me as the memory of my relationship with her embodied form fades into the more distant past. She visited me that night.

That night, I dreamt vividly of my grandmother. We were in her old home and she appeared to me as the robust figure I remembered from my youth, rather than in the diminished form of her final couple of years. As we conversed, she demonstrated the sharp wit she was known for, which also faded as she succumbed to Parkinson's. She was jovial and friendly but seemed somewhat distracted throughout our visit, as if she was struggling to remain present and give me her full attention. Noticing that I noticed, she broke the dream's fourth wall, and spoke to me directly.

> Okay…. It's kind of strange to be back in this place, with all of these things. I recognize it all and it is interesting to me.

My sense of time in the dream was a bit confused, but I remembered her being sick and did think that her healthy appearance was unusual. I reasoned that this visit was taking place during the final part of her life, when my aunt had moved her from her mountain home to the suburbs of Columbia, South Carolina.

> I really am enjoying my visit with you she assured me. "I really enjoy being able to spend this time with you, here, in this place and surrounded by all of these things…. It is just a bit strange. I really like where I live now and I look forward to going back. Everyone (friends and family) is there.

This confused me, because I understood that she did not like living in the city and missed her mountain home. Why did she want to go back? I knew that two of her daughters and their families lived there but why did she say *everyone*? I expressed my

confusion and she laughed at me, playfully. She told me again that she enjoyed our visit and that she was going to go back now, and she said goodbye.

I woke up immediately after her departure. As I woke, her words hit me differently and I immediately felt an icy chill shoot through my body. I thought about the things Mike had taught about death and the spirit, including things that had previously felt tangential to me. He had spoken before about the spirit world to which we return after we die…. That we can't catch glimpses of it now because it would make our current lives hard to live (the spirit world is better, and we will be in the presence of our departed loved ones). I suddenly felt, very strongly, that I had just been visited by my grandmother's spirit, which had been summoned by my having thought about her so much the previous day.

At the following talking circle (two weeks later), I shared my experience with several people, including Mike and Marty. As I told my story, they shared knowing looks with each other, before Marty said "it sounds like you had a vision, Chris." He then pulled me aside and invited me to the Sundance (see chapter on Sundance).

(*Everyone always liked Bear Root. Its distinct scent* . . . .)

3.4 Cedar (ȟaŋté)

Of all of the medicines used in ceremony, cedar is most closely associated with the healing of physical disease. (also purification; in the greater tradition protection from bad spirits). It is also an irritant; when cedar is burned in the sweat lodge, the smoke from the oils in cedar is harsh and creates a burning sensation in the eyes. When I first started participating in sweat lodges, I noticed that my eyes would burn for two or three days afterward. Later, a longtime participant told me that this was a lingering effect of the cedar burned in the ceremonies. "It helps your eyes cry" he told me.

Something that deserves a bit more acknowledgment, perhaps, is the fact that sweat lodge ceremonies as well as many of the other sacred rites, hurt. I want to exercise caution in describing this, as it could be all too easy to turn it into a fetish (which is all too common, unfortunately). It is true though. The Wiwáŋyaŋg Wačhípi hurts; the haŋbléčheya hurts. There were moments during my first Ініpi ceremony that I felt that I was being cooked alive; when it took every bit of strength in my body to stay seated, huddling in absolute darkness, focusing on the songs and prayers of the ritual. Why do we need caustic cedar smoke to make our eyes cry? I am notorious among my friends, family, colleagues, mentors, and counselors for putting excessive effort into measuring my words; overthinking my feelings, impulses, and even my intuitions. That day in lodge though, when I chose to endure the suffering and trust the

hearts and minds of the elders, when my conscious mind was preoccupied with the heat and the pungent air burning my lungs and the strange sensation of the faucet drip of sweat falling from my head onto my crossed legs, my fleshly inhibitions were paralized when I was called upon to express. It was a surrender; albeit one elicited by pain, but a surrender nevertheless that opened my heart to deal with the old things and consider some new things. Literature Professor and scholar of Lakota song and spirituality Harry Page referred to Lakota ritual as "trail by torture" (Page 1970, 130). Sometimes healing hurts.

3.4.1 Unemployable and Holding onto Anger

I parked my car across from the OK Robin chapel on the American Lake VA campus. I was often one of the first to arrive; I was house-hopping constantly when I was in the field and my commuting time to the campus ranged from a handful of minutes to over an hour with ferries in between. This meant that I sometimes arrived very early for ceremonies, as I always left with as much extra time in hand as I could manage. Marty's jeep was there already and I parked next to him.

The OK Robin chapel is a small non-denominational church built in the same Spanish Colonial Revival style as the rest of the American Lake medical campus. While sweat lodge ceremonies are conducted on the forested peninsula just north of the campus proper, the bi-weekly talking circle ceremonies are held in the OK Robin

chapel. I got out of my car and walked to the chapel door; to my left a conch shell sat next to a bag of sage leaves and a book of matches, resting on a small bench. When stepping onto the ceremonial lodge grounds, I would typically be greeted by an elder who would smudge me with sage smoke. The smudging is decidedly less formal at OK Chapel but still required. I sprinkled a few sage leaves into the conch shell, lit them, and wafted the purifying smoke all over my body, from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. My smudging complete, I opened the door and walked inside.

The layout inside the chapel resembles the majority of traditional Christian church chapels I have been inside. There is a small foyer with a water fountain and restrooms just inside the entrance, followed by another set of doors that lead to the chapel's sanctuary. The walls of the foyer are covered with flyers featuring a mixture of Christian messaging and announcements for various focus groups for veterans. To my left, Marty was coming out of a storage closet pushing a cart with a coffee maker, coffee, filters and other coffee-making accoutrements. He greeted me with a hug and passed the cart to me. I pushed the cart into the sanctuary and set up the coffee maker on the folding table to the door's left. I unpacked a stack of styrofoam cups before filling the coffee maker with water, loaded it with a coffee filter, and filled it with ground coffee from a can. As I was laying out packets of sugar and cream, Marty walked back into the room, carrying a bag of food, which he began to arrange on a table on the other side of

the sanctuary's entryway. Finishing our tasks at approximately the same time, we walked to the empty corner on the other side of the coffee table and began to arrange chairs in a circle.

Marty: "We are going to do things a little bit differently today."

Me: "What's going to be different?"

Marty: "Well, over time, we've kind of developed our own way of doing these talking circle ceremonies. But today, we are going to do a traditional talking circle."

Marty explained to me that in a traditional talking circle, in the indigenous tradition from which our ritual was taken, participants would tell stories as the staff was passed around. In the format that I had become familiar with at American Lake, the talking circle functioned more as a kind of group talking session. The ceremony's leader would initiate the ceremony with a prayer before passing a ceremonial staff around the circle in a clockwise motion. During the first pass, participants would introduce themselves, usually sharing information about their military background or, in the case of indigenous participants, tribal ancestry. During the second pass, participants would share experiences related to PTSD, substance addiction, abuse, and other issues of struggle. After the second pass, the staff would pass around as people volunteered to speak, often in dialogue with the others who had already spoken. Talking circle

ceremonies, like the sweat lodges, usually feature a mixture of elders, regular participants, and veterans from the hospital's inpatient domiciliary program.

Today, Marty explained, our objective would be to tell stories of significance. He would begin with a story he had prepared, before passing the staff to other participants to share their own stories. I appreciated that we would be doing the ceremony differently but I immediately felt nervous, as I had not prepared a story to tell. I continued setting up but became preoccupied in my mind with trying to think of a story I could tell that would be meaningful for our ceremony.

Leaving me to continue setting up the chapel for our ceremony, Marty left to walk to the Dom. Before the talking circle ceremonies, Marty and/or Mike would walk to the Dom to collect participants. As Marty was leaving, Mike arrived, followed by Estelita and Steve. Each brought food for our potluck dinner (held during every talking circle) which they prepared as I was finishing the other set up. A handful of other regular participants filtered in, each also with food in tow.

Marty returned, followed by four inpatients from the Dom. He gathered us to begin the ceremony and led a prayer to Wakȟáŋ Tȟáŋka. We sat in a circle and Marty explained to everyone, as he had to me earlier, how we would be conducting a *traditional* talking circle ceremony, which he would initiate with a story. He passed the staff to me (I was next to him, clockwise), I introduced myself, and passed the staff to the person to

my left. After everyone had introduced themselves, Marty took the staff and began to recount a parable about seeds blowing into a field, sprouting several different kinds of grass. While Marty was speaking, Thomas (an indigenous domiciliary inpatient who had participated in several sweat lodges and talking circles with us) arrived and took a place in the circle. When Marty finished his parable, he told us that he would break from our traditional pattern of moving clockwise and would go ahead and begin to pass the staff to whoever in the group was ready to tell the next story. Thomas asked for the staff. No more stories were told that night.

I don't know the intimate details of the struggles had led Thomas to the PTSD inpatient clinic. I do know that the elders *were* familiar with his situation, which involved some amount of financial struggle and conflict with his family. Thomas had not been there when Marty explained the different format we would be using for this ceremony and he took the staff to share a personal experience that was burdening him.

> I have a burden that is heavy on my heart. I've been talking to my team here. We are trying to work through things and figure out the best path forward for me.

Thomas explained that his counseling team from the inpatient program wanted to pursue, with his permission, "unemployable" status. Being declared unemployable would secure Thomas disability payments for, at the very least, a period of years for which he would not be required to work. Rocking the staff nervously between his hands while staring at the ground, Thomas admitted that his initial resistance to the idea

of pursuing unemployable status was giving way to a sense of relief. "It feels like a weight coming off of my shoulders" he said, referring to the thought of no longer having to shoulder the burden of finding and maintaining employment. He asked the group for prayers and wisdom and then closed with "mitákuye oyás'iŋ."

One by one, participants began requesting the staff to speak. Three in a row spoke directly to Thomas, affirming their belief that allowing his team to pursue unemployable status could be good for him. "You have to take care of yourself" one participant said. "Don't feel bad about giving yourself the space you need to heal" said another. Mike, who had been sitting quietly through the ceremony, requested the staff. He stood and spoke abruptly.

> I don't think this is a good idea.

While not a rebuke, Mike's unease with the idea of Thomas taking unemployable status was palpable. Mike told Thomas about people he had watched in the past who, after taking unemployable status, began to "rot." Expressing his feelings about the PTSD diagnosis:

> PTSD is a construction that was created for the DSM. It is a 'diagnosis' sterilized of culture. What we do have is not even necessarily PTSD. PTSD is a 'diagnosis.' We need to understand the difference between the diagnosis of symptoms and sickness as a result of diagnosis. PTSD is a diagnosis; it means 'Please Take Some Dollars.'"

Though Mike's words felt a bit jarring, creating a disjuncture from the mood and affirmative tone that was originally building around Thomas's concerns, I had heard

words like this from Mike before (and would hear them again and again). Mike often emphasized the distinction between "the diagnosis of symptoms" and "sickness as a result of diagnosis." His quip that PTSD stands for "please take some dollars" came out often; not as a dismissal of the reality of PTSD but rather as a form of commentary towards what he saw as institutional biomedicine's failure to really heal affliction. Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is as much a social condition as a disease and, from Mike's perspective, can be as much a product of biomedicine as it is a product of the overtly traumatic experiences that are understood to cause PTSD. I never once heard Mike argue that PTSD isn't *real*. He often voiced though that he believed that the diagnosis was waged to eschew real responsibility and accountability by the institutions that are both complicitly and actively responsible for suffering.

Looking at Thomas, Mike saw iwáyazaŋ azúyeya, the sickness one acquires from fighting others and the self. He viewed Thomas's potential acceptance of unemployable status as a kind of surrender to a diagnosis and system that Mike viewed as part of the greater whole that was already wounding Thomas's body and spirit. Also, while Mike's charge makes him responsible for the whole range of multi-ethnic veterans who come through his areas of ceremonial authority, his manner of address towards the struggles experienced by his Native American participants was shaped by decades of close, affective work with indigenous people and sometimes operated according to a register

that did not always come naturally to me (I admit that before Mike spoke, I was also planning to affirm Thomas on the path of pursuing unemployable status). I witnessed this several times, including once when an indigenous man, transitioning out of prison in the hospital's inpatient facility, arrived for a sweat.

Steve, Kevin, Dave, and I were working on the fire. The van carrying residents from the PTSD inpatient facility usually arrived shortly after we got the fire going. Kevin and Dave walked with me, as I went to the gate to greet them.

Marty smudged the five men with sage smoke. Four of the men were first-timers I had never seen before. The fifth was Gabe, a Native Dom resident who had been a regular attendee for several ceremonies. Gabe was beginning to assume a role as a kind of liaison, helping to introduce Dom residents to the ceremonial grounds. As Gabe was explaining things to the first-timers, one of them interrupted him, sharply:

When is this going to be over with?

The man stared at the ground, and then at the sky, and then back to the ground, with an impatient glare.

Gabe answered:

> Well….. I see that they've got the fire going already. The fire heats the stones; it takes a little while. We let the fire burn down…."

The man interrupted Gabe again:

> *I have an appointment this afternoon. I can't miss that shit.*

Gabe continued:

> ....we watch the fire burn down. Once the scaffolding collapses, the elders start to round everybody up. We dress down to our shorts….

The man interrupted Gabe yet again, stomping his foot and stating the time of his appointment and expressing his feelings of indignance. His anger was palpable. He was my age or possibly a bit younger, tattoos adorned his brown skin. He clinched his fists and his muscular arms shook with anger.

Gabe invited me:

> Let's go get Uncle Mike so we can check on the timing of things today.

We approached Mike and Gabe got his attention:

> Uncle Mike, there's a guy over here you need to come talk to. He's staying at the Dom. He just got out of the iron house a couple of days ago.[25] He keeps talking about how he needs to make this appointment and he's worried about it….. But he's like…. really angry.

Mike Responded:

> The iron house? Okay. I'll go talk to him.

The three of us walked back to the gate entrance, where the four men from the Dom were still standing. Mike introduced himself to the four men, asking their names. The angry man said his name quickly and then interjected:

> Hey, listen, I got to make an appointment this afternoon. What time is this all going to be over with?

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[25] Emic term for prison

Mike gave the man his attention and switched his manner and register of speech. I had come to know Mike as a kind of paternal ceremonial elder, who calmly gives teachings and occasionally officiates ceremonies. On occasion, I have seen him switch speech registers to talk to different attendees in different ways. Mike addressed the man:

Whoa. You look like an Indian. What people do you come from?

The man responded:

I'm CREE!

He almost seemed to spit his answer at Mike, as if being asked to identify his heritage was a challenge he had to meet with aggression.

Acting satisfied with the answer, Mike responded:

Cree? Hey! I know some Cree language. Do you speak Cree?

"Yeah. I speak some Cree" the man spat.

Mike started speaking in a language I didn't recognize, presumably Cree. The man appeared a bit startled and then said something back, also presumably in Cree. Suddenly, he threw his hands up in the air and stormed away, walking out of the gate and on the path back towards the hospital. After an awkward silence, Mike spoke:

Sometimes it is like that coming out of the iron house.

Dave, who had joined us, spoke up:

Uncle Mike, should I try to catch him and talk to him?

Mike responded:

No. He's just walking off some anger. He'll come back.

When it was time to enter the sweat lodge, the man had returned. Marty, who was leading the lodge ceremony that day, asked for a show of hands before we entered the lodge, of people who were experiencing their first sweat ceremony. Noticing that the man did not raise his hand, Marty asked him:

Oh, you've sweated before?

The man answered:

Yeah. A bunch of times. My family did it.

Marty offered:

Oh, since you're experienced, I'll have you sit by the door to help bring the stones in.

The ceremony proceeded, seemingly as normal, until the end of our second round of songs and prayers (somewhere between one and two hours into the ceremony). Kevin, who was maintaining the fire, opened the door flap and offered some water to the participants. As cups of water were passed through the lodge, the man suddenly said something loud and incoherent and he stormed out of the lodge. Mike followed him out. As he was exiting, Mike told Marty to continue the ceremony without him.

Mike never returned to the lodge. When the ceremony was over and we exited the lodge, I saw that Mike was still there, outside, and fully dressed. I joined a few others and approached him to ask about the man.

Mike said:

> He wasn't ready to let go of his anger. When somebody isn't ready to let it go…. you can't make them. Some people like their anger. They love it. It is like a drug

I was concerned for the man and made a comment about being fresh out of prison and how it must be very difficult to adjust to life outside. Perhaps like coming back from war? Perhaps worse?

> He wasn't ready" Mike said. "I tried. I can't help somebody who doesn't want to be helped.

I pressed a bit:

Maybe he's the one who needs this most of all?

Mike answered:

> A lot of people come here, carrying a lot of things. Anger. War. Drugs. People come in carrying so much negativity. We give it back to the earth…. When somebody shows up that's carrying so much negativity…. who loves their anger…. We can't have something that toxic. I have a responsibility to keep a positive environment for the people who are here to heal.

3.5 Lavender (Pȟežúta šatȟó)

When I began attending ceremonies at American Lake, the sweat lodges were gender-segregated, with the exception of a once-per-month night lodge that was open to all. While I was conducting preliminary fieldwork, I traveled to American Lake and participated in ceremonies where all participants and elders were people who identified as "men." During this same time period, a dispute broke out that nearly dissolved the thiyóšpaye. The community disassembled the lodge and performed a ritual to return the earth to its prior condition. For a period of months, ceremonies were not held and there was some question about whether or not they ever would be again. The contexts surrounding this are complicated and it took me a while to get a real sense of what happened. When it was happening, I was new to the community and people were not yet speaking very openly with me about things that were not directly related to the ceremony itself; particularly the happenings "behind the scenes." In respect of my interlocutors, I will not go into detail about what happened. The American Lake thiyóšpaye is made up of humans and, as is the case with all groupings of humans, conflicts happen. Speaking very generally, the bundle of conflicts underlying this event were matters of gender. I am happy that this situation was resolved and that the community came out stronger on the other side. Today, all sweats at American Lake welcome participants of all gender identities.

The subject of gender with regard to Native American ceremony, including Plains/Lakota ceremonies such as these, has long been subject to various controversies. Feminist critiques exist (CITE). . . . . I will list a number of issues here:

-There are competing claims to "original" indigenous concepts of gender.

-The Lakota language itself is gendered and is gendered in a manner that is unlike the kind of gendering that occurs in, for example, the Indo-European Romance languages.

-Traditional adherents of indigenous religion often consider it inappropriate to project Western culturally contingent concepts of gender/gender oppression onto non-Western social assemblages.

-Some indigenous traditions claim to have never included women in sweat lodge ceremonies in the first place, because it was not necessary.

Also:

-The role of gender in military culture is so significant that the kinds of suffering borne by veterans who are non-men can be unique and, arguably, may beg flexibility on the behalf of traditional ceremonial models.

I have heard women participating in the ceremonies lament that it is unfair that men are allowed in the lodge wearing only shorts, while women are forced to cover their bodies with long (usually cotton) dresses. The ceremonies can be extraordinarily

hot and the clothing becomes sweat drenched, heavy, and uncomfortable almost immediately. Some people have had experience with sweat lodge ceremonies that have been inflected by the New Age tradition. It is not uncommon for New Age influenced ceremonies such as these to have mixed-gender sweats in the nude. It is common for many indigenous traditions to sweat in the nude but these ceremonies tend to be gender segregated (if not exclusive to men). However, ceremonies that are associated with the Healing tradition, such as those held at American Lake, require men and women to be clothed when sweating together, with women expected to cover more of their body than men (I once heard a woman ask if she could enter lodge in a sports bra and shorts; the answer was no). Pushback occurs sometimes, usually because wearing cotton dresses in sweat lodge ceremonies feels bad and/or because gender-based dress codes are seen as patriarchal and oppressive from a Western Feminist perspective. A woman member of the elder council (referred to locally as "the Auntie") is tasked with guiding the women through these norms. The Auntie explains to the women (and to everyone when necessary) that our ceremony has to accommodate people who are dealing with a range of afflictions and while it may be physically uncomfortable, we cannot permit the possibility of distractions that could get in the way of someone's healing experience. Of course, the idea that women should cover their bodies to accommodate the vulnerable eyes of men is incompatible with conventional Western Feminism, especially

considering that it requires women to be even less comfortable in a ceremony that is already decidedly uncomfortable.

The ceremonies are now gender-inclusive and welcome trans and non-binary folk. However, a fundamental concept of manhood continues to animate the ceremonies, while pre-Western concepts of gender roles occasionally manifest. During my earliest ceremonies at American Lake, when sweats were still segregated by gender, the role of manhood in the ceremony was discussed overtly. According to those teachings, sweat lodge ceremonies are necessary for men because our bodies lack the self-purifying qualities of women's bodies. When women menstruate, we were told, their bodies endure a painful purification ritual every month. Due to menstruation, the woman's body is better able to keep itself in "balance" than a man's body. Because men do not menstruate, our bodies are more prone to becoming out of balance without the concerted effort to prevent this. Thus, we have to endure the pain of a monthly (at least) purification ritual to compensate.[26]

[26] Contemporary progressive discourse discourages the reification of gender norms through essentialist categories. This movement has been supported by compelling accounts of the diverse array of gender norms that exist among various (especially Indigenous) peoples around the world and throughout history. However, my experience at American Lake has been that the categories of wičháša and wíŋyaŋ (man and woman) are treated as a priori classifications that are inherent to Lakota cosmology, along with prescriptive ceremonial duties. The community acknowledges and accepts other gender categories, such as the Lakota "wíŋkte" and the pan-indian "Two-Spirit." The ceremonial procedures can be changed when non-cisgender participants are integrated, as such individuals are seen as having specific ceremonial roles. However, the roles for people who identify as cisgender men and women are relatively inflexible.

Further explication would note that in many indigenous traditions, women did not participate in sweat lodges because doing so was seen as redundant. In contemporary sweat lodges, which do permit non-men, women are not allowed in the lodge when they are menstruating. This particular restriction, perhaps above all others, is the one that most commonly receives backlash from women. In response, elders explain that this backlash is due to the concept of "defilement" which is endemic in Western cosmologies. They explain that the defilement concept is inappropriately projected onto their indigenous ceremony where it does not belong. Rather, a woman who is menstruating is understood to be very powerful, and this power would overwhelm and perhaps inhibit the other ceremonial activities. At any rate, there would literally be little benefit to be gained from a lodge ceremony by someone who is menstruating.

One consequence of this is that, even in the contemporary gender-inclusive ceremonies, women sometimes (depending somewhat on who is officiating the ceremony) find themselves attached to a predetermined narrative of their "role." As elements of the idea that the ceremony is designed to restore balance to the minds and bodies of men are maintained, women can be framed as "helpers" who are there for the purpose of enhancing the ceremony's impact with their mere presence (due to their inherent feminine energy). In my fieldnotes from my first couple of sweat lodge

ceremonies, which were men-only, I wrote that the ceremony seemed to be designed as a kind of feminizing ritual to tame toxic masculinity and unmitigated testosterone. In those early ceremonies, we were repeatedly asked to focus on sacred feminine energy and the lodge itself was framed as a uterus, and the almost unbreathable dense steam we were forced to breathe was described as amniotic fluid. Though the ceremony itself was relatively unmodified, the acknowledgement of this aspect of the ritual became less overt through time, after the ceremonies were no longer gender segregated.

The following story is sensitive and, due to the fact that it involves the experience of a vulnerable, protected subject, I have to strategically modify the story to protect the identity and experience of this person.

3.5.1 Wíŋyaŋ

Erin arrived alone for the ceremony. Erin presented as non-femme queer woman. Her hair was cut short and she wore a t-shirt and shorts. She came to the ceremony as many do, on her own looking for healing. She was quiet and stood to the side of the property, avoiding socialization with the other participants. It was not unusual for a participant, particularly a newcomer, to behave this way. Under normal circumstances, someone from the lodge community (often a leader) will attempt to reach these people and "bring them in." In this case, the Auntie and one other woman approached her; I couldn't hear their conversation but Erin remained distant throughout

the duration of the ceremony's preliminary stages and only came in when it was time for us to enter the lodge.

At American Lake, women typically enter the lodge first, followed by the men (in reverse order of age). When it is time to enter the sweat lodge, participants go to a wooden shack on the property to change into their sweat attire (shorts for men, long cotton dresses for women). Clean, extra sweat lodge-appropriate clothing is kept on site for newcomers who do not have their own. The women change first; it is at this point that the Auntie explains the protocols with clothing and long dresses are provided for women who need them. Again, I did not hear the conversation, but I saw that Erin refused to wear a dress. She entered the sweat lodge in the same t-shirt and shorts she arrived in.

Ceremonial etiquette prohibits me from repeating things said inside the lodge, so I have to interrupt the vignette here to share my thoughts on the outside, concerning what happened leading up to Erin deciding to depart before the post-sweat feast. In Erin, I saw a person whose experience of military-related suffering resembled that of many of the male combat soldiers who pursue healing in the lodge. The trauma of battle, guilt, self-hatred, and a sense of the terrible weight of war burdened her. However, I wondered if she found in the lodge, on that day, an environment that struggled to bear witness to the particular way that she had experienced trauma, as it

did not fit a gendered template being utilized in that ceremony. I wondered if she felt pushed into a gender role that she did not relate to, which did not allow her to fully acquiesce to the heat and commune with the spirits that had been called there to ease her pain.

This was one bullet point on an exceptionally short list of times that I felt that the lodge had not served someone as well as it could have. I remember wishing that Brad had been there that day, as he was gifted in his sensitivity to people like Erin but he wasn't. This situation felt over my head, with regard to my status there at that time. I wanted to talk to her but she left quickly after the ceremony and I didn't get a chance.

I should address my own sense of unease during the event. In reality, I never got to talk to Erin and ask her how she felt about what happened. Am I projecting my own insecurities on her? While I have previously spoken, in what I hope to have been a neutral tone, about the conflict between Western feminism and the conventions of the lodge, I have to admit that I too have been steeped in the Western feminist tradition.

This brings into question some of the most fundamental questions about the lodge itself. While the rootedness in pre-colonial Indigenous tradition is clear, the healing lodge as practiced at American Lake is a ceremony that was intentionally designed during the late 20th century to heal Native American men struggling with conditions such as substance dependency and war trauma. This was based on the

theory that Native American men had internalized harmful colonial stereotypes about masculinity. If this is the case, why do women, especially non-Indigenous women, feel compelled to participate in these ceremonies in the first place? Furthermore, why does *anyone* who is not a Native American man feel compelled to participate? There is of course an argument to be made that some people, including non-Indigenous veterans who do not identify as men, suffer from similar afflictions. Understanding this, how critical are we allowed to be of a ceremony which, on this occasion, failed to recognize these afflictions in a person who was not recognizable to some as anything other than a "biological female?" I wrestle with these questions and have not found the answers to them.

3.6 Summary

The usage of ritual plants is central to the ceremonial practices at American Lake. Each plant (sage, sweetgrass, cedar, bear root, and lavender) has different properties that serve different respective ritual purposes. I divided this chapter into sections, each associated with different ritual dynamics. The sage section concerns purification and the importance of creating and respecting sacred space. The cedar section addresses the existence of pain in the healing process. The lavender section looks at the gender dynamics in play in the ceremonies. Bear root recognizes the spiritual encounters that

mediate healing experiences. The sweetgrass section is a meditation on the complexities of cross-cultural spiritual practices.

Going beyond the empirical description of the ceremony, this chapter serves to illustrate some of the complex situations that are brought to the healing site at American Lake. The intrinsic characteristics of the plant medicines resolve tensions not only in the personal lives of participants but also in the ceremonies themselves. The plants mediate encounters with the divine and create opportunities to reorganize disharmony according to new cosmological structures. However, while the degree of difference between the cosmological worlds of the site and some of the people seeking healing there can create unique opportunities, there are cases where this difference can create misrecognitions. This may be most explicit in cases where the gender norms (and conflicts) of U.S. society do not align with ceremonial norms that were designed to help cisgender Native American men. From its beginnings in the pre-Colonial spirituality of the American Northern Plains and through unique circumstances and challenges of the late 20th century, the ceremonial bundle engaged with at the American Lake site continues to evolve to address the dynamic challenges that manifest in a changing society.

4. The Figure of the Warrior

> A Militarily conquered group is given a bit more status in colonization. Savage but courageous natives are somehow more worthy of being civilized. The mythical martial race, overcome only by military adeptness in the first place, has been invented and reinvented by colonizers throughout history
> Tom Holm (Holm 1994, 1).

Introduction

Until relatively recently, it was not common for soldiers, veterans, or other practitioners of martial trades to identify as *warriors*. Historically, the term warrior was reserved for usage describing groups of people who were seen as "others" with respect to modern industrialized societies. During the 21st century however, it has become common for not only soldiers and veterans to identify as warriors, but also police, civilian defense contractors, and even civilians who pre-emptively arm themselves to defend their families and property from threats. At American Lake, the very existence of a sanctioned site for the practice of Indigenous ritual was constituent to a concept of warriordom that imagined warriors to require forms of healing outside of biomedicine's scope. The warrior turn is in fact a medicalization of culture, folding masculinity and race in with science. This chapter, in two sections, considers how masculinity and race work together to constitute sciences of affliction and healing.

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, one of the primary justifications for creating a separate, decidedly Indian space for healing was the argument that Native American veterans required special non-biomedical healing interventions due to their warrior culture provenance. Biomedical PTSD therapy treats a neuro-physical disorder that manifests in response to chemical/hormonal changes that occur during moments of extreme fear. However, warrior cultures ostensibly relate to war violence in deeper, more categorically fundamental ways than do the modern soldiers who are meant to relate to war in a more professional, transactional manner. It warrants repeating here that this reflects the amorality of framings of war trauma that are intrinsic to the classic PTSD diagnosis. The marked treatment resistance of Native Americans diagnosed with PTSD was attributed to this fundamental difference in how these Indigenous veterans were understood to relate to war.

According to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, as a concept, warriordom is fundamentally a descriptor of relationships between "self" and "other" (Viveiros de Castro 2004). A warrior can only exist in binary opposition to something else; as a *subject* it exists in binary opposition to an *enemy* other, and as an *object*, it exists in binary opposition to a *modern soldier* self. In this chapter, I will argue that multiple dynamics at the site are mediated by shifting notions of self and other, which are evidenced by these unstable usages of the signifier *warrior*. More than something unique to this site, these

changes are indicative of much larger issues endemic to North American society, Capitalism, racialization, medicalization, liberal modernity, and many other things.

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first will look at warriordom ethnographically, beginning with my own constitution as a "warrior" many years ago. The second section is theoretical and considers warrior subjecthood and how warriordom is used as a metric for configuring notions of self and other in contemporary Western society.

4.1 Part I: The Contemporary Warrior

4.1.1 The Colonial Warrior

The van, driven by a civilian contractor, delivered me to the Infantry School at Fort Benning Georgia in early March, 2004. I was assigned to the 30th AG Reception Battalion, a kind of transition unit that prepares recruits for Basic Training, where one's real initiation into the Army begins. At 30th AG, I was issued uniforms, inoculated against numerous communicable diseases, given my first PT test, and given a crash course in military discipline that would be necessary for my successful navigation of the intense regimen I would encounter when shipped "downrange" in two weeks. On my first day at 30th AG, I was given a booklet filled with information to study. In the opening pages was the "Soldier's Creed," which I was instructed to memorize immediately.

The creed I was given was new to the Army; less than a year old at the time. It read:

I am an American Soldier

I am a warrior and a member of a team

I serve the people of the United States and Live the Army values

I will always place the mission first

I will never accept defeat

I will never quit

I will never leave a fallen comrade

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills

I always maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself

I am an expert and I am a professional

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America, in close combat

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life

I am an American soldier

The four lines in italics, known as the "warrior ethos" are often displayed on their own and are regarded with particular importance within military culture. I had to

memorize another poem, also called "the warrior ethos," though I have been unable to find record of it since. I remember it pretty well however. As I recall:

A soldier is a warrior and a member of the best trained and equipped team

Flexible, adaptable, confident and competent in warrior tasks and drills

Proficient in required skills for current duty assignment

Grounded in Army values

Lives the warrior ethos

Prepared to close with and DESTROY the enemies of the United States in close combat

These creeds were developed in the early 21st century as part of an initiative to shape the military for the needs of the series of conflicts known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This Soldier's Creed was developed to replace an older one that exemplified the values of the late 20th century Cold War military. It reads:

I am an American soldier

I am a member of the United States Army - a protector of the greatest nation on earth. Because I am proud of the uniform I wear, I will always act in ways creditable to the military service and the nation it is sworn to guard.

I am proud of my own organization. I will do all I can to make it the finest unit in the Army. I will be loyal to those under whom I serve. I will do my full part to carry out orders and instructions given to me or my unit.

As a soldier, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored profession - that I am doing my share to keep alive the principles of freedom for which my country stands. No matter what the situation I am in, I will never do anything, for pleasure, profit, or personal safety, which will disgrace my uniform, my unit, or my country. I will use every means I have, even beyond the line of duty, to restrain my Army comrades from actions disgraceful to themselves and to the uniform.

I am proud of my country and its flag.

I will try to make the people of this nation proud of the service I represent, for I am an American soldier.

These changing creeds represent the beginning of an epistemic shift which reconceptualized the philosophical underpinnings of armed martial service. The older creed emphasized the uniform, professionalism, and the flag; all of which can be seen as representative of the greater project of the American nation state. The new creed emphasizes something else: *warriordom*, the cultivation of tactical prowess for the purpose of destroying enemies and defending *the American way of life*, broadly defined.

Before the 21st century, it was not common for professional soldiers to identify as "warriors." Today, *warrior* has become the identity of choice not only of soldiers but also by members of all branches of military service, veterans who no longer wear the uniform, police, civilian defense contractors, militia groups, and others. Academic critical military studies tend to analyze contemporary militarism as an object exemplified by the old soldier's creed, with its lockstep patriotism and subservience to the socioeconomic needs of the nation state. However, contemporary militarism is marked by shifting, slippery notions of loyalty and increasingly amorphous definitions of patriotism.

The notion of warriordom is not new. The term's phonetic ancestor is the Norman French *Guerreier*, which roughly translates as "soldier." However, during the Norman period of Medieval England, the French term replaced the Old English English word *wiga* while inheriting the Germanic word's more poetic meaning and connotations of mythical heroism. In English learner's dictionaries, it is normal for footnotes to explain that the term *warrior* is not conventionally used to describe modern soldiers.

However, warrior has become *the* favored word for describing modern soldiers in the 21st century. Books and merchandise marketed to soldiers and veterans, clinical literature dealing with PTSD, military creeds, and popular media all use the word

warrior to describe their object. What has led to the changes in this population's identity that are signaled by this sudden but meaningful change in terminology?

There are two major roots to warrior identity's contemporary manifestation. The first is a countercultural movement that grew out of the U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War. This kind of warrior identity was mostly confined to paramilitaries and militias in the 20th century but has attained mainstream legitimacy in the 21st (James Gibson's 1994 monograph *Warrior Dreams* provides a deep analysis of the development of this form of paramilitary warriordom) (Gibson 1994). The other major root is associated with the development of combat trauma as an ontological object. The distinct history of the growing cultural importance of combat trauma, notably with the establishment of the PTSD diagnosis in the late 20th century, strengthened the sense among both soldiers and civilians that the world of armed combat exists in an alternate universe, unknowable to the uninitiated. Working together, these two movements created a new kind of warrior identity that is premised by its promise of connection to the ancient.

The "problem of reintegration" has dominated the discourse about the social struggle of veterans after war, for some time (Hoge, Auchterlonie, and Milliken 2006; Bowling and Sherman 2008; Burnell, Coleman, and Hunt 2009; Demers 2011; Briggle 2013). The "problem of integration" refers to the theory that veterans struggle after war due to deep cultural conflicts between the military and civilian social worlds

(McCormick, Currier, Isaak, Sims et al 2019). In the words of former Secretary of Defense William Cohen: "A chasm (is) developing between the military and civilian worlds, where the civilian world doesn't fully grasp the mission of the military, and the military doesn't understand why the memories of our citizens and civilian policy makers are so short, or why the criticism is so quick and so unrelenting" (Correll 2000). This theory, spoken here at the very beginning of the 21st century, presupposes that the divide is, on some level, a matter of misunderstanding and that the burden of understanding falls on the "civilian" side of the divide. The idea that veteran suffering would be alleviated if the civilian world would do a better job of "bringing them home" is not only ubiquitous but it reinforces the idea that the "veteran" position is inherently normative, with all of its associated sociopolitical appurtenances.

This discourse has reinforced the idea that people who fight in wars are a distinct "kind" of person who is distinct from civilians. Recalling the bioarchetype that frames combat trauma as a distinct "transcendent" form of suffering that is unique to warrior experience, the moral/ethical world inhabited by such warriors is increasingly imagined to be transcendent of the world of civilian norms. Increasingly, service members and veterans identify as "warriors," as do police, defense contractors, and others. This was not common until the 21st century. Prior to this discursive rupture, warriors were imagined to be something else; something primitive and uncivilized. It was through this

binary that it was imagined that Native American "warriors" would require ceremonial space to heal from war, while non-Indigenous veterans would heal best in a clinical environment.

4.1.2 The Indigenous Warrior

Indigenous scholar Tom Holm has noted that colonizers endow their enemies with superhuman qualities, often for the purpose of increasing the prestige of their own ability to conquer them. As long as the United States has existed, Holm argues, American Indians have been imagined as a martial race, with the belief that superhuman individual combat competence is inherited. This inheritance has been ascribed to genetics, as the study of genes developed in science. Prior to and through the Vietnam War, American Indian soldiers were commonly forced into dangerous "scout" positions, due to what some soldiers have referred to as "Indian Scout Syndrome." Indian Scout Syndrome refers to the tendency for white commanders and soldiers to assume that American Indian soldiers have an inherited proclivity and skill with respect to certain combat-related tasks. Woodcraft, acute senses of sight/smell, as well as fearless ferocity in combat are parts of this construct. This fetishizing form of "veneration," combined with the overt racism experienced by Indigenous peoples at home in the United States, has been attributed as a source of the disproportionate suffering (represented by a high PTSD diagnosis rate) experienced by Indigenous veterans (LaDuke 2013, 13-18).

The relationship between Native Americans and the U.S. Military is both deep and complex; while the United States Army was often the deliverer of the Government's campaign of genocidal violence against the continent's Indigenous peoples, Native Americans serve in the military at a rate higher than any other ethnic group in the United States (Schilling 2014; Vergun 2021). Much like the VA in its justification for making ceremonial therapy available for Indigenous veterans, the public often attributes this high rate of service to the "warrior tradition" of Native Americans (Ault 2020). This colonial sense of warriordom is sometimes expressed by Indigenous veterans themselves (Viola 2008). Native Hawaiian anthropologist Ty P. Kāwika Tengan has observed in his research with Indigenous Hawaiian men that his interlocutors often see themselves as having genetically inherited warriorhood, as the progeny of a warrior culture (Tengan 2008). In an interview with two Native Hawaiian veterans, Tengan recorded their expressed belief that warriorhood was in their DNA, and that their Native American peers in the military similarly demonstrated particular prowess under martial conditions (Tengan 2015, 229-235). It is important to note here that, regarding statements like this, Kim TallBear argues that Indigenous peoples do not necessarily mean to reference *actual* genetics in statements like this (TallBear 2013). In communication with Ty P. Kāwika Tengan over these particular interviews, TallBear stated that most Indigenous people understand that "who we are as peoples is

comprised of cultural and political (read sovereignty) factors, plus we are physical bodies descended from the bodies of our ancestors" and cautioned that linking Indigenous peoples and their DNA with soldiering and warriordom potentially ignores the "political economic conditions that shape our high enlistment" and "denies how profoundly U.S. colonization disrupted our ancestors' life ways and the degree to which it continues to oppressively structure our lives" (TallBear 2015, 240).

Lumbee scholar Robert Williams Jr. identifies the colonial concept of Indigenous warriordom in the writings of Thomas Jefferson, though Jefferson attributed warrior prowess to social factors rather than DNA. However, though Jefferson praised Native Americans for their skill in battle and woodcraft, he saw these as indicative of the limited and primitive culture of Indigenous peoples, "which call for a display of particular talents only" (Williams 2012; Pearce 1965; Sheehan 1973). Even today, the usage of Native American names and nations is abundant in the military, particularly in the naming of units and equipment. I recall being told by a high ranking officer during my time in the military (every Company in my Battalion was named after a Native American tribe) that we used the names of tribes that we (the Army) had conquered, so that we could mobilize the power of those peoples.

4.1.3 Bad Ass

The sense of temperature change was dramatic. It was warm by the Pheta Wakhan (the sacred fire) and the overhead sun was hot (in spite of the humidity being lower than in the damp Carolina forests of my home, I always feel like I am closer to the Sun when I'm out West). However, as we were coming into the evening, a cool wind blew in from the lake and over our newly exposed backs. At this point in the ceremonies, before we enter the lodge, the men always strip down to a lightweight pair of shorts (and women, interestingly, into long cotton dresses). Mike, the ceremonial Elder, pulled a group of us aside. It was me, and a small group (maybe four or five) men who were residents of the hospital's inpatient PTSD program. As a therapeutic option, groups of residents are sometimes ferried over to the sacred grounds, where they are covered in sage smoke, briefly educated on the ritual decorum of the grounds, and invited to participate in sweat lodge ceremonies. On this day, Mike pulled us aside, and said that we were going to be having a pipe ceremony (čhaŋnúŋpa) before going into the lodge. He summoned Joseph, and asked him to sing the pipe loading song. (I would sing it for you, but that would not really be appropriate for this environment). Joseph is Dine, and a fixture in the local Indigenous community. He has the sharpest, quickest wit of anyone I have ever met in my life; he can turn anything you say around on you in an instant, but always as a sincere act of good-natured humor. Joe

also has an encyclopedic knowledge of Native American ceremonial songs, in several languages, and is gifted with a beautiful singing voice (as well as talent as a skilled flautist). Joseph brought his drum, sat on the ground, and sang the pipe loading song while Mike loaded his čhaŋnúŋpa with čhaŋšáša (a smokable fiber made from willow bark). Mike led us in the pipe ceremony and we passed the pipe around, most of us saying a prayer and smoking before passing it to the next person, clockwise, cradling the čhaŋnúŋpa like a baby in our hands. People who are in recovery from a smoking habit are permitted to participate by touching the pipe to each shoulder before passing it along, rather than smoking from it. Two people in our group make this choice. Mike told us a story and sang a song, before getting up and telling us that we would be summoned to enter the lodge very soon.

After Mike left, the domiciliary inpatients looked at each other with a look of mixed reverence and excitement. Several of them were covered with tattoos, mostly military and tribal in character.

"Are you ready for this?" one said to another

"Hell yeah" he spoke back.

"Are you ready for this?" the first said to another in the group

"Hell yeah" he spoke back.

"This is going to be bad ass" the first said, with nervous, excited anticipation obvious in his demeanor. I was nervous before my first sweat, for good reason. The ceremonies *can* be overwhelmingly hot……. And long…….. they ordinarily last for several hours. People do die sometimes in improperly officiated sweat lodge ceremonies……. Almost without fail these are sweats that were conducted by practitioners of New Age synthetic forms of spirituality who were not properly trained in the officiation of a sweat lodge, the proper regulation of temperature and sensitivity to the physical experience of participants. It is not a coincidence that news reports about people who die in sweat lodge ceremonies often also mention that the participants paid a lot of money to participate in them, sometimes thousands of dollars……. Most Indigenous traditions forbid taking payment for participation in ceremonies like this, but it has not changed the fact that reports such as these have shaped public opinion about sweats…… what they are and what the goals of participants might be…..

They were nervous……. But it was a nervousness inflected by the sense of pain. The ceremony was not only to be an efficacious act of healing……. In the minds of these participants, it was a "bad ass" ritual of endurance…….. a place where men go to suffer with other men, other warriors, and temper their metal in the ceremonies of ancient warriordom that have been lost in our soft, civilian society. The energy felt more like something you might hear from a group of buddies about to go bungee jumping, or

like my peers in the Infantry School at Fort Benning GA right before we began the course for one of the program's most notorious training activities/rituals, where we climb out of a trench and low crawl across a field in the middle of the night under the tracer fire of actual machine guns firing just a few feet above our heads "DO NOT PANIC AND STAND UP" the drill sergeants repeatedly warned. . . . . not what you might expect to hear for people preparing for a ceremony which was, as I found through a period of several years attending this site, intense but also emotional, often filled with unmitigated weeping and bursts of vulnerable emotion. Intense? Yes. Powerful? Yes. Bad ass? I don't think that is the term I would use. Neither would the Elders. They tell every single group before going into the lodge that this is *not* what the ceremony is. It is not a test of endurance of manhood. In fact, people might hear some things that challenge their tightly held concepts of manhood during these ceremonies……. People are encouraged to ask for help and exit the lodge if they become too uncomfortable or frightened…… people who do so will be comforted and cared for by empathetic members of the community who are helping outside. These experiences are often transformative for those who come here; sometimes due to how radically it differs from their initial expectations. For this reason, these expectations, how they came to be, and how they have become perpetuated through our society, are important to me.

4.1.4 The Culture Warrior

The Vietnam War itself, particularly its aftermath, began the process of reconfiguring veteran subjectivity in North America. As the United States' invasion of southeast Asia was met with unexpected domestic unpopularity, even among soldiers and veterans, the Nixon administration responded with a massive propaganda campaign. The propaganda argued both that: A. countless veterans were being held in communist prisoner of war camps and B. veterans experienced mass abuse upon homecoming at the behest of leftist anti-war protesters (Franklin 1992; Lembcke 1998). The goal of this propaganda campaign was to frame *domestic anti-war leftists* as the veteran's, and thus the state's, real enemy. Film and popular culture representations of Vietnam War veterans reified this image in the public imagination. In the aftermath of the war, an effluence of popular fiction in the form of movies and novels exalted Vietnam War veterans who struggled at home against a corrupt, abusive society. The core, shared plot device in these works utilized the abused veteran's struggle as an allegory for a massive conflict that pitted masculinity, traditional values, patriotism, strength, and order against femininity, queerness, amorality, and naïve weakness.

The promise of connection to the ancient is, theoretically, fundamental to the emergence of this identity formation. Warrior identity did not develop on an island, isolated from greater cultural processes. Sociocultural anthropology observed long ago

that the ontological categories of *nature* and *culture* powerfully structure western cognition. Anthropologist Philippe Descola termed this schema *naturalism*, further exploring how this shapes the ways in which people understand and relate to other people and beings around them. Understanding the warrior turn in contemporary society is facilitated by engagement with this schema. Emergent warrior identities are not only translatable through ontologies of nature/culture dualism but also reflect contemporary society's deep historical and nascent struggles with these categories. Climate change, globalization, civil rights campaigns, indigenous/anti-colonial movements, and debates over land and resource management have powerfully challenged classic western assumptions about nature and culture. The warrior turn is an expression of western culture's attempt to muster a riposte to these challenges.

Today the rituals at American Lake are no longer seen as specific to Native American veterans. Likewise, Euro-American veterans no longer see "warriors" as something different from them. Though uncommon prior to the 21st century, the term has been widely embraced by contemporary veterans and others, such as domestic police (an approach and mindset that has recently come under well-deserved scrutiny). For veterans, they see themselves as warriors and less so as "citizens who served."

Veterans who embrace the term warrior use it to mean a distinct kind of person, often imagined as a privileged caste in "warrior cultures" throughout human history. In

contrast to WWII veterans who returned to the U.S. from war with the intent of strengthening their nation as civilians, contemporary veterans who embrace a warrior identity often feel an "otherness" in relation to civilians. They come home with the intent of continuing to be warriors, strengthening their society through maintaining their inherent martial values.

This worldview has been reinforced by contemporary literature and media. One analogy for this, already popular from retired Lt. Col. David Grossman's 2004 book On Combat, achieved ubiquity after it appeared in the 2014 film American Sniper. This analogy posits that there are three kinds of people in the world. The vast majority of people are "sheep," who are virtually helpless and naïve about the dangers of the world. The remaining people are either "wolves," who prey on the sheep, or "sheepdogs," who protect the sheep from the wolves.

In applications to U.S. society, the sheep represent the majority of citizens. Wolves are the criminals, terrorists, and gangsters who are seen as constantly trying to penetrate our borders. The sheepdogs are the "warriors" of our society, a category that not only includes military personnel but increasingly domestic police as well. In his book, Grossman explains that the sheepdogs should expect to be disliked by the sheep for their brutality and disagreeable nature. But, he argues, the sheep do not realize how

helpless they are and that it is only through the violence of the sheepdogs that they do not become the immediate prey of wolves.

Grossman has been training police for two decades to think of themselves as warriors. Recently, he has come under heavy criticism for his "bulletproof mind" training program that teaches cops to kill with less hesitation.

When I first went to American Lake, I wondered if such notions of "warriordom" might inspire non-Native veterans to pursue healing in the sweat lodge community, seeing it as a form of warrior-specific therapy. As warriors who distinguish themselves from civilians, they can imagine postwar suffering to be unique and transcendent of PTSD, which can be experienced by civilians due to ostensibly less "profound" forms of trauma that can be treated by biomedicine in a clinical setting.

From my conversations with first-time attendees, I have learned that some veterans are attracted to the ceremonies for this very reason. But what unfolds transcends their preconceived notions. Far from a macho-warrior event where men demonstrate their strength and capacity for pain, the ceremony escorts veterans through something deeper and potentially more challenging—a journey that's more like an unraveling.

Mike Lee, the elder who leads ceremonies at American Lake, grew up on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana and is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Many times, I

have heard him share his wisdom with new attendees before they go into the lodge for the first time. In addressing the notion of "warriordom," Lee explains that the English word "warrior" is an artifact of European worldviews and Hollywood. It fails to adequately describe many of the Indigenous peoples, including his own ancestors, to whom it is applied.

Even within contemporary North American society, Lee cautions that "a 'warrior' and a 'soldier' or 'veteran' are not exactly the same thing." The overwhelming brutality of Western war, where people travel far from home and lay waste to foreign people and lands, would be

incomprehensible to his ancestors. Lee explains, "Often, the goal was not even to kill but rather to take the enemy's spirit—challenge their bravery."

Lee's teachings provide a cultural context for understanding the suffering that people experience. The American Lake approach has less to do with treating a medical diagnosis and more to do with how the violence and alienation of modern society, along with toxic frames for masculinity, Indigeneity, and race, harm the men and women who work to uphold notions of "manhood" in both war and everyday life.

Iwáyazaŋ azúyeya is, perhaps, beyond the scope of clinical therapy or conventional biomedicine. However, it is not seen as being specific to a warrior caste.

Oriented to a different cosmology than what most Westerners hold, the teachings convey to attendees that the expectations of manhood and warriordom are not inherent; they are culturally constructed.

While Western societies often have a "law and order" view of the world, which means some veterans are unable to forgive themselves for their battlefield actions, the alternative proposed is a worldview that emphasizes adjusting and getting back to life through recognizing what happened and seeing it from a new point of view.

That new point of view offers a spirit-oriented perspective: that humans (and all living beings) are spirits who come to this world to live and interact, and then cycle out of it to return to the spirit realm.

So, for veterans who have killed or hurt others, the teachings from American Lake, which are shaped by the cosmologies of Plains tribes, may shift their sense of themselves and others. Elders focus on learning from horrific experiences—not carrying guilt and self-hate about one's past actions. They emphasize moving on to become better people who do not harm others.

For many participants, the Euro-American cultural understandings that can create painful dilemmas—and that also frame that suffering as "PTSD"—simply begin to fall apart.

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony and other rituals are purifying or cleansing people from the sickness that comes from fighting other people (and the self). Faced directly, the experience of being afflicted with one's own violence is understood and attendees are accepted with a kind of guaranteed belonging that is unlike anything I have observed in my own society, including in my experience in the military. A sincere, radical belonging is virtually guaranteed to attendees provided they respect and adhere to the ritual decorum of the sacred grounds.

4.1.5 In the Lodge

The third round, late in the ceremony, is always the hottest. I sat cross-legged on the dirt, Uŋčí Makȟá (the Earth Grandmother) underneath me, receiving our prayers. The relative coolness of the ground, contrasted against the overwhelming heat emanating throughout the lodge, seemed to confirm this (I thought about how my sense of "coolness" on the ground was actually the sensation of the heat in my body dissipating into the earth). By this point in a sweat, I am usually terribly uncomfortable physically, as much from the restrictive seating position as the heat. I felt the sweat rapidly dripping onto the inside of my right calf from my nose and I briefly wondered how it was possible that, this far in the ceremony, there was still enough fluid in my body to drip out of my pores at this rate. We sang. I always find my inhibitions limited by this point in the Ініpi and my behaviors much more reflexive and immediate. The

people around me experience the same. Someone is weeping. The drums beat louder and I hear the hiss of the pouring Elder dripping water on the stones with his cedar bough. This will make it even hotter. Respiration becomes difficult here, as the hot, pungent steam takes the place of breathable air. Sometimes (and today is like this), the sound of my rapid, pounding heartbeat becomes difficult to distinguish from the drums. The songs and prayers of my neighbors become difficult to distinguish from the voices in my head. I know that I am crying; saying something. The sense of my physical body becoming acutely distressed is becoming impossible to ignore, as I hear another splash on the stones. I begin to see flashes of light: blue and purple. These appear both as lightning-like splashes and small orbs rapidly zipping through the lodge. I look into the dimly glowing íŋyaŋ tȟuŋkášila (grandfather stones) in the center of the lodge and I am certain that they have faces, looking at me, singing the songs, compelling me. My eyes are burning and I close them.

I stood on the outskirts of the village. Facing west, I gazed over the wadis that cleaved deep wedges out of the centuries-old path that I had been tasked with guarding. To my left, the Tarnak river valley stretched for many kilometres. From my perspective, the valley appeared like an enormous brown stagnant lake, with the spattering of oases resembling clumps of dark green algae floating on the surface. Damming the lake was the mountain ridge that forms the plateau that holds the saline Abe Istada basin. On my right, the mountains that feed the Arghandab river

hovered closely, though not nearly as closely as suggested by the optical illusion created by the expanse of this place. My assistant gunner Jose was beside me, sharing in our assigned task of preventing anyone from leaving or entering the village while other members of our company were searching it. This was a typical 'cordon and search' type mission, in which a village is surrounded and contained by one group of soldiers while another group of soldiers search the village for weapons, bomb-making materials, or people. For the two of us, our place in this mission was a familiar one, composed of the bizarre juxtaposition of stress, hypervigilance, and boredom. For several hours, we would stand guard in the blistering arid heat, strictly forbidding anyone from crossing our path, in or out. Jose got my attention: 'Hey, Sgt. James is coming over here'. I turned to see my approaching squad leader, who had been searching the village. Leading in front of him was an Afghan man, walking with his hands bound behind his back. When Sgt. James arrived, he told me that I would have to keep watch on his prisoner while continuing to guard the entrance to the village, allowing Sgt. James to return to his search. I looked at the forty-ish man as Sgt. James guided him to sit on the ground. Something seemed wrong to me. I inquired:

Me What did he do?

Sgt. J He was acting suspicious during our search. Keep an eye on him.

Me Did he try to do something?

Sgt. J He was out while we clearly had this place on lock-down. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever for somebody to be out while we are conducting our search. He was up to something. Watch him.

Me So he was just walking around? Sgt. J I told you he was acting suspicious. He's hiding something. Guard the fucking prisoner.

Me Yes Sergeant.

Sgt. James glared at the man with suspicious disdain for a moment before turning and walking back into the village to continue the search. For a brief moment, I saw Sgt. James' jaw clench and I fully expected him to kick the bound man. He resisted whatever it was that he was tempted to do and he walked away. I saw that this man was shaking violently, from fear. This image unsettled me; in spite of having endured many frightening situations with people, I couldn't remember having ever seen an adult shaking from fear like this. He was shaking the way a person shakes when pulled from cold water, in the early stages of hypothermia (which I have seen). I could tell that this man was trying to contain his trembling but it was uncontrollable. There were rumors that were common in Afghanistan at that time. These rumors hinted of horrific abuses of prisoners at the hands of American interrogators. For our part, we were told that these rumors were Taliban propaganda, intentionally spread to cultivate public distrust and undeserved hatred towards Americans. This was in the era, difficult to imagine from the present, before the publication of the infamous and damning report that revealed mass torture of GWOT

prisoners and I genuinely did not believe at that time that the rumors were true (Feinstein 2014). Honestly, I didn't really know what became of the prisoners that we apprehended and turned in to be processed at Kandahar and Bagram Airfields. I was an Infantry soldier and it was my job to fight and capture 'enemy' but after that, it was anybody's guess. What I knew was that I would guard this man for the remainder of this mission and would then take him to the nearest Forward Operating Base. After that, a detail of soldiers would be sent to take him to Kandahar Airfield for interrogation. What I knew was that this man was in a state of pure terror, fully believing that he would soon be subject to some form of horrible torture. I would never know what became of him or if he was returned to his home. At that time though, what I was sickeningly certain of was that the terrified man sitting on the ground next to me as I guarded him with my M249 machine gun had committed no act of terrorism. I knew this in my heart. He had committed no crime other than simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In the lodge, somebody says something about guilt. I feel stricken and I look back to the tȟuŋkášilas, who were still looking at me.

I had felt differently a month earlier, on that dreadful night mission when someone had shot at us and appeared to run into someone's home to hide. After breaking into the mudbrick home and identifying a suspect, I didn't ponder the complexities of the situation I was participating in. As children screamed in horror, we tore through their home looking for evidence … . I remember one child in particular, standing rigid; frozen like a statue, with her mouth

gaping, screaming from overwhelming, petrifying terror … . A woman, perhaps her mother or grandmother, was bent over her, attempting in vain to comfort her. Our suspect became very belligerent and this was the first time in my life that I pointed a firearm directly into someone's face … . And I barked at him, mustering as much authority and menace in my voice as possible, that I would kill him if he didn't sit down and shut up … . While later escorting this man alone across the arid landscape, under an unpolluted night sky that seemed to be made more of stars than darkness, I did not question his guilt. He was Taliban. He was a terrorist. He was the unmarked antagonistic other who was bent on my destruction. He was the cannibal, the wild man. I delivered him to our patrol base and the next day he was taken to Kandahar Airfield to be interrogated. I forgot about him almost immediately and I didn't think about him again for a very long time, but I'm thinking about him now. The screaming child has been a frequent sojourner through the years, though. Today, wherever she is, does whatever wicked phantom that haunts her dreams bear my face? Do I feature in her nightmares as often as she does mine? In both versions of the story, mine and hers, I am the villain.

Nitȟuŋkášila ahítuŋwaŋ yaŋkelo he!

Nitȟuŋkášila ahítuŋwaŋ yaŋkelo he!

(Your grandfather is sitting there, watching you)

I'm preparing the lodge, with a few other regular attendees. The willow frame is exposed and we are spreading blankets over it to keep the heat in, and the light out, of the lodge. I begin

talking about the guilt I feel; my sense of unworthiness and inability to get past it. My whiteness, maleness, in participation in the GWOT weigh heavily on me. This isn't the first time I've talked about this. By this point in my fieldwork, this insecurity of mine was known to the majority of the people in our community. A Native friend looks at me and asks me, in a serious tone:

"were you raised as a Christian?"

After being shocked by the seeming randomness of his question, I responded "yes"

"Do you still practice that religion?"

I responded "Not really. I occasionally worship with Quakers but I haven't joined the church and I no longer identify as a Christian."

He went back to work, as he continued talking to me:

"I thought so."

His voice strained as he used a long stick to lift a blanket over the top of the lodge.[27]

"Back in the residential school days, the missionaries all taught us about guilt. Taught us to feel guilty for being Indian. Guilty for being alive. Guilty for existing. Guilty for the sin of our ancestors. That stuff sticks with you. It is deep in our community. The missionaries got us

[27]Traditional sweat lodges are low to the ground, below the height of an average sized human. However, to be friendly to participants with disabilities, the lodge at American Lake is taller. This allows participants with certain prosthetics or in a wheelchair to fit through the door.

real good with that. Even when you try to go back to the old ways, it still sneaks up. It takes a lot of conscious work to get past that."

"Right" I responded.

"Our beliefs, our faiths, didn't even have a sense of 'guilt' like that. Nothing like it. That kind of guilt, something that follows you around and convicts you, disciplines you, keeps you self-guessing, makes you feel like you can't do better, makes you feel like you aren't entitled to everything the Creator has actually given us, is a Western invention."

"I hear you" I said.

"So what I'm saying is, you may not identify as a Christian anymore….. but you are still worshiping those same gods by a different name."

In the lodge's intense heat, I shared in a combined sense of vulnerability and non-judgement with everyone around me. I felt others sharing in my suffering, as I shared in theirs. I felt a kind of liberation in the radical belonging offered in that place and in concert with trust in the confidentiality we promised to one another. There was a lot of iwáyazaŋ azúyeya in each of us, and we worked together to give it to the earth.

Belonging and connectedness are central to what participants receive at the American Lake community. As one participant said to me: "They know the importance of recognizing the human that exists in us all. You learn to see the fundamental good in people … even in yourself."

4.2 Part II: Warrior Subjectivity

The figure of the warrior has been an object of anthropological study since the birth of the discipline. Through time, as anthropology's focus moved to ethnographies of power and state violence, etic studies of warriordom were replaced in large part by critical anthropologies of militarism/nationalism. However, in the contemporary western world, the concomitance of multiple sociopolitical phenomena is producing a new kind of identity, which chooses the signifier *warrior* to describe itself. This increasing preference among modern soldiers and military veterans (as well as police, security personnel, defense contractors, and others) to identify explicitly as warriors was not common until relatively recently and is indicative of significant, deeper transformations in society. I call this discursive rupture the "warrior turn."

The root for this transformation in the identity of militarized populations can be found in the intersection of shifting biomedical trauma ontologies and domestic social transformations that began in the late 20th century. These changes have led militarized populations to reimagine what their relationship to society fundamentally is. Anthropological studies of warriordom have conventionally described warrior identity being constructed in binary opposition to stigmatized external "others" who are designated as "enemies" (Viveiros de Castro 2004; Taylor 2014; Harrison 2014). This notion of identity translates easily with the established anthropological analytic of

nature/culture dualism, particularly when explaining the kinds of violences that are associated with modern imperial militaries. This analytic provides the implicit basis for most contemporary critical military anthropology, even when it is not explicitly stated as so. However, the transformations that have taken place in 21st century militarisms compel us to reconsider warrior identities and how people who identify as warriors might understand their relationship to society (Gusterson and Besteman 2019; Rutherford 2019). The contemporary warrior ontologically relates to categories like nature and culture, while imagining how other objects relate to those categories, in ways that challenge extant anthropological frameworks for warriordom and militarism. Most importantly, the contemporary warrior constructs their identity in binary opposition to civilians in the warrior's own society. In this schema, the domestic civilian becomes the inimical "other" in the warrior's cognition, even more so than real or imagined external enemies.[28] This shift may be most poignant in domestic police, who have enthusiastically adopted warrior identity in recent years.

The emergence of right-wing sociopolitical movements around the world oblige concerted scholarly attention towards the militarized nodes embedded in those currents; armies, defense-contractors, police, and paramilitary organizations can act as hotbeds

[28]This is not to say that contemporary militarism is no longer xenophobic or no longer poses a meaningful threat to people outside of the warrior's society.

for proto-fascist growth (Gebauer 2019; Duncan 2019; McCausland 2019; Hume 2019). Their (often) armed nature, combined with their variable access to governmental and/or corporate legitimacy, enables the possibility of these nodes becoming the sites for both structural and physical violence against civilians. Soldiers, in particular, serve as the archetypal representatives of nationalist policy at the violent margins created by nation states and capitalist/imperialist regimes (Bickford 2011, 3). This convention has been complicated though in the era of the all volunteer force (AVF). In places such as the United States in the post-conscription era, citizens must volunteer to occupy this emblematic role. Perpetuating this system is a complicated task, especially in a world where even working-class white Americans feel increasingly alienated from the project of the capitalist/imperialist nation-state and of government per se. Outside of direct compulsion, the continued production of soldiers and police occurs in the messy intersection of numerous sociopolitical projects, including colonial racialization, Enlightenment rationality, and biomedicalization. The warrior turn represents a shift in how these projects are interpreted in the cognition of those who consider themselves to be "warriors." I emphasize the project of biomedicalization here. The historically increasing prominence of combat trauma in discourses of war (and increasingly in policing), combined with the reification of combat trauma as a pathogenic object, is an essential element in the development of contemporary warrior identity. Combat trauma

is also, simultaneously, the analytic through which veterans are translated to civilian society, as well as to themselves.

4.2.1 A Western Invention and the "Nature/Culture Divide"

Many scholars will note that some European notions of self and other can be traced at least as far back as Ancient Greece (Descola 2013, xv). The Greek notion of "kosmos/chaos" signals belief in an ontological divide between the realm of "culture," which includes agency-bearing civilized humans, and the realm of "nature," which acts as a kind of substratum that is independent of culture (Mikkelsen 2016, 202). The realm of nature not only includes non-living processes, plants, and animals, but also "uncivilized" peoples, who are thought of as animal-like. However, Marshall Sahlins argues that the journey of these ostensibly Greek ideas into modern civilization was not continuous. According to Sahlins:

> a bunch of indigenous artists and intellectuals in Europe got together and began inventing their traditions and themselves by attempting to revive the learning of an ancient culture which they claimed to be the achievement of their ancestors, but which they did not fully understand, as for many centuries this culture had been lost and its languages corrupted or forgotten (Sahlins 1993, 7).

Rather than Classical Greece, Sahlins identifies the early modern era as the time when Europe began to define itself as a "self" per se, with these notions of nature and culture. Importantly, this was concomitant with the "age of discovery," when European merchants and explorers traveled the globe looking for trade routes and opportunities to expand their wealth and empires. The European encounter with various diverse

peoples created the impetus for Europeans to classify themselves and others, generally around principles that justified their own superiority and right to conquest.

William Pietz, through his exploration of the genealogy of the word "fetish," shows how the interaction between Portuguese merchants and the peoples of West Africa during the early modern era produced ideas "not proper to any prior discreet society" (Pietz 1985, 5). When Portuguese merchants encountered West African peoples, their goal was to trade with them and to ultimately profit from these trades (this was also when early capitalism was coming into being). However, the socioeconomic system utilized by these West Africans was different in many ways from the European mercantilism, which created barriers for the Europeans who wanted to engage in profitable trade. To be able to justify the supremacy of their own system and ultimately impose it upon the people they wanted to trade with, it was necessary to stigmatize those people and customs as backwards and primitive. It follows that Europeans began to see their own customs as the normative culmination of a diachronic progression of human development.

Silvia Federici observes a similar phenomenon taking place within Europe during the same time period. However, the target of this process of stigmatization was European women (Federici 2014). Federici's argument is that the goal of the famous European "witch hunts" was to dispossess women of prestigious and powerful social

roles that they held in European society, prior to the rise of capitalism (though contemporary popular culture imagines the witch hunts as a medieval phenomenon, Federici shows that the vast majority of witch hunts and executions of accused witches actually occurred in the early modern era). As capitalists in Europe consolidated power through the accumulation of the means of production, there was an intentional stigmatization of forms of labor that had allowed women to have some degree of economic autonomy. Severe penalties for prostitution were imposed, while herbalism, healing arts, and midwifery developed negative, magical connotations (92-115). Similar to how the term "fetish" came to racialize and stigmatize Africans, the term "witch" was used to stigmatize women who acted outside of subservient, domestic roles. Recalling the nature/culture divide in European ontology, Federici argues that women became the "savages" of Europe" during this era (100).

The connection of this type of stigmatization to the nature/culture divide is described by Sherry Ortner in her argument that: "….devaluation of woman could be accounted for, quite simply, by postulating that woman is being identified with, or symbolically associated with, nature, as opposed to man, who is identified with culture. Since it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if woman is part of nature, then culture would find it "natural" to subordinate, not to say, oppress her" (7-8). Thus, a significant part of the European socioeconomic/sociocultural projects

that developed throughout the modern era was to define a social place of "culture" and to give it dominion over "nature." As capitalist projects, imperialism, and the slave trade reached all parts of the world, this dualism increasingly assigned the agency of "culture" exclusively to property-owning men who were *white*. Hence, the subordinate role given to everyone else (women, all people who were not classified as "white") was seen as completely natural. This notion would receive additional justification in the 18th and 19th centuries, as the ideas of scientific racism and social Darwinism made their way into the linguistic register of Europeans (Gould 1981).

In the 19th century, Arthur de Gobineau argued, forcefully, that there are "innate and permanent differences in the moral and mental endowments of the various groupings of human species" (Gobineau 1856, 172). He used this argument not only to stigmatize non-white peoples, but also to stigmatize the lower classes of Europe as being genetically inferior to aristocrats. Gobineau's theories would be used to justify white supremacy in the United States, as well as the rise of Nazism in early 20th century Germany. Then-contemporary anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Tylor argued against "race" as a biologically-valid classifier: "For the present purpose, it appears both possible and desirable to eliminate considerations of hereditary varieties or races of man, and to treat mankind as homogeneous in nature, though placed in different grades of civilization" (Tylor 1920, 7; Morgan 2000). However, they also

believed that diverse human societies could be understood to be scientifically classifiable, with some more advanced than others. This does place "lower" societies in a place closer to culture than nature. While this system of classification resists overtly racist institutions of slavery, apartheid, and genocide, they still affirm cultural colonialism as being for the good of the colonized people.

4.2.2 Colonial Violence

The development of racialized/gendered notions of self and other in modern Europe shaped the degree and nature of violence that was employed in the colonial project. The dehumanizing imagination of racialized peoples as being animal-like allowed the imposition of extraordinary violence in conquest. On top of the severe trauma that this inflicted upon colonized peoples, the performance of this violence also had significant psychological effects on the people who imposed it.

Anthropologist Simon Harrison has shown how this specific application of the nature/culture divide in European culture produces profound violence. Harrison argues that though war is always violent, it can be shown that white people can be shown to always exercise greater violence in war when their enemy is racialized (Harrison 2012). When white soldiers imagine themselves as "people" and their enemies as "animals," they begin to imagine themselves as "hunters" and their enemies as "prey." According to Harrison (who is a structuralist), this binary corresponds with

an established European mythos that lionizes the triumph of civilization over nature (Figure 10).

Figure 1

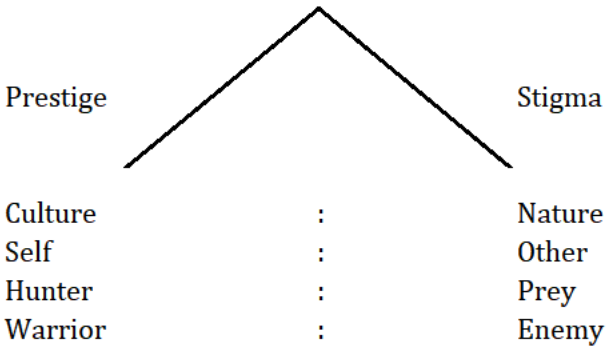

Figure 10: Binary as Described by Harrison

Harrison supports his argument by showing that white soldiers, imagining themselves to be "hunters," often take "trophies" from the bodies of their slain enemies, much like hunters keep the skins, horns, or antlers of their game. This same dynamic is seen in the lynching of African Americans by white southerners throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Harrison shows that lynched African Americans were dismembered and skinned, and their lynchers often displayed their body parts, proudly, as trophies in their homes. Similarly, American soldiers fighting racialized Japanese soldiers during WWII often took war trophies in the form of body parts (most commonly, in the form of skulls). There is virtually no incidence of this taking place in the European war theatre, where American soldiers saw the Nazi soldiers they killed in combat as "white."

Another important phenomenon that Harrison documents is that the same white Americans who took war trophies from Japanese soldiers they killed in WWII, often became deeply disturbed by the war trophies later in life. In some cases, these veterans began to believe that they were being haunted by the ghosts of the people associated with these objects and they often became obsessed with repatriating the body parts to Japan for military burial (this can be challenging, as it is difficult to prove that these body parts are actually what the American veterans claim that they are). Harrison points out that people becoming disturbed by these body parts coincided with the change in American public attitudes towards Japanese people in the mid-late 20th century. Prior to the mid-20th century, Japanese people were much more racialized/stigmatized in American culture. As American society increasingly viewed Japanese people as fully human, the holders of Japanese war trophies become increasingly disturbed by them. A similar occurrence was reported by Arthur Kleinman in his therapy of a WWII veteran who had fought in the Pacific theatre. This man, called "Winthrop Cohen" by Kleinman, suffered through the majority of the second half of the 20th century from a psychological affliction that Kleinman struggled to diagnose. According to Kleinman, Winthrop Cohen was deeply vexed by the extraordinary violence that he had performed himself during the war, against people he admits to having once seen as racialized and less than human (Kleinman 2006, 33-36).

The profound and unique violence of this kind of war was also noted by Renato Rosaldo. Rosaldo admits that when went to the Philippines in the late 1960's, he carried with him a sense of disgust at the bloody practice of headhunting by the Ilongot people he studied. While he was there, he received notification by mail that he was being drafted to fight in Vietnam. He was shocked to discover that his Ilongot hosts not only encouraged him to dodge the draft, but offered to help hide and protect him as he did so.

Having expected the Ilongots to be impressed with his potential warriordom, Rosaldo pressed his interlocutors for clarification. They explained that the kind of fighting that they witnessed on their island, between the United States and Japan during WWII, violated their sense of ethical decency in ways that were almost indescribable. To the Ilongots, a modern soldier was something very different from what they considered to be a warrior in their own society. The overwhelming scale of that combat, which killed as much as 1/3 of the Ilongot people in the crossfire, was unlike anything they had ever seen. Above all, the Ilongots found the presence of regimented subservience that defines not only armies, but industrial western civilization itself, inconceivably odious (Rosaldo 1993, 65). Thus, the Ilongots described soldiers as "the people who sell their bodies." For Rosaldo, his own conception of how things functioned in culture vs nature

(a conception that was previously disgusted by Ilongot headhunting but did recognize the same ethical murk in cultured soldiering), was deeply problematized (Rosaldo 2000).

While the fact of trauma experienced by both colonizer and colonized may appear self-evident, the colonial experience creates other deeply complicated forms of relationship. Rosaldo identifies the phenomenon of "imperialist nostalgia," which occurs when "a person kills somebody and then mourns his or her victim." He follows: "In more attenuated form, someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to his or her intervention." Rosaldo abstracts this one more degree, applying the term to cases where "people destroy their environment and then worship nature" (Rosaldo 1989, 108). With this final abstraction, Rosaldo explicitly links various colonial violences to the nature/culture divide. This kind of complex crisis of identity was also identified by Michael Taussig in his book *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. After imposing almost unimaginable colonial violence on indigenous people during the "rubber boom" in the 19th and 20th century Amazon, European rubber traders eventually sought out indigenous shamans to heal them from the trauma of performing this violence (Taussig 1986).

It is important to note that these experiences are in contrast to how the nature/culture divide was originally imagined to structure colonial

cognition. Importantly, Sigmund Freud established at the beginning of the 20th century how a normative soldier of western civilization should experience war violence, in terms of their relationship to peoples, places, and things that were classified according to nature or culture. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud outlined his theory of mind that equated "neurosis" with "primitive" cognition (Freud 1913). According to Freud, the mind of a "neurotic" person is analogous, in constitution, to the mind of a "primitive" person, with both defined by their subservience to mistaken beliefs and paranoias. This is due to the inappropriate projection of psychic phenomena onto the external world. The pathological nature of primitive and neurotic psychologies are made recognizable through contrast to healthy minds which are, according to Freud's theory, exemplified by the modern, rational thinker (who is, almost by default, Eurowestern) who draws well-informed conclusions through informed reason. The nature/culture divide is the prominent analytic here, with the psychologies of "primitive" and "neurotic" people relegated to the sphere of "nature," while the psychologies of rational Europeans are located, ideally, within the sphere of "culture."

To support his theory, Freud borrows heavily from the anthropology of Sir James George Frazer. In doing so, Freud theorizes combat trauma in particular, contrasting the soldiers of modern armies with "primitive" headhunting warriors from several Pacific

islands that were noted by Frazer. Frazer references the ceremony of an indigenous people of Timor:

> Moreover, a part of the ceremony consists of a dance accompanied by a song, in which the death of the slain man is lamented and his forgiveness is entreated. 'Be not angry,' they say, 'because your head is here with us; had we been less lucky, our heads might now have been exposed in your village. We have offered the sacrifice to appease you. Your spirit may now rest and leave us in peace. Why were you our enemy? Would it not have been better that we should remain friends? Then your blood would not have been spilt and your head would not have been cut off (Frazer 1951, 247).

Freud paraphrases Frazer, noting that these headhunters would place the heads of their victims in places of honor at the table and, for a period of time, place the best cuts of meat from their own meals in their mouths (Freud, conscious of the prejudices of his modern European reader base, beseeches his readers to not dismiss this as a form of desecration, or as some kind of mocking ritual). Freud assures us that this ritual is performed with the sincere intent of appeasing the spirit of a killed enemy.

Important here is the notion of *haunting* which, respectively, is theorized differently by Frazer and Freud. For Frazer, the experience of haunting is simply a matter of magical thinking; a case of uneducated natives who simply haven't realized that ghosts aren't real. For his part, Freud takes up this notion of haunting and makes the initial, rather insightful step of interpreting the ghosts of killed enemies as animations of the sensation of deep guilt for having killed another person, that are buried deep in the unconscious of the killing warrior…. After this insight, however, Freud maintains that the belief in ghosts *is* pathological and associated with a form of

primitive neuroticism to which modern European soldiers should not be subject. In that regard, the modern soldiers of western civilization should not have to conduct themselves according to the decorum needed by paranoid, neurotic primitives. While locating the "primitive" warrior and their customs within the sphere of nature and the modern European soldier within the sphere of culture, Freud pathologizes the guilt of killing at war and, perhaps, the embodied experience of combat trauma itself. It could very well be the case that this rational model of human psychology creates the conditions for the kinds of war, waged by modern armies, that allow for unprecedented levels of psychological injury on the behalf of all proximal people. However, Freud's rational soldier-subject is absolved, by virtue of his cultured cognition, of the responsibilities held by primitive "warriors" who are bound to contend, haplessly, with the wild and spooky realm of nature. This understanding is the epistemological basis for later cultural struggles with combat trauma.

4.2.3 Race, Class, and Colonialism in North America

The experiences of colonialism and racialization have impacted the people who live in North America in various powerful ways. The ideal of normative whiteness (and its associated values discussed earlier in this paper, such as patriarchal masculinity, violence through warriordom/hunting, scientific rationality, and other things) has been deeply impressed upon not only white people, but also people who are classified as

"black" or "Indian." This manifests in cases where white people struggle to see the validity of white privilege in North America and also when movements of resistance (such as those associated with blackness or indigeneity) themselves perform to the ideals of colonial society.

Frantz Fanon identified many of these dynamics in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon examines public culture in colonial society and observes the nature/culture divide, associating black and indigenous people with nature and wildness:

> The Tarzan stories, the tales of young explorers, the adventures of Mickey Mouse, and all the illustrated comics aim at releasing a collective aggressiveness. They are written by white men for white children. And this is the crux of the matter. In the Antilles – and there's no reason to believe the situation is any different in the other colonies – these same magazines are devoured by the local youth. And the Wolf, the Devil, the Wicked Genie, Evil, and the Savage are always represented by Blacks or Indians; and since one always identifies with the good guys, the little black child, just like the little white child, becomes and explorer, an adventurer, and a missionary 'who is in danger of being eaten by the wicked negroes.'" (Fanon 1967, 124)

Also:

> In the Antilles, the Black schoolboy who is constantly asked to recite 'Our Ancestors the Gauls' identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizing colonizer, the white man who brings truth to the savages, a lily-white truth. The identification process means that the Black child subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. He invests the hero, who is white, with all his aggressiveness – which at this age closely resembles self-sacrifice: a self-sacrifice loaded with sadism. (126)

However, in spite of this kind of psychological identification with colonial white society, the Black person in that society can never really be white. According to Fanon, black people are forced to live their lives performing for white approval, which is the

ultimate (perhaps only) source of status in colonial society. However, white people are actually *afraid* of black people, who they see as wild and threatening. Because of this dynamic, the best efforts of the colonized person of color are always doomed to fail.

According to Circe Sturm, this reality has actually inspired the American indigenous peoples of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma to try to actually *become white*. Within this group of over 175,000 people, nearly half of them have less than 1/16 of American Indian ancestry (Sturm 2002). Sturm identifies two reasons for this. One of these is that a substantial population of the Cherokee Nation are "Cherokee Freedmen," who are descended from African slaves who were brought to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears. These people are phenotypically black and, increasingly, are deeply stigmatized in the Cherokee Nation. Many of them are "culturally" Cherokee, speaking the language and practicing the customs, but the Native American population has segregated them. The other factor identified by Sturm is that the Native population has practiced intentional exogamy with white people for several generations, hoping to "breed out" their own Indian features to become phenotypically white. Within the racial hierarchy of the Cherokee Nation, the most stigmatized people are the Freedmen. Above them are dark-skinned Cherokee who appear phenotypically Indian. The most privileged Cherokee are those who can pass as white. Sturm shows that even Cherokee people who look Indian have been pushed out of Cherokee governance and leadership and that the tribe has been governed exclusively by the "white" Cherokee for

many years. This all supports Fanon's argument that racialized peoples ultimately internalize racism and aim to please white supremacist society.

J. Matory shows in his book *Stigma and Culture: Last Place Anxiety in Black America* that racialized hierarchies also exist within groups of people who are all classified as "black" in the United States. According to Matory, this racialized hierarchy utilizes a slightly different scheme, placing African Americans at the bottom, below other "black" people (Matory 2015). In this case, the bourgeois aspirations of immigrants to the United States from Africa and the Caribbean encourage them to perform their superiority over African Americans to white supremacist society. This particular distinction also occurs with the mixed-race descendants of Africans and American Indians. Though these people sometimes appear phenotypically African, they will almost always deny their African ancestry and argue that they are unambiguously Indian.

For many colonized people, attempts to embody their own pre-colonial identity can be complicated by the imposition of colonial ideals. Bob Antone, a Haudenosaunee Indian man, observes that American indigenous communities have been so bombarded by colonial notions of manhood that it is difficult to access pre-colonial masculinity (Antone 2015). Scott Morgensen argues that colonial notions of masculinity were themselves invented for the purpose of achieving social dominance (Morgensen 2015).

The reality, according to Brendan Hokowhitu, is that many indigenous men end up reproducing highly toxic forms of patriarchal masculinity themselves, modeled on white society, in attempts to perform what they imagine to be pre-colonial indigenous masculinity (Hokowhitu 2015). This bears some reseblance to the situation identified by Fanon, through which colonial society has been taught to believe in tropes about the wildness of non-white people. However, while Fanon observed people attempting to perform whiteness in opposition to the wild stereotype, some scholars have identified cases of indigenous people appropriating the stereotype of wildness, believing that it is who they "really" are. This is often associated with the "warrior" trope, which I will discuss later in this paper (Tengan 2015).

The impact of racialization and colonialism on people who are classified as *white* is also significant. In the contemporary United States, challenges to white supremacist patriarchy have produced a mythology, which has been called the "deep story" by Arlie Russel Hochschild (Hochschild 2016). I will summarize Hochschild's account of the deep story as follows:

> *A person is standing in line, among many other people who are like him. They are white, older, Christian, and predominantly male. The thing everyone is standing in line for is "the American dream." This person is weary from a life of hard work and frustrated that the line is not moving more quickly. Behind him are minorities, poor*

people, humans of all ages.. Suddenly, he realizes that not only is the line moving too slowly, it is actually moving backward and, to his horror, he realizes that the people from the back of the line are cutting ahead of him. While he tries to be proud of the kind of life that he has lived, demonstrated through his commitment to conservative Christian morality, he is scolded by amoral liberals that his values are old fashioned and bad for society. The line cutters include immigrants, refugees, women, former President Obama, and even non-human animals. The people cutting in line complain about oppression incessantly and are being facilitated by someone; that someone is apparently the United States government. The man does not want to be uncompassionate but he realizes that at some point, he has to buckle down and commit to his values, banding with like-minded peers (135-140).

Carol Anderson frames the situation more harshly. In her book *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Anderson takes issue with the obsession white Americans have with so-called "black rage" that manifests in response to racial injustice. According to Anderson, some of the most profound social violences in American history have occurred at the behest of white people, as backlash against social advances by black people (Anderson 2016). An interesting observation made by Anderson is that the racial backlash against black people is often very damaging to the white people who carry it out. Some of the most racist regions of the United States

experience dire poverty among white people. Anderson argues that white people often choose political arrangements that are hurtful to themselves because their racism is so deep that it is *worth it* if the political arrangement hurts black people too.

The history of racialization and colonialism in the United States has created numerous tensions and anxieties, which can be damaging to the entire society (even those who are relatively privileged). However, these racializations have a remarkable capacity to situate various stigmatized/oppressed peoples against each other, to the ultimate benefit of white supremacist aristocracy. Patrick Wolfe argues that there is an underlying logic behind the differential racialization scheme in the United States, which makes it function so effectively. Wolfe argues that the forms of racialization that can be observed in the United States always correlate with something that white supremacist society wants to take from the stigmatized/racialized population (Wolfe 2006). For example, the different forms of racialization that were imposed upon black people versus indigenous people in the United States were each constructed to aid the project of stealing black bodies and stealing indigenous land, respectively. Wolfe calls these taxonomies of inclusion and exclusion. Because white Americans wanted indigenous land, their goal was to use taxonomies of exclusion for Indians, through which the descendants of Indians could become "white" if they chose to do so. Otherwise, they had to be exterminated. This also created an incentive for white people to appropriate

American Indian culture; the end goal was to eliminate distinctions between living Indians and white people so that Indigenous claims to land could be invalidated. In the case of African Americans however, the goal was to perpetually maintain a servile, subordinate class. The "one drop rule" made it impossible for the descendants of Africans to become white and the cultural incentive for people to distinguish themselves from African Americans was instituted. Thus, American Indian history is a mixture of genocide, theft, and cultural pressures to participate in whiteness. African American history is comprised of slavery, institutional segregation, and inescapable generational stigma.

A set of cultural events in the late 20th century contributed to the development of a particular kind of warrior identity, which is one of the major roots of today's warrior construct. Sociologist James Gibson observes that a crisis in white heterosexual Christian male identity developed at the end of the Vietnam War (Gibson 1994). On top of an intentional conservative/right wing political project of convincing Veterans of the Vietnam War that they were victims of left-wing hatred (a phenomenon described in detail in Jerry Lembcke's book *The Spitting Image* (Lembcke 1998) the Civil Rights Movement had expanded rights to people of color, women, and other social minorities that had previously only been guaranteed to certain white men. In this era, representations of a kind of white male warrior began to abound in popular media. This

identity was exemplified in the 1980's by the fictional action hero John Rambo. Rambo, who suffers from PTSD from his time as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, struggles to adjust to civilian life while his Army buddies die from cancer related to Agent Orange exposure. A picture of physical fitness and tactical prowess, Rambo becomes a survivalist, living in the woods as he wages a one-man war against a degenerate American society. The severity of his PTSD flashbacks cause him to conflate this experience with the Vietnam War and he unleashes overwhelming wrath against American authorities. Though he is eventually convicted and sentenced to hard labor in prison, the audience is left believing that Rambo is the story's real hero and that the actual villain was the degenerate American society that disrespected him. Following this archetype, white American men imagine themselves to be misunderstood warriors, emasculated by a society that has lost its values. This correlates with a rise in paramilitary activity and fantasy of acting out a Rambo-like guerilla war against domestic enemies, who are a hodgepodge of immigrants, feminists, liberals, and non-white urban criminals. In short, killing whoever one's own imagined "scumbags" happen to be, is the highest act of masculine honor.

Prior to the Vietnam War, media representations of male heroes tended to portray conventional soldiers or police officers who fought to preserve their societies within the confines of established laws and institutions. In the late 20th century, this

kind of hero was replaced by the "rebel" or the "lone wolf" who, usually after experiencing some sort of betrayal by their own society, was forced to fight to restore social order outside of civil restraints. Gibson argues that fighting *per se* became imagined as normative during this era, which led to the embellishment or even outright fabrication of enemies to fight. It was no accident, Gibson shows, that the sale of military-style firearms (and the marketing thereof) increased exponentially at this time.

The era spanning the late 20th century and early 21st centuries were also the time when overtly right-wing sociopolitical ideologies were accepted and became dominant among rural working-class white people in the United States. According to Thomas Frank, much of the white, rural population of the United States leaned left, well into the 20th century. However, the political strategies of the Republican Party successfully rallied this population through the aggressive mobilization of tropes concerning race, immigration, and religion (Frank 2004). Frank also argues that the Democratic Party chose to respond by courting white elites who were seen as liberal on social issues. The end result is demonstrated by J.D. Vance in his recent memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*. Vance shows that the primary motivating ideology behind many contemporary rural white Americans, is their overwhelming hatred for liberals, who they stigmatize with the stereotype of the "coastal elite" (Vance 2016). As was shown by Thomas Frank, right

wing strategists managed to convince rural and working class white Americans that people who vote for Democrats are sleazy, amoral scumbags who hate them.

Gibson's study, published in the 1990's, concerned a "warrior" identity that was primarily expressed through informal militia groups. I argue that a continuation of this is now prominent in the active duty military, veteran community, and increasingly, police and security forces. I call this shift "the warrior turn." The warrior turn is signaled by an increased preference for identification with the signifier "warrior" over the established signifier "veteran." The connotations of the word warrior versus the word veteran are quite different. I also argue that this shift is a factor in recent changes in diagnosing/treating war trauma.

Anthropologists have established that the identity of a warrior, in all societies, is a kind of *self* that is always defined by its relationship to a particular kind of *other* (Taylor 2014, Harrison 2012; Viveiros de Castro 2004). The warrior's other is known as the *enemy*. Philippe Descola has shown that the ultimate manifestation of warrior identity occurs when self:other / warrior:enemy plays out over the ontological substratum of a society. As shown earlier in this chapter, things associated with culture (men, white people, capitalism) are privileged over things associated with nature (women, nonwhite people, "fetishism). The realm of nature is thought of as a world of natural laws and processes, while the realm of culture is thought of as contingent and

subject to the special, free will of rational men. The place of the warrior in this naturalist ontology was shown earlier in the diagram (figure 1) of Harrison's description of warriordom. Nature is to culture as enemies are to warriors.

However, the warrior turn in contemporary Western Civilization reconfigured this structure of self and other. As veterans are heavily medicalized in contemporary society (Wool 2015), a brief analysis of changes in combat trauma diagnosis is a good place to start looking at how this is taking place. The influence of naturalist ontology in Sigmund Freud's account of combat trauma, discussed earlier in this paper, is clear. This created the archetype for how combat trauma was understood throughout the 20th century (figure 11).

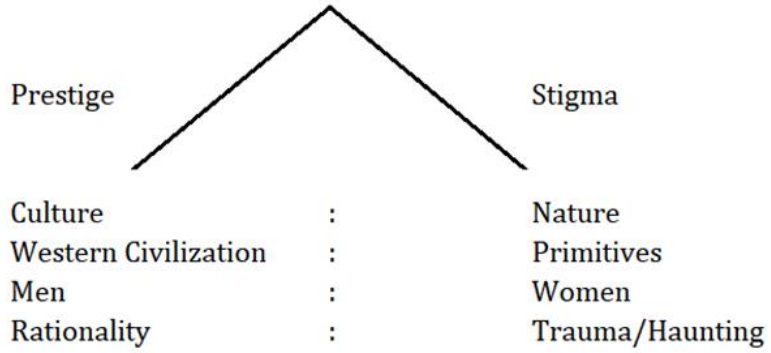

Figure 11: Binary as Developed by Freud

However, this became a problem in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, when the near ubiquity of combat trauma among veterans found its way into media and became a

matter of common public knowledge. This problem was resolved, within the confines of the naturalist schema, when PTSD appeared in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III, which was published in 1980 (American Psychiatric Association 1980). The designation of combat trauma as an amoral biomedical *disease* removed the stigma from sufferers, who could now be seen as fully rational humans (figure 3). The appearance of PTSD in the DSM was a massive social event, which has shaped public perceptions of combat trauma ever since (importantly, allowing people who suffer from all kinds of trauma to be seen as valid) (Figure 12) (Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Leys 2000).

Figure 12: Binary After Acceptance of the PTSD Diagnosis

However, in the 21st century, the PTSD diagnosis has become banal.

(Figure 13).

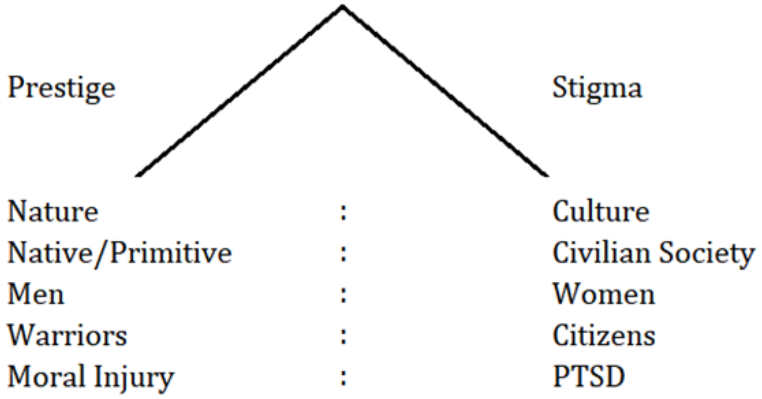

Figure 13: Binary With 21st Century Bioarchetypes

Historically, and in Descola's schema, anthropological critiques of the nature/culture divide are ultimately critical of the tendency for people to privilege culture over nature. The reason why is clear when one considers Harrison's account of colonial violence. It is easier to inflict violence when one imagines that the thing being acted upon is a thing of lesser value. However, there is a considerably different dynamic at play in the warrior turn. The new warrior self is imagined to inhabit the realm of *nature*, which is now considered normative due to alignment with what are imagined to be universal laws and archetypes. The realm of *culture*, which is inhabited by civilian society, becomes stigmatized. The reordering can be taken a step farther (figure 14).

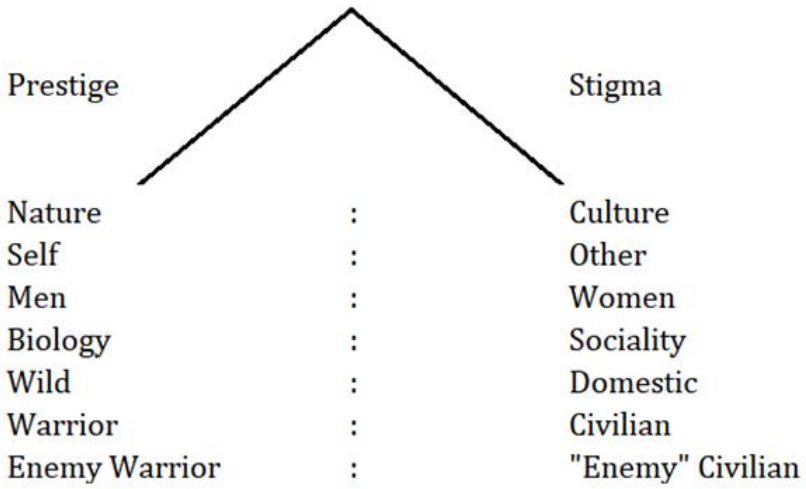

Figure 14: Binary vis a vis Warrior Turn

Rather than constituting a warrior self through antagonistic relations with an enemy other, the warrior self is constituted through agonistic relations with the civilians in the warrior's own society. In this way, the warrior might imagine that they have more in common with other warriors throughout the world and history, including those they fight, than with civilians anywhere. Importantly, the symbolism associated with the warrior turn overlaps broadly with the racist symbolism used by many extreme-right-wing groups, including Neo-Nazis and other white nationalists. The impact of the warrior turn (and the way that the warrior determines who their "other" is) in arenas such as the law enforcement sector is also worth exploring.

4.2.4 Warrior Industry

Though the disaster of the Vietnam War and the culture wars of the 80's-90's generated a kind of warrior mentality described above, associated primarily with anti

government and paramilitary groups, the warrior discourse was remobilized in the post 2001 era. Today, literature marketed to veterans ordinarily uses the term "warrior" in the title, a phenomenon that is almost exclusive to the 21st century (Coker 2007; Hoge 2010; Jones 2013; Tick 2014; Denning 2015; Waddell and Orr 2015; McNally 2016; Guerin, Ferris, Bush, and Arden 2017). Almost ubiquitously, these works speak to the challenge of homecoming, PTSD, and the difficulty of coping with civilians and civilian life. Also in the 21st century, an entire industry of warrior apparel emerged (Messinger 2013). Such apparel is marketed not only to veterans but also to police, emergency first responders, and increasingly to civilian "patriots."

Though marketing to "warriors" is a relatively recent phenomenon, it is premised by a connection to the ancient. The "warrior diet," a popular nutrition plan marketed by Israeli special forces veteran Ori Hofmekler, promises to recreate the "primal habits of early cultures such as nomads and hunter-gatherers, the Greeks, and the Romans" (Hofmekler 2007). In this same book, Hofmekler posits that contemporary western dietary patterns result in a population with disproportionately high levels of estrogen, which are reduced by the "warrior diet." Arguing that the contemporary world "emasculates men and threatens women" replacing "primal, instinctual standards" with "confusion about gender identity," the figure of the warrior is framed as antidote to the threat of the femininity and weakness of modernism (173). The images

found on warrior apparel are notable for the creative ways that they conflate images of contemporary soldiers and police with imagery associated in popular culture with venerated ancient "warrior cultures," such as Spartans, Vikings, Maori, Lakota, Medieval crusaders, and Colonial North America.

Sebastian Junger's popular book *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* also frames PTSD as a matter of the returning warrior's struggle with going home to a sick society (Junger 2016). Comparing contemporary veterans to captured indigenous peoples who attempted to escape colonial occupation, Junger argues that the conditions of combat mirror the hunter-gatherer lifestyle that humans evolved to practice. During combat deployment, soldiers experience the kind of environment that they are naturally hard-wired to thrive in. Returning home after this is a soul-crushing experience, as veterans discover that modern society is decadent and plagued with social anomie. Much of what is diagnosed as PTSD, Junger theorizes, is actually the suffering that comes from this dissonance. Junger also champions the importance of gender roles, arguing that both the nurturing of "women" and the bellicosity of "men" are necessary components of a healthy society. (CITATION JUNGER).

The 21st century "warrior" claims an identity that is premised by its connection to an ancient, inherited archetype. While the modern soldier/veteran has been conventionally theorized as a supercitizen; a defender, product of, and servant to liberal

democracy and the modern nation state (all institutions of culture), the warrior is something else. Contemporary warriors envisage ancient transcultural castes that are believed to be biologically normative in the human species. Their social role is instinctual, self-evident, and beyond the confines of modern liberal democracy. The biggest fight thought to be facing the contemporary warrior is the naivety of contemporary civilians. Modernism, democracy, and social progressivism (projections of culture) have eroded the strength, security, and order provided by biologically normative warriors (projections of nature). Notably, this warrior identity has spread from military, veteran, and paramilitary groups to domestic police forces (Crisp 2016; DeGrave 2018). There, it finds expression in debates about police brutality, which frame police work not only as sacred but so unimaginably dangerous and traumatic in comparison to the lived experience of most civilians, that the health of our society is dependent upon absolute submission to them, or risk immediate death (Dutta 2014). Emphasis here is on locating the police-warrior in a sacred realm that is beyond the reach of civilian judgement.

4.2.5 Returning to Warrior Trauma

The historical relationship between combat trauma and modern day warriors reflects changing societal attitudes towards war itself, as well as the relationship between veterans and civilian society. In the past, combat trauma invited stigma, while

biomedicine struggled to name and contextualize the suffering associated with war. Today, soldiers not only expect traumatization but may consider it normative; a validating battle scar that marks the afflicted as a fully legitimate warrior subject, transcendent of the less authentic civilian sphere.

In the 1980's, it was assumed that a "warrior" was something *else*; something different than a modern soldier. With some implication of primitivity, it was assumed that healing the warrior required an entirely different context as well. Today, this distinction has withered. The term "warrior" is increasingly used in clinical literature to describe modern soldiers, veterans, and police, with an increased willingness in this literature to embrace more ceremonial forms of therapy. (Johansen, Laberg, and Martinussen 2013; Lancaster and Hart 2015; Lancaster, Kintzle, and Castro 2018) . While the nature/culture divide historically aligned culture with whiteness, modern militarism, and clinical therapy and aligned nature with indigeneity, warriordom, and ritual, the categories have shifted. Culture is aligned with civilians, modernity, and clinical therapy while nature is aligned with warriors, biologism, and ritual.

Global political changes over the past few years have destabilized certain neoliberal power structures of governance. The contemporary uniformed fighting person may not feel the same affinity for U.S. global military dominance that was taken for granted in the earliest years of the GWOT. Increasingly, they may support a much

less interventionist military apparatus than the current one. Rather, this person may prefer a more isolationist approach to military strategy. Though it can be argued, correctly, that these changed dynamics can still be strategically mobilized to serve the same imperial purpose, there is more going on and more attention should be paid to the domestic implications of the warrior turn. Today, it is increasingly the case that the idealized, emblematic "warrior" is no longer the deployed soldier expanding colonial U.S. economic interests abroad. The classic warfighter fighting against alien enemies overseas is being replaced by the militarized warrior disciplining the domestic front. The domestic warrior guards a flock of naive sheep at home, managing their errant behavior, purging them of invaders (immigrants, dissident leftists, and other hard-to-police populations), and restoring their society to a form more accordant with "nature."[29] The vision may be less defined by expeditionary war than by a concerted project to convert the warrior's home society into an idealized "warrior culture." The color and shape of this culture is reflected in the frustrations of some of the more overt manifestations of recent domestic violence in the United States. The common

[29]This references Colonel David Grossman's profoundly influential metaphor of "sheep, sheepdogs, and wolves." This metaphor likens criminals and terrorists to "wolves," the bulk of civilian society to hapless and naive "sheep," and warriors to "sheepdogs," who must protect defenseless sheep from predatory wolves. Grossman's analogy posits that sheep cannot survive without sheepdogs but the sheepdog's authority and rough demeanor inevitably elicit resentment from the sheep (Grossman 2009). This analogy became popular when it was quoted in the film *American Sniper*. Like contemporary warrior identity, Grossman's metaphor projects an archetype as being ancient and pre-cultural without considering the practice of sheep-herding, with its internal dynamics, as a relatively recent human invention.

denominator of many contemporary mass shootings, "incel" activism, and misogynistic violence is a longing for a society that privileges the esteemed warrior as an elite, respected for their physical strength and commitment to conservative principles.

Modern warrior identity is intrinsically linked to combat trauma ontologies. Prior to and during much of the Cold War, militarized identity stigmatized combat trauma as a sign of weakness or neuroticism. The contemporary warrior identity originated in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and intensified at the conclusion of the Cold War, as the PTSD diagnosis biologized combat trauma as inevitable and amoral. This kind of warrior identity has become increasingly mainstream in the 21st century, as the *moral injury* quasi-diagnosis permitted the existence of transgression in combat trauma discourse. This kind of warrior identity is associated with romanticized notions of ancient "warrior cultures" which are imagined to have glorified violent men, while accepting their pathologies as an inevitable burden to bear by a society that is better off for doing so. However, indigenous elders who have been ascribed "warrior" status by contemporary society argue that this notion of warriordom is a projection of western metaphysics that does not translate into the ontological perspective of many ostensibly "warrior" peoples.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a brief summary of how identities within Western Civilization have been constructed, for both colonizer and colonized. I emphasized the importance of the imagined divide between nature and culture in the construction of these various identities. I focused a bit more on local contexts within North America, where I conduct my own fieldwork as an anthropologist. In the end, I discussed how major changes are occurring in the identities of people who consider themselves to be "warriors" in western society.

This final point merits far more discussion; investigating this will be a major aim of my dissertation research. Similar phenomena have been observed in Australia (Talbot 2012; Dixon 2014) and in Scandinavia (Daugbjerg and Sorensen 2016; Pedersen 2016). The case in Scandinavia is notable, as progressive scholars there were shocked to see warrior identity materialize in their society, which they imagined to be peaceful and anti-war. However, a warrior identity has developed there, through which Danish men imagine themselves to be Vikings in pre-modern Europe. As a global phenomenon, the warrior turn increasingly produces a mentality that values violence, for its own sake, as part of a natural and universal archetype. At the same time, colonial-era notions of race (and 19th century scientific racism and social Darwinism) are

providing the categories invoked by self-imagined "warriors" when they idealize the kind of society they believe they are protecting.

It is important to note that the contemporary public framing of veteran suffering takes for granted and is founded upon the notion that one root is located in the tensions inherent in the radical difference between military and civilian worlds (known in the vernacular as the civilian/military divide). However, these tensions might actually stem from the attempt to either transform the civilian moral world into the military one, or to craft a new (though it is framed as ancient) all-encompassing moral world that affords different rules to civilians vs warriors. Is the warrior turn, ultimately, an attempt to force civilian society to accept the local moral world of militarism?

Having read Arthur Kleinman's work on local moral worlds, I gave a conference presentation several years ago, after observing that veteran suffering was often rooted in the different local moral worlds of the military and civilian domains (Kleinman 2007). Having interviewed many veterans, and having gone to war as a soldier myself, I understood that one of the challenges of postwar "homecoming" is the fact that the registers of right and wrong are defined very differently in the military with respect to civilian society. What I had not yet realized at that time was the degree to which there may be an actual project of preventing "warriors" from ever having to conform to the moral world of civilian society. I wonder now: to what degree might the

veteran/military suicide epidemic be less a matter of the physical, mental, and logistical demands of contemporary military life, and more a matter of the degree to which militarized subjects are trained to other themselves from the world; such that the world becomes an unlivable place?

What do we do when the colonizer decides "I am the savage"

5. Sundance

Woven throughout this dissertation study is my own experience: the healing journey that I undertook in the pursuit of both scholarly questions and my own personal recovery. In the midsummer of 2019, I was invited by the Elders to attend a Sundance ceremony, an offer I accepted. I had long felt that the Sundance was a place I didn't belong, but it became one of the most profound and transformative experiences of my life. This chapter is a necessary part of this dissertation, as it shows both an insight into my own encounter, and a number of tensions that trouble me in action.

5.1 My Experience

Throughout my time with the American Lake community, I expressed my unwillingness to engage in cultural appropriation. My concerns about this occasionally came across as obsessive in the perspective of my interlocutors, who were occasionally irritated by my anxieties about this subject. On more than one occasion, I was admonished that it would be good if I would just take the good things I was being offered and stop worrying about whether or not it was appropriate. My anxieties never completely went away (and they continue to exist today). However, during my time at American Lake, with the encouragement of my community, I increasingly allowed myself to experience that which I was offered, the preoccupations of anthropologists be damned.

The Sundance is a sacred ceremony practiced by several societies of the Northern Plains, and is one of the Seven Sacred Rites of the Lakota. This ceremony is many things: sacred, controversial, contested, and dramatic. Unfortunately, the drama of the Sundance (particularly the visceral "piercing ritual") has become romanticized by Western popular culture and rendered fetishistically cinematic in films such as *A Man Called Horse*. Especially during the concomitant rise of Pan-Indianism and New Age spirituality in the late 20th century, questions such as who should or should not be allowed to participate in the Sundance (along with the other Lakota rites) became passionately contested by multiple parties. An entire dissertation could be written just about this subject; I will do my best to provide enough context to serve the rest of this project, as well as to make some sense out of my own presence/experience at this sacred ceremony.

One day, I arrived for a talking circle ceremony at the American Lake chapel. As I had observed in previous years, the sweat lodges and talking circles increasingly focus on the Sundance (which is held in the late summer) as it approaches. The Sundance was coming soon and I overheard conversations between the Elders discussing work being done in preparation for the ceremony. For my part, I assumed that the Sundance was something I would never experience firsthand. I was familiar with the ceremony, as well as the controversy over whether or not it was appropriate for white people to

attend. At the conclusion of our talking circle, Marty pulled me aside and told me that he was feeling a leading to invite me to the Sundance as his guest. I resisted and told him that I understood that it was probably not appropriate for me to be present at a Sundance, but Marty pressed and I accepted, though I told him that I had made plans to go fishing with Dave at that time (Dave usually attended the Sundance and was himself a Sundancer, though he was not planning to attend that year for reasons I do not recall). Marty offered to talk to Dave for me, to explain to him that I would be going to the Sundance. Dave was present at that talking circle, and Marty called him over to us. After explaining the situation, Dave stated that he would change his plans to attend himself, and would drive me to the dance.

Popular culture, anthropologists, and even many Lakota themselves can represent Lakota faithways anachronistically, as continuous with a knowable fixed tradition from the pre-colonial past (Starn 2011; Posthumus 2015). However, Lakota faith is dynamic and has adapted through the years to numerous circumstances (and was never truly fixed, having been practiced with variation by different bands) (Bucko 1999).

I could perhaps oversimplify the great debate into a few basic questions: Who is allowed to practice this faith? Furthermore, who is allowed to claim Indigenous identity? Where is the line between respectful cross-cultural sharing and inappropriate

cultural appropriation? Can *anybody* truly lay claim to an authentic, unbroken line of tradition unpolluted with colonial influence? Many scholars have devoted a lot of attention to these questions; trying to properly answer them is far beyond the scope of my work. They are magnificently important though and are a continuous presence in my head. The story of my time at the Sundance is something I share in the hope that there is something valuable in it to people observing from many different perspectives; not to argue one way or another about my own presence and behavior there.

When Dave arrived, Marty told him that he had invited me to attend the Sundance, which was going to interfere with our fishing plans. Immediately, Dave said that he would attend the Sundance and would pick me up and drive me there. This seemed to shock Marty a bit, but the matter was settled.

At this point in my fieldwork, I was living on Anderson Island. Anderson Island is the southernmost island in Puget Sound and is only accessible by a Ferry, which runs between the island and the town of Steilacoom several times per day. That morning, after taking the ferry, I sat by the dock on the Steilacoom side of the route. I had packed some clothes and basic hygiene items into my backpack, not entirely sure where I was going or what I would need for my three days there.

Dave arrived and got out of his car to greet me and told me he was giving me a gift. He presented me with a bundle wrapped with red cloth, containing sage, a conch shell, and a few other sacred items. I thanked him and got into the car.

After Dave started driving, I admitted to him that I actually had no idea where we were going. There are Sundances held in a number of locations; most of them (including this one) are not open to the public and are held in wilderness locations, where they are unlikely to be noticed. In this case, it is held on a piece of national forest, set aside by the federal government for this use. We would be driving for several hours, deep into the Pacific Northwest forest.

We made only a couple of stops during our drive: once to get gas and another time to pick up some items to give as gifts. As we drove, our conversation drifted from the Lakota music we were listening to, to the signs of extensive logging visible from the long gravel road we were traveling.

"This music is going to stick with you" Dave said, in an almost warning tone. "You're going to hear these drums, the Sundance drums, for days after you get back. You'll be singing the songs to yourself for weeks."

Dave had been to many sundances and was a sundancer himself. Having endured several sweat lodges with Dave, I had seen the piercing scars on both his chest

and back (the back scars from his time as the *eagle dancer*, during which he drug a Bison skull behind him, attached through piercings). (CITATION)

The Sundance is a sacred ceremony practiced by several of the Great Plains peoples and is one of the seven sacred rites given to the Lakota by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. During the Sundance, people pray and make sacrifices, asking for good health and healing for the community (broadly defined). Though the Sundance is a complex, multi-faceted ceremony, it is best-known to the non-indigenous public for the grueling, visceral, physically painful feats endured by the dancers. Notably, the dancers fast for several days and attach themselves to a sacred tree through holes pierced in their chests, which eventually tear through their flesh as they pull away from the tree. This particular ritual has been dramatized and exoticized in several portrayals in western media. This adds to the popular misconception that Lakota ceremonies such as the Sundance, Inipi, or Hemblechia, which are difficult and can involve the endurance of pain, are rites of passage through which warrior men prove their strength and bravery. Quoting Thomas Mails:

> In writing about the Sun Dance one is tempted to begin with a vivid description of the absorbing, flesh-piercing ritual. But to do so is a tragic mistake, for in focusing everything upon a single, albeit sensational, fraction of an entire and splendid religious ceremony, the overall significance of the four-day event is missed, and it is inevitable that the rest of the Sun Dance will be ignored and misunderstood – even by some Indians.
>
> That is indeed a tragedy, because the Sun Dance is a profound celebration of thanksgiving, growth, prayer, and sacrifice. It is full of significance, full of power, and full of drama, for the Sioux and for all mankind." (Mails 1978, 2)

Governments of both the United States and Canada passed a number of laws banning Sundances in the 19th century, beginning in 1881. During this time, the ceremonies went underground and were conducted in secret until the mid 20th century, when the prohibitions were lifted (Mails 1978, 6).

We turned off of the gravel road, went a short distance, and a clearing opened up in front of us. I could see a camper pulled over to the left, with a group of people standing watch over the entrance to the ceremonial grounds. Dave rolled down his window and a couple of people approached the car, and they immediately recognized him. After a friendly greeting they asked him to turn off his car, as a round was occurring and we needed to wait. Dave turned the key and we got out of the car.

In front of me was a large flat clearing, somewhat down the hill from us. It was surrounded by densely forested hills on all sides, with some ancient, massive cedar trees towering over the others. To our right (which was north), a mountain ridge rose sharply above the ceremonial grounds. In front of me and to my left, several cars were parked in formation. Around the clearing and tucked into the forest were several campsites, including tents, campers, and tipis. To our right, an outdoor kitchen area was established, with several women preparing food and cleaning dishes and cookware.

The sound of drums and singing echoed through the clearing. At the far end away from me, at the southwestern end of the oval-shaped clearing, was a circular,

roofless structure. I could see men, dressed in long red skirts, dancing around a tree in the center. At the opposite side of the structure, a group of singers were playing drums and singing songs in Lakota. Around the structure, people were dancing and singing. Adjacent to the structure, a group of tipis was surrounded by a barrier, allowing only the tops of the tipis to be visible.

I stood there for several minutes, until the music stopped and the dancers retreated to the blocked-off group of tipis. The people who were dancing around the round structure dispensed to various areas of the ceremonial grounds.

Dave introduced me to the people who greeted us on our arrival. Almost immediately, I felt very much that I was "different" from the other people present at the Sundance. It was obvious that I was not "Indian." Most of the people at the Sundance knew each other; though the majority of the people were more darkly complected than me, the people and atmosphere reminded me somewhat of the very blue collar, folksy Appalachian Webb family reunions of my youth. Likewise, the Webbs were "clanish" and any outsider would have been obviously so and treated with suspicion. However, I noticed that when Dave or anyone else introduced me to their friends as a veteran, their countenance would soften and my reception would turn warm.

Marty walked up to us, with Steve. Steve had secured our group's campsite at the periphery of the grounds. I quickly received instruction on some of the ceremonial

etiquette of the place (for example, there are geographic lines on the grounds that one is not supposed to walk across) and I was taken to our campsite.

We walked along the northern periphery of the clearing, with the forest to my right and everything else to my left. Multiple campsites were tucked into the woods, some small and some larger, ranging from tipis and tents to small campers. We passed the sweat lodge, where fire tenders were cutting wood. I recognized Joseph as I passed by, working with the firewood, and he shouted his "hey little brother!" greeting to me. Steve led us to our campsite, which was at the northwestern corner of the clearing. He had a camper parked there, with a tent pitched beside it. A few camp chairs were set up facing south, overlooking the tops of the tipis that housed the sundancers, concealed next to the dancing area. A hammock was strung between two trees, on the west side of our campsite. The men who were older than me would be sleeping in the camper and Joanne was sleeping alone in the tent. I was assigned the hammock and I placed my backpack underneath it.

In 2003, in response to the mass cultural appropriation of Lakota spirituality, Arvol Looking Horse, the 19th keeper of the sacred bundle of the White Buffalo Calf Woman, issued a proclamation regarding the usage of Lakota ritual by non-Lakota. Speaking to the Sundance:

> The only participants allowed in the center will be Native People. The non-Native people need to understand and respect our decision. If there have been any unfinished

commitments to the Sundance and non-Natives have concern for this decision; they must understand that we have been guided through prayer to reach this resolution. Our purpose for the Sundance is for the survival of the future generations to come, first and foremost. If the non-Natives truly understand this purpose, they will also understand this decision and know that by their departure from this Ho-c'o-ka (our sacred altar) is their sincere contribution to the survival of our future generations.

Continuing:

Please understand the Wi-wanyang-wa-c'i-pi Ceremony is not only taking place in the center (Ho-c'o-ka) with the dancers. The ceremonial participation also depends on all the supporters on the outside of the arbor who should be in prayer. From the gate, to the cook shack, to the fire-keepers, to the supporters around the arbor, to even the moon camp, all people are still a part of this sacred ceremony" (Looking Horse 2003).

Figure 15: Arvol Looking Horse

Having studied the proclamations of Looking Horse, I committed to keeping distance from the altar at the center of the Sundance, where the sacred tree was placed. I was not sure yet what my time at the Sundance was going to look like, but I identified

the altar and contemplated how I might move and act in deference to it during my presence on the grounds.

Shortly after placing my things in our camp, Marty offered me some water and invited me to sit next to him in a camp chair. It was hot and the water went down fast. Marty began to explain the symbolism of things at the Sundance. Near our camp, I could see the tops of the tipis where the Sundancers stayed. We had only been sitting for a minute when I heard the sound of drums and singing. Marty offered to take me to the edge of the courtyard and he instructed me to remove my shoes. There was a cottonwood tree, covered in colorful prayer ties. An eagle dancer was pierced to the tree, where he was to remain, exposed to the elements, for the entire four days. The Sundancers emerged, each holding an eagle bone whistle in their mouths and weariness already etched on their faces. I stood back, but Marty walked to the structure and began to participate in the song and dance.

It is not appropriate for me to recreate certain details here. There is a good book to reference. Several times per day, everyone converged around the arbor to sing and dance. Lakota songs follow a pattern, of call and response. At certain, emphasized parts of the song, the crescendo, everyone would look to the sun and reach for the sky. This was the pattern for the next three days. Repeatedly, throughout each day, music would begin and the dancers would come out. Everyone would crowd around the courtyard

and I would stand behind them, listening to the songs and singing along when I knew them. A piercing ritual would take place sometimes, followed by uproarious cheers when the dancer would break free. The eagle dancer remained pegged to the tree, with an ever-increasing look of suffering on his face.

Back near the entrance to the grounds, the cooking area was constantly buzzing with the action of the group of women who were cooking for the attendees. They provided three meals per day, making an announcement when each meal was ready. With the exception of the sundancers, who were fasting throughout the ceremony, everyone would walk up the hill, stand in line, and get their food. We ate under a large awning on long, cafeteria style tables and the women cleaned the dishes when everyone was finished eating.

I can't remember the jokes to repeat them here, but the women working the kitchen picked on me incessantly. Every pass through the line for food, visit to throw away trash, or even walking by the kitchen area brought me ridicule. It was witty and sharp but I treated it as good natured and tried my best to respond with my own self-deprecating jokes. It wasn't hurting my feelings.

I finished my first meal and was about to return my dishes to the kitchen when one of the women approached me carrying a large tub. Without saying a word, she pushed my plate out of the way and dumped the contents of the tub, which was full of

potatoes, in front of me. Also without a word, she placed a peeler and a large pot next to me, and walked away. I understood my assignment and peeled all of the potatoes, filling the pot. Just as I was finishing, the same silent woman returned and dumped out another tub full of potatoes in front of me. I peeled them, cleaned up my mess, and returned to my campsite.

That first night, I quietly crawled into my hammock as the rest of my party (with the exception of Joanne) went into Steve's camper and closed the door. I fell asleep almost immediately. The temperature dropped but I was wrapped up in my old military blanket and managed to stay warm enough to sleep, until it began to rain. I felt compelled to try and endure it, thinking of the eagle dancer who was pegged to the tree, not far from me. It didn't take me long to concede and I crawled out of the hammock and into Steve's camper, and curled up like a dog on the floor.

I was awakened the following morning by the sound of drums and singing. I quickly got up and went to the edge of the courtyard, and watched the dancers come out. The eagle dancer, who had spent the night on the ground exposed to the elements, was on his feet and dancing with a visible lethargy in his movements. I noticed that Uncle Terry (an elder Paiute veteran who was a regular attendee of sweats at American Lake) was there. Uncle Terry usually came and went with Joseph, who had already been at the Sundance for two days. I looked back towards my camp and saw Elizabeth

(Joseph's wife) walking in. When the song ended, I said hello to Uncle Terry and walked back to our camp with him.

Elizabeth seemed surprised to see me and she asked me if I had ever experienced a Sundance before. I said no and told her that I was still finding my footing there. Someone suggested that we would need to expand the footprint of our site a bit, to accommodate for Elizabeth camping with us. A couple of members of our party went to the edge of our site and began trying to remove a few saplings, with some difficulty. I went back to my backpack to retrieve a large knife that I usually carry with me in the woods, to help cut the vegetation from the area. Joanne saw me and spoke, with a sigh:

"Oh, boys and their knives."

I felt a little defensive; I don't really like being associated with male gender stereotypes and I started to defend myself. Joanne placed her hand on my shoulder and said:

"It's okay. You don't have to explain yourself to me."

I said "okay," and began cutting vegetation.

I heard the call for breakfast and made my way to the kitchen. I got in line, right behind a boy who was perhaps 8-10 years old. When I got close to the food, one of the women serving breakfast snapped at him:

"What are you doing? That's your uncle standing behind you. Why are you standing in front of your uncle?"

The boy moved from in front of me and took his place in line behind me. I felt an immediate urge to say something, to tell both the kid and the woman that I didn't mind him being in front of me. I held back though, recognizing that by doing so I would be violating the custom there. It still felt uncomfortable to me.

I sat at a table with Dave, who began telling me about different sorts of forest spirits that the local people believe in. As he was talking, one of the women serving food shouted an insult at me. Dave told me "they wouldn't pick on you like that if they didn't like you."

"I'll have to take your word for it" I responded. Shortly thereafter, a huge pile of potatoes and a peeler appeared in front of me.

I will avoid naming names here, but shortly after this, a couple of conflicts materialized in our group. One of these occurred when two of them disagreed over the meaning of some symbols at the Sundance, as they were trying to explain them to me. I could tell that they were becoming legitimately angry with each other and I wished that I wasn't there. I felt responsible for their argument, which I believed would not have happened if I had not been present, and I thought of historical anthropologists who were accused of creating the conflicts they wrote about. I stepped away to go to the

bathroom, and when I returned the two of them were no longer at camp. A member of my group informed me that one of the two men had left the Sundance for good. The reason he gave was that the anger he was feeling was inappropriate for a sacred ceremony like the Sundance and he considered leaving to be the responsible thing to do. I look of guilt certainly came over my face, and I sat down. Elizabeth spoke to me:

"It isn't your fault."

"Are you sure?" I responded.

"I'm sure" she said. "This is what Indian men do. Some of the biggest fights you will ever see are over what certain traditions mean or don't mean. You should see how Joe (Joseph, her husband) and Uncle Terry get into it sometimes. It gets really intense."

Elizabeth retrieved a book from her bag and gave it to me.

"I was meaning to give this to you anyway; I didn't know you were going to be here but I'll go ahead and give it to you now."

She handed me the book *Conversations with God* and said that she thought it would be interesting to me, considering some of the conversations we had had about divinity and spirituality. As I thanked her for the book, a man walked over to our camp and told us that there was going to be a veterans' healing service at the arbor. As our group had a disproportionate number of veterans, several people began moving

towards the arbor that was erected around the courtyard. Someone touched my shoulder and told me to come with them, and I did.

When I arrived at the arbor, there was a line of people, single file, with a man giving them instructions. The drums began beating and the Sundancers came back out into the courtyard. I heard the instructions, that the veterans were to enter the courtyard when directed to do so and that the Sundancers were going to pray for them. I felt my heart jump into my throat and I stepped aside and went to the back of the line. The singers began their song and the call came, so that the line of veterans began to move into the courtyard. When I got to the entrance, I spoke to the man who had been giving instructions.

"I'm not supposed to go in there. I'm not Indian."

He answered me:

"It is okay. This is a healing ceremony for veterans."

I pushed back:

"I have a firm understanding that non-Indians aren't supposed to go to the altar. I have a sincere appreciation for this gesture of acceptance, but I think that keeping this ceremony good means that I shouldn't go in there."

The man looked at me with a look of desperation in his eyes and he moved almost like he was in a panic. He pushed his long black hair out of his face and grasped my arms, looking straight into my eyes with a firm grip on each of my biceps.

"Listen my brother" he said. "There is something good for you here. We appreciate your service. We think that giving yourself to serve something bigger than you is a very important, very noble thing to do."

I was silent and looked at him with what was certainly a distressed look. He tightened his grip on my arms.

"We want to pray for you!" he exclaimed, with the same tone of desperation. "The Sundancers want to pray for you. We are here to dance for the people and to bring healing to the world. We want you to experience that healing. We love you. I love you."

He embraced me and squeezed me very tightly, before pulling back slightly and looking directly into my eyes.

"Please go get your healing. It is yours. Please."

I removed my sandals, nodded my head up and down, remaining silent, and he placed his hand on my back and walked me to the courtyard. As I walked into the courtyard, the song hit one of its crescendos, and the hands of everyone standing around the arbor went high into the air and the Sundancers blew their eagle bone whistles,

turning their heads towards the sky and lifting their hands vertically. One of the helpers, wearing a full eagle feather headdress, approached me.[30] He smiled and gently guided me towards the tree. Around the tree, several veterans were kneeling on the ground and the Sundancers began praying for them, swatting their bodies with eagle wing fans.[31] The man wearing the headdress spoke softly to me.

"Kneel down right here and place your hand on the tree."

I kneeled beside the other veterans like he said and, after a brief hesitation, I placed my hand on the sacred tree. I bowed my head and closed my eyes and gave myself up to the moment and the ceremony. I felt feathers stroking my body and I heard the prayers of the Sundancers as well as the helpers, mostly being spoken in Lakota, though I did hear some English as well. I opened myself up to the generous prayers and kindness of the people around me and, in my commitment to presence at that time and place, I pushed the feeling of being an intruder out of my mind.

The drums beat hard; I could feel the beats through the ground. The song reached another crescendo and the eagle bone whistles rang out again, above and all

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[30] Sundances include "helpers" who are respected members of the community who facilitate rituals in the sacred arbor.

[31] U.S. laws prohibit non-Indigenous people from possessing the feathers and body parts of several species of birds, including all birds of prey. I met a couple of people in the community during my time there who were contacted by officials when, for example, a bird of prey died in a zoo or was killed on the road. The bodies of the birds would be handed over to them, to process and produce the items used in ceremonies such as these.

around me. I thought about healing and the various kinds of affliction that had vexed me through the years. The prayers continued and I received them, for what felt like eternities, as the drums and whistles and songs rang all around me. I felt a hand on my back and a voice spoke, less like a prayer to Wakȟaŋ Tȟáŋka and more like a command to me:

"Let it go."

When those words were spoken, I felt a powerful, inexplicable sensation of *something* leaving my body, through my hands and into the tree. I felt both shocked and slightly deflated, as if something of real substance had exited me and there was now less of me there remaining. I don't remember the next few minutes very well. I know that the healing ceremony ended and we were walked out of the courtyard. I know that I put on my shoes and walked back to camp and sat with some water, and I drank it.

I felt overwhelmed and was certainly wearing a deer-in-the-headlights expression. Someone asked me how I was doing and I spoke, relaying my experience. The sensation I felt as I sat there at camp reminded me of how I felt after a traumatic experience like a car accident or severe combat. My heart was racing and I felt fixated on the moment; overwhelmed and struggling to make sense of it. Everyone around me was beaming though and seemed jubilant over my experience. People began

to refer to it exactly in those terms, saying "Chris had an experience." Someone asked "what left your body?" "I don't know" was my answer. It still is.[32]

The next time the music started, I went to the arbor, removed my shoes, and stood alongside everyone else. Reflexively, I danced with the songs, singing along with the ones I knew. That evening, people in my camp commented on how exuberant my dancing was (which is remarkable, considering that I'm not much of a dancer anywhere, much less at a ceremony where I worry about my presence being intrusive). There was certainly a sense of release, as I immersed myself into the ceremony. I was going to say "allowed myself to be immersed into the ceremony," though as I recall, I didn't feel like I was making choices anymore but was an empty vessel pulled into the ceremony, following it wherever it led.

That evening, the heyókȟas came out. Heyókȟas are usually described as a kind of sacred clown, similar in some ways to the kachina clowns of the puebloan peoples. However, heyókȟas become so through dreams. When someone dreams of the wakíŋyaŋ, the thunder beings of Lakota cosmology, they become heyókȟa. Heyókȟas are obligated to perform certain ceremonial duties, and are understood to be contrarian and to do things backwards. For the purposes of this chapter, I am not going to describe

[32] I am reminded of a piece of wisdom that was often given to people by Mike and others. They would say "when you pray to give something away, you should be sure that you really are ready to let it go. Because it might actually be gone, and it will be gone for good."

the ritual activities of the heyókx̌as that I witnessed. I found their costumes more frightening than silly and their behaviors mischievous and, categorically, strange.

Figure 16: Image of Heyókx̌as from the 19th Century

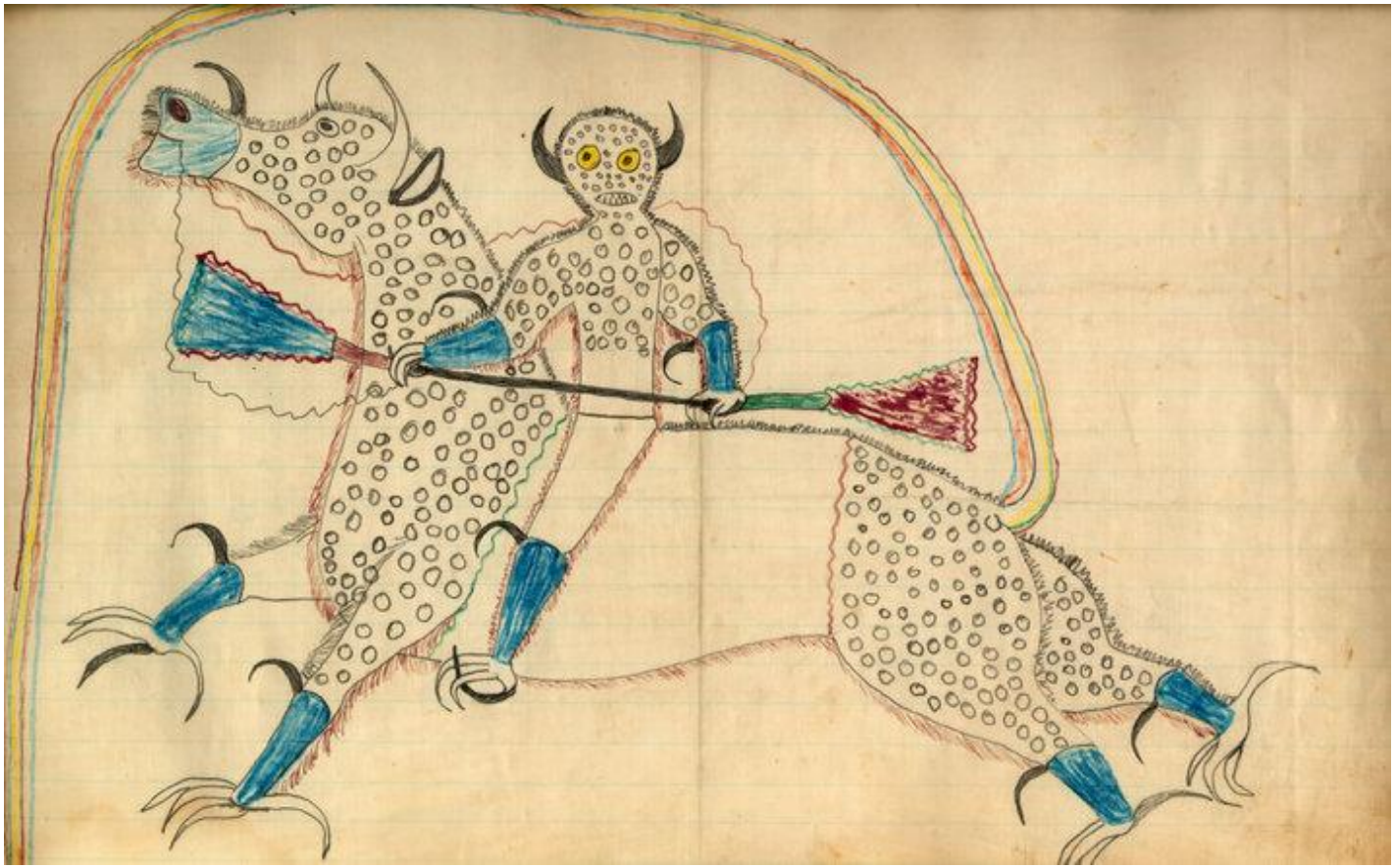

Figure 17: 1880 Illustration of wakíŋyaŋ by Lakota Artist Black Hawk

I met Joseph as I was nearing camp, and he asked me what was wrong. I told him how I was feeling. He responded to me:

"Well, it is a heyókȟa day. Everything is upside down and backwards. There is also a lot of stuff in the air. . . . I'm preparing a sweat lodge right now. I think you need to come and sweat with us."

I told him that he was probably right, but that my headache was so bad that it was hard for me to imagine enduring a sweat lodge.

"I understand, little brother. I think it might be good for you but you decide what you need to do. The stones are hot and we will be getting started soon. Come back here if you decide that you can."

I thanked him and went back to sit at camp, where I decided that it was not in me to endure a sweat. As people filtered back to camp, I was open with everyone about how I was feeling. Others responded similarly to Joseph. It was a heyókȟa day. There was stuff in the air. A sweat might be good. I maintained that I was not in condition to endure a sweat and that night I went to bed early.

Before the drums started in the morning, I was awakened by the sound of retching, coming from the Sundancers' tipis. After several days without food and water, I was sure that there was plenty of misery to go around between them, and I looked forward to them soon being able to recover and replenish their bodies' empty reserves.

My headache was gone and I felt much "lighter" on that day. With the sound of the drums, I went to the arbor, removed my shoes, and danced and sang. During one song, the helper in full headdress approached me with a čhaŋnúŋpa (sacred pipe) in his hands. He asked me:

"Has anyone ever given you a čhaŋnúŋpa before?"

I said no.

"Can I offer this to you?" he asked.

I hesitated. He offered:

"We will help you. Come with me."

He walked me around the arbor, until I was standing in front of the drums and singers. As someone placed a čhaŋnúŋpa in my hands, the Sundancers and their helpers were standing in a line, moving forward and backward, towards me and away from me in sequence. With each crescendo they looked to the sky and raised their hands. I felt overwhelmed and small but tried to maintain my composure so I could give the ceremony the reverence it deserved. The line of dancers kept advancing towards me and then away, their faces hollow with exhaustion and the sacrifice they had been putting their bodies through in prayer for the people. The singers had grown hoarse after singing almost continuously for the previous three days, such that entire words were coming out silent as they sang them, no longer able to produce normal speech

sounds. The music stopped and the helper asked me if I knew how to do this. I told him that I had been present for čhaŋnúŋpa ceremonies but had never led one. He told me that people would help me and he led me to a group of people who had been standing around the arbor. With their help, I led a čhaŋnúŋpa ceremony, and then returned the pipe to them.

I returned to the camp and some members of the group were waiting on me. One of them asked "did they give you a čhaŋnúŋpa?" I affirmed and he clapped his hands, exclaiming "yes!" Everyone in my group seemed to be filled with joy for the experiences I was having,

I stepped back out to the arbor and continued to dance, immersed in the ceremony, feeling entirely different than I did when I first arrived. During a song, I was presented with *another* čhaŋnúŋpa, and the entire process repeated. Back at camp I was met with the same questions, and my responses with greeted with even greater celebration. "This is a good day!" someone said. Another agreed. I concurred "it is a good day indeed."

I had to leave early on the last day of the Sundance. Dave announced to everyone that I was bound by a ferry schedule and that it was already going to be a stretch to get me to the dock in time to make it back to the island. We packed our things, walked to Dave's car, and my time at the Sundance was over.

Several days later, I visited Brad at his house. He immediately raised the subject of the Sundance and he shared that the entire Elder Counsel was very happy about the experience I had there. He also expressed his own joy at the goodness of that experience. However, he also offered his belief that too many people attend the Sundance. "The Sundance is very powerful" he explained. His argument was not so much from the cultural appropriation angle or the perspective that the wrong people being at the Sundance is bad for the Sundance. Rather, his position was that the power of the ceremony is extreme and is too much for many people. People become overwhelmed and make commitments that they cannot keep, to which they become spiritually obligated. People can get hurt and have their lives changed in ways they are not prepared for. The work of the Sundance is serious and important, is not for the faint of heart, and is not a spectator event. I thought again about the wisdom of giving something away and wondered what exactly it was that went out of my body at the tree.

While sitting on his porch, I shared with Brad how I had felt going to the Sundance, about Arvol Looking Horse's proclamation, and how hard it was to get myself to go to the tree when the attitude at the place was so in favor of me going. Brad went inside his house and returned with some sage and a few other sacred items. He lit the sage and gave a prayer and then asked me to give a prayer as well. After my prayer,

he shared a long, beautiful story with me that I can't repeat here, but that spoke to the fundamental spirituality of the earth and the universal truth that every being on earth is bound by. "What IS" he emphasized. Brad's life had been shaped in significant ways by racism and patriarchy, from the white supremacist threats that drove his mother away from her homeland and the time in his youth when he worked as a logger. He also felt strongly about gatekeeping and puzzled over the idea that there were places of worship that some people might be excluded from.

I looked back on my life and thought about my own youth growing up in the Pentecostal church. In those memories, I can recall some intense spiritual experiences. After I left the church, the memories of these experiences vexed me, as I remember thinking "if that wasn't God, then what was it?" After listening to Brad, I considered the possibility that it actually *was* God that I had experienced in my youth. However, unlike the Native Americans in my community, the church leaders of my youth did a very bad job of contextualizing the power of a sacred experience.

5.2 Sacredness

Sacredness is a deeply important facet of the healing path that can so effectively help people suffering from trauma and other forms of affliction. Often, when I'm telling people about my research (especially non-anthropologists), people assume that I am studying the effectiveness of trauma therapies, looking to improve the best-practices

implemented by biomedicine. Though having such an impact would be nice, this isn't really what I'm doing and the kinds of things that I have learned wouldn't translate very nicely into evidence-based medicine. I remember when I attended the conference on moral injury in Los Angeles, the prominent psychiatrist and trauma theorist William Nash had been moved by the presentations he had seen from various healing groups. At the end of the conference, he admitted that he was trying to think of how to diagnose and treat with "drumming" through evidence-based medicine, and considering how such a treatment might appear in the DSM. I am not confident that my work contributes meaningfully to that endeavor. Perhaps, the process of learning to recognize the very existence of sacredness goes a long way in healing.

War destroys belief in the sacred. Many of the people who go to war honor many things as sacred; things like religion, nationalistic ideals, and human life. The experience of war can erode one's belief in the sacredness of all of those things. The same thing can be said about so many traumatic experiences that people survive. The loss of those things can leave a massive hole in their wake. A veteran friend of mine, Feral, once shared her experience with these feelings. Feral is a transgender woman who had served in Afghanistan as a Special Forces Medical Sergeant while identifying as a man. She shared with me that one of the most enduring pains of the war was the

loss of all of the things she used to believe in. I understood the feeling she was describing.

I don't understand everything I experienced at the Sundance and, in spite of the kindness I was shown and the decision I made to embrace my presence in the ceremony, I still struggle a bit with the fact that I violated my own standard and went to the altar there. However, I know that I had an intense encounter with the sacred, as I had also experienced at times in the sweat lodge. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will go back to this concept of sacredness and will struggle with it as an object of analysis (though I have now come to "understand" it and embrace it on a sub-linguistic level.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter, I recalled my experience attending a Sundance ceremony. I was initially reluctant to attend, due to concerns about my status as a White man. After being compelled by Indigenous participants to put my anxieties down and join them in the ceremony, I had a transformative spiritual experience that left me with more questions but also gave me a sense of having moved closer to the center in my own healing journey. After a conversation with Elder Brad, I left feeling certain that the dismissal of a realm of existence that is *sacred* may contribute to distress and suffering in my own society, though I still struggle in some ways with the term.

6. Conclusion (A Meditation on Sciences of Affliction)

From the beginning, this dissertation has been concerned with sciences of affliction. What causes affliction? What forms of affliction are legitimate? How do we heal it? My journey into this research began with my own personal sense that something was missing/inadequate in the PTSD diagnosis and the ways in which it is defined, diagnosed, experienced, and treated. I found my way, pressed by my own healing path, into the usage of Indigenous ritual to heal the trauma not only of Indigenous veterans, but also in multi-ethnic veterans. The story I discovered was one of competing claims to sciences of affliction, and on a bigger scale, to science itself. The encounter between Native Americans and war veterans (a group that includes many veterans who are themselves Native American), under the foggy residuum of violence and trauma, bring into view a unique look into humanity's dynamic and troubled struggle with epistemologies and ontologies of affliction.

What does it mean to be afflicted? Veena Das struggles with this term, invoking it to reference "sensibilities that might sometimes call upon God but are not necessarily looking for a Christ-like figure to lift them out of the abyss that is made up of a kind of corrosion of everyday life that seems to take away from many the capacity to engage life" (Das 2015, 2). Das goes on to note that "not everyone succumbs to this suffering in the same way, even if even if their souls are marked by what they have to endure" and

"many people within the same environment move from one threshold of life marked by bleakness, even abjection, to some other threshold at which they seem to engage with others, laugh, eat, have sex, look after children, greet visitors." In this meditation, Das aims to collapse distinctions between "a subjective experience of suffering and the objective conditions that account for the unequal distribution of suffering, or the difference between a theological move in which suffering poses questions of theodicy and an analysis that privileges the economic and political conditions rooted in political economy" aiming to not "bracket either questions relating to institutions and objective conditions or those that relate to experience and the process of subjectivization." Das contrasts her view with that of philosopher Simone Weil. According to Weil, affliction is "installed in them like a parasite directing them to its own ends" (Weil 1951, 123). Of concern to Das is Weil's treatment of affliction as an object in the body, noting that experiential phenomena cannot be pointed at "as one points at a chair or table" (3).

I can't help but be reminded of Mike's frequent joke, which he invokes as a response to people who reference "my PTSD." He asks "where is it?" while looking around the person, as if they are carrying a PTSD object somewhere on their person. Furthermore, Das roots Weil's philosophy of affliction in Christian mythology, particularly in an aspirational longing for God from the abysmal conditions of the material world. Likewise, I am reminded of the compulsion within postcolonial

Indigenous spirituality to resist Christian models that are based on salvation, which includes the biomedical category of curing. The ontological divide extends to other categories, such as linear vs circular time (with emphasis on both Christian and Enlightenment notions of "before" and "after") and spatial metaphors like Lakoff and Johnson's "up/down" vs "centered/uncentered." The list continues.

When I teach medical anthropology to students, I avoid the common definition of the subdiscipline that describes it as something to the effect of "the anthropological study of health and illness." Rather, I teach students that the categories of health and illness are themselves unstable and that medical anthropologists can study many things that exist in social formations that do not conceive of the notions of health and illness, which are biomedical categories. I offer that medical anthropology might better be described as "the anthropological study of cultures of affliction and healing." My time in the field, along with my personal experiences in the healing lodge and other ceremonies reinforces this for me. I went to the field with questions about suffering (or "distress," as is the preferred term in the discipline of psychiatry). I came home from the field with a greater appreciation for the profound degree to which the world does not agree on exactly *what* afflicts us, or what affliction even is, much less how we might meaningfully address it. Nevertheless, I do recognize a shared sense among many of my fellow humans sojourning with me right here and now in what Sturgill

Simpson calls in his metamodernist view "the myth that we all call space and time" (Simpson 2014) that we are all, somehow, afflicted.

I observed contrasting narratives of science and affliction at an event I attended in the aftermath of the Standing Rock protests of 2016-2017. This protest left much to make sense of in its aftermath, with media coverage of the event providing conflicting accounts of what actually happened there. On this backdrop, relationships that were cultivated at the protest, such as that between indigenous people and military veterans, aimed nevertheless to maximize the momentum of their partnership. In spring 2017, after the protestors had been evicted, an indigenous cultural center in a major North American city hosted an assembly to facilitate a public discussion about the veteran/indigenous relationship that materialized at Standing Rock. I attended this event and listened as several veterans and indigenous people spoke about their experience at the protest. The billing for this event stated that the discourse of trauma and healing (which is intrinsic to the public-facing side of veteran politics) would be used to translate this partnership. However, the indigenous speakers there framed their relationship with veterans, and their goals as resistors, differently.

The respectful, yet palpable incongruity between the visions shared by these two groups, united in passionate resistance against a common power, signals conspicuous issues that are both felt in the world today and theorized in anthropology. The

indigenous theorization of of this problem, using science as an allegory, not only critiques colonial society but provides a framework for understanding the tension that was visible at this event.

Originally, I was drawn to the phenomenon of veteran mobilization at Standing Rock due to a prominent public discourse of *healing* that materialized around it. Veterans posted videos online, expressing that participating in the Standing Rock protests healed them, among other things, of PTSD symptoms. I contacted one of the primary veteran organizations that had mobilized to Standing Rock and was preparing to travel there myself when the camps were evicted. Shortly thereafter, the event at the indigenous cultural center was organized and I was invited to attend. This event came about amidst deep public skepticism and controversies; these included allegations of bellicose/disrespectful behavior by veterans at the protest, negative environmental impact from the protest camps in general, and misappropriation of crowdfunded resources by veteran organizers (Franco 2017; Berlinger 2017; Scovlund 2017; Blankenbuehler 2018). These tensions were acknowledged as the speakers endeavored to imagine what a continued partnership resisting oppression might look like. Coincidentally, this meeting occurred just prior to a massive international "March for Science," in which many participants planned to march. With this in mind, indigenous speakers framed their points of discussion with "science" as an organizing

theme, asking attendees to consider how colonial notions of "science" might limit the ways in which mainstream American society, including white attendees at that event, can even imagine what concepts such as resistance and healing might mean.

6.1. Background

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was designed to carry petroleum from the oil fields of North Dakota to facilities in Patoka, Illinois. The pipeline was originally projected to run near the city of Bismarck North Dakota but was rerouted when it was determined that it threatened Bismarck's water supply (Aisch and Lai 2017). The new route took the pipeline one half mile from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, threatening the waters there (McKibben 2016). In spite of lawsuits from the Standing Rock tribe and concerns raised by some U.S. Government institutions (particularly the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior), construction of the pipeline commenced.

Subsequently, Standing Rock's Historic Preservation Officer, Ladonna Brave Bull, initiated a protest against the pipeline in spring 2016. This protest attracted significant media attention and began to draw people from all over the world. Though it was initially a small camp, the number of protesters grew to the point that several new camps had to be founded to host the participants, who numbered in the thousands by fall 2016. The tensions boiled over when, in September 2016, the DAPL brought in a

security contractor to guard their bulldozers as they broke ground on the site. This was the beginning of a period of violence, captured in profoundly disturbing media images of brutality against protestors by the contractors, their attack dogs, and law enforcement. In spite of denials of violence by law enforcement and DAPL, media images showed protestors being bitten by dogs, shot with rubber bullets, and blasted with water cannons in freezing weather. The public's investment in the Standing Rock protest, and outrage against the use of violence to suppress the protesters, increased.

In response to the use of violence against protestors, multiple groups of people mobilized to Standing Rock. Notably, a large group of American military veterans organized to "deploy" to Standing Rock and act as human shields between protestors and law enforcement/security contractors. The timing of this deployment coincided with the Army Corps of Engineers' mandatory evacuation deadline of December 5, 2016 (Hayden, Thorbecke, and Simon 2016). Over 2,000 veterans, (including high-profile veterans such as Wesley Clark Jr and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard), mobilized to Standing Rock, while at least 26,000 people from around the world donated money to support this mobilization. The Native American community received the veterans with a welcoming ceremony. A group of veterans then executed a ceremony of their own that apologized to American Indians for their historical treatment by the U.S. military. After

a months-long public struggle, they were successfully evicted and the DAPL was completed.

In the aftermath, this mobilization of non-native protesters at Standing Rock (especially the veterans), attracted significant public controversy. They were accused of polluting the protest grounds, betraying the environmental component of their protest. One veteran group was accused of severely misappropriating the funds that were donated to their mobilization effort. All of the non-indigenous people who participated were accused of cultural appropriation, humanitarian tourism, disrespecting local indigenous peoples, and ultimately taxing American Indians with their efforts more than helping them (Anderson 2016; Seraphin 2017; Oster 2019). The event I attended was organized by veterans and Native Amercians who had been prominent in the organization of the Standing Rock protest who felt that, in spite of the controversy, there was something good in their partnership that should be explored and perpetuated.

6.2 Debriefing

In spring 2017, I traveled to a public meeting where indigenous and veteran protest participants discussed the complex dynamics of their coming-together. In a city far from Standing Rock, a local tribe hosted the event in their own ceremonial building, which included Standing Rock Sioux, indigenous peoples from other tribes, and a multi-

ethnic (but mostly white) group of veterans, all who had been active in the protests. This meeting was predicated by the notion that there was something special, though admittedly controversial, about the relationship that had developed between indigenous people and veterans who protested together at Standing Rock.

That afternoon, the man who was hosting my stay gave me directions to the longhouse, where the event would be taking place. He told me that I wouldn't miss it, due to the artwork on the outside of the building, which he described as "terrifying."

I arrived at the longhouse and struggled to find the entrance. At the back of the building, I found two American Indian men and asked them for help. They did not speak to me but they walked to a door, opened it, and gestured towards me, inviting me in. I entered the longhouse and was greeted by members of the veteran's group in the entryway, which doubled as a museum and gift shop. Through yet another door, I entered the longhouse proper, a beautiful rectangular wooden building with three levels of bench seating facing inward. A painted Canoe sat on one side of the room, with a podium set up for presentations. I took my seat, on the side of the room away from the canoe, and waited for the event to begin.

A member of the local indigenous people introduced the event; playing his drum and singing a "send-off" song, explaining that doing this was necessary to "make things right" before proceeding. He introduced the first speaker: a woman who had been

prominent and active in the organization of the veteran group that mobilized to Standing Rock. She described how the event would be conducted; several people would speak, including both veterans and indigenous people who participated in the Standing Rock protests (as far as I could tell, she was the only speaker that night who identified both as veteran and Indian). In her introduction, she said that the speakers would all talk about how participating in the Standing Rock protests was an act of healing; particularly of trauma/PTSD.

The speakers were organized into two blocs. The first several speakers were veterans, while the second bloc of speakers was comprised of indigenous people. A sample from each group is provided as follows:

6.3 The Veteran Voice.

Most of the veterans who spoke at this event shared a remarkably similar narrative, summarized as: While struggling with trauma, PTSD, or other difficulties of post-military life, witnessing the violent imagery from Standing Rock through media stirred the veterans to action. Though they expected to perform or endure violence there, the majority of the time spent at Standing Rock involved seemingly banal but very meaningful acts of service to the community in the camps. The act of performing this service was experienced by the veterans as transformative; something that provided healing that had eluded them, sometimes for years. This healing experience was

interpreted by the veterans as being rooted in doing something genuinely *honorable*. Many of these veterans expressed that they felt their military service, or at least significant parts of it, had been quite *dishonorable*. Giving back and performing service for people who were suffering under violence and oppression restored the veterans' sense of honor, which had been lost during military service.

B

The first speaker was B, a veteran of the United States Navy and a Pueblo Indian. B's presentation focused on the difficulty of transitioning from military to civilian life. "I had a really hard time dealing with my experience," she said, describing her own struggle with this transition. Having completed a deployment to Afghanistan, she described her civilian life after discharge as plagued with nightmares, which involved a mixture of combat imagery and her home life.

> I started having nightmares about saving kids and having a weapon with no ammunition…. Being responsible for taking kids out of this country.. I served in Afghanistan. Now I'm a mother and I started imagining my child there. I was waking up in the middle of the night, terrified in bed, believing that something was in my house.

When the events at Standing Rock began to gain media attention, B started talking to her own young son about their identity and culture as American Indians. After she received a phone call from M, the leader of the veteran's group, she committed to go to Standing Rock, arriving "the night of the water cannons and tear gas." B said that her time at Standing Rock connected her with community and gave her

a sense of purpose that she had been missing since her discharge from the military. She concluded her talk and introduced M.

M

M served in the Army for 10 years as an Infantryman and was a veteran of the war in Iraq. At the beginning of his presentation, he emphasized the importance of understanding that veteran involvement in Standing Rock was part of a healing process. M was the first of several veterans who explained that his passion for the Standing Rock cause was ignited when he saw images of militarized police and contractors using violence against protestors in media images

> I started seeing these military actions taking place there…. Being a veteran myself, this really hurt. I was seeing them use tactics, 'them' as in the police force up there, using tactics against civilians that we used in Iraq and Afghanistan…. I can't speak for every veteran but I feel that the way my skills were used in Iraq…. it kind of took the honor out of being a warfighter. They would say 'go out there with your buddies and come back safe.' So that was the point, that was the point of it all. The whole point of the entire thing was to 'come home safe.' It wasn't to help anybody there or save America or protect anybody. It was to protect my buddies and come home safe and so I didn't have a lot of honor when I came back. One thing I've figured out is that one of the things that is missing in the healing process, in identifying what was wrong with me…. It was the honor.

M explained how he organized 4,000 veterans and that though the plan was to go and endure violence so the native protestors could rest, the majority of their time at Standing Rock was spent in service.

> We were building snow banks and helping people get their cars unstuck, cooking food and cutting firewood. It restored that honor and gave us a way to honorably serve the people we signed up to serve.

At Standing Rock, M sat up at night with other veterans, discussing how they could continue their service after the Standing Rock event concluded. They decided to form a community service organization "to get like-minded veterans an outlet to get out and participate in a healthy way with other veterans in their community."

J

J was a veteran of the Navy, who spent his service stateside. Though he was initially proud of his job doing search-and-rescue missions on the coast, he grew frustrated with what he described as "military bureaucracy." In time, his observation of the bureaucratic process led him to believe that military missions were never really what they claimed to be. He told the story of a man committing suicide by jumping off a bridge. Rather than helping the man or trying to rescue him (which he had imagined to be his "job" in the military), this event became a joke among his peers, which disgusted him.

> I felt disgusted every time somebody thanked me for my service. I felt like my service was just a waste of taxpayer dollars.

J admitted that, at first, he had not really been following the events at Standing Rock and only vaguely knew that it was "about a pipeline going through reservation land and people were angry." However, he was immediately enraged when he witnessed images of violence against protestors by police and contractors.

> But then I started seeing these videos, of very violent tactics being used against the resistors there. Whether or not I knew what the situation was or even agreed with the movement, I knew what I was seeing was wrong. It was not justified. The level of violence being used did not match…. So here I was angry (at the military in general) and now I'm seeing my country behaving in a way that I see as a betrayal to my values as an American. I did not know what was happening but I saw people getting hurt and I thought I could use my skills that taxpayers paid for to actually help American citizens. I actually ended up doing really awesome work. It was a really good feeling. I felt like a lot of that anger that I had in my heart…. I was able to let that go. I can focus on what I can change and what I can contribute.

K

K was a Marine Infantryman who described having a profoundly difficult adjustment to civilian life, which included 2 suicide attempts. 10 years later, the image of water cannons being used against civilians at Standing Rock stirred him and he reached out to M after seeing an article about veterans organizing to go there.

> I went there with a very militaristic mindset…. I thought of this as a 'deployment' (like) we are going to go out there and take rubber bullets and pepper spray. That was part of what we did but it was much more about community service to the camps…. Chopping firewood for somebody or cooking soup. When I got home, I realized that this was the healing I had been needing for the past decade….. It was the most at-peace I had felt in the past 15 years of my life. It was very powerful. I realized my whole life had changed."

6.4 The Indigenous Voice

After the veterans framed their experiences at Standing Rock as transformative events that provided healing from combat trauma and lost honor, the indigenous people who spoke took the discussion in a very different direction. Indigenous speakers focused pragmatically on how other opportunities to fight oppression might be pursued, such as divestment from financial institutions that fund things that need to be resisted.

Others focused on the experience of hereditary trauma by indigenous people, and critiques of colonial attitudes that continue to structure even movements to oppose colonial violence.

Matt

Matt, a Lakota man from Standing Rock, was the first non-veteran Indian to speak. Matt's presentation assumed a distinctly different character than that of the veterans. Matt didn't focus on healing and he referred to the cross-cultural partnership at hand in a matter-of-fact way. Rather than these themes, he described several advocacy projects that people could hopefully now turn their attention to, with Standing Rock being "over." Matt explained how winning the fight will require a concerted effort against financial institutions and entities that profit from the oppression of people and destruction of the earth. He briefly addressed the veterans:

> My family has been fighting the pipeline since we first heard about it in 2014. It made my heart feel good to see all of the veterans coming out to stand with us.

A group of Indians joined Matt to sing a song in the Lakota language, which he described as a song for the veterans who had traveled to Standing Rock. He translated the song as "Your Grandfather borrows you."[1]

[1] The theme of this song recalls Renato Rosaldo's observation of how Illongot people perceived American and Japanese soldiers during WWII (as people whose bodies had been sold to some higher authority). Though the Lakota song is written in admiration and the Illongots reacted with antipathy, taken together they show that indigenous peoples often react strongly to the sense that modern soldiers lack ownership and personal sovereignty over their own bodies (Rosaldo 1980; 1993).

Dawn

The next speaker was Dawn, a woman who identified as a member of the Celilo Falls people from the Columbia River area in Oregon. Having participated in the protests at Standing Rock, she compared the fight over the pipeline to the violence and relocations her people had suffered when the United States government flooded their lands under what is now Lake Celilo. Dawn explained that these actions were all part of a concerted effort by the United States government to subject indigenous peoples to extermination.[2]

> In 1957, they flooded Celilo Falls. The Army Corps of Engineers came in and today, we have been through six relocations, all meant to exterminate us as people, even the new laws they form today against us today, the few of us left.[3] Yet in a couple of weeks, we have to go to court to prove that we are who we say we are. This is part of the original trauma, it runs partner to anybody suffering from PTSD from traumatic events in their lives, having to defend our ancient existence.

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[2] Celilo Falls refers to an enormous set of cataracts on the Columbia River, that were once the 6th largest (by volume) waterfall in the world, significantly larger than Niagra Falls. Adjacent to the cataracts was a thriving, massive settlement that served as a trading hub and site of cultural exchange between numerous indigenous nations, considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited community in North America. In 1957, Celilo Falls was submerged under an impoundment created by the Army Corps of Engineers, when the United States Government determined that doing so did not violate a set of treaties that guaranteed fishing rights to the indigenous people who used the area. Today, a small settlement called Celilo Village continues to exist, populated by the peoples of mixed tribal ancestry who were relocated when the original metropolis was flooded (Dietrich 1995; Gibson 1997; Barber 2001; World Waterfall Database 2017).

[3] When the United States Government flooded the Celilo Falls settlement, they promised the relocated indigenous people that they would construct a new, high quality village to replace the one they lost. These were never built and the Celilo peoples lived in low quality temporary housing for decades (though new, better settlements for displaced white people were completed in the 1970's). In early 2016, the government committed to fulfilling their promise and began the process of constructing the new village for the displaced Celilo peoples. However, in early 2017, the newly elected Trump administration defunded the project (Dietrich 1995; Babits 2009; Harbarger 2016, 2017).

Dawn explicitly addressed the complexity of the situation of white veterans arriving at Standing Rock, including her own ambivalent feelings about it. After describing her sense of extreme fear at Standing Rock, she said that the arrival of the veterans did make her feel a greater sense of safety. However, it was not easy for her to accept them at first, especially with their military affiliation.

> It required me to go deep inside of myself for a prayer. It required me to see the visions…. Upon the arrival, (I asked) 'what are you doing here? What do you know about the people here?' The Army killed our dancers (in the 19th century), on the very ground we were occupying…. We don't share the same skin color, so it is from a much more privileged place that someone else can be a protector of land that Indian people have occupied for thousands of years…. Still, today, we are under termination. What does the United States government say, just as it always had to Indian people? (It says) We (indigenous people) don't matter. We (The United States Government) don't even have to abide by our own treaties.

Dawn explained that in spite of her ambivalence, Indian peoples are under such a severe state of duress, just trying to continue existing as a people, that it is simply impossible for them not to welcome anyone who shows up to help.

> The veterans who helped our people, who helped our elders and children…. We felt much more protected. I know people who personally endured pain for us.

However, addressing the centrality of the "trauma" theme that dominated the testimonies by veterans, Dawn explained that her time at Standing Rock was actually traumatizing to her, compounding the generational trauma she experiences as an Indigenous woman, and she believes that the event left her with clinical PTSD. However, she explained that as a non-veteran, she has not been given access to any of the theoretical frameworks or resources provided to combat veterans to

understand or address her own experience of trauma. While narratives of trauma and healing seem inseparable from veteran experience, to such a degree that the presence of PTSD in vets is taken for granted in public culture, she feels that the trauma of Indigenous people is ignored and left out of discussions such as the one we were having.

> I left with PTSD from all of this, without knowing what to do with that…. It affected my health. The violence was just too much.

P

P, a Salish man, was the final speaker. He had participated at Standing Rock but spoke only briefly about it. Rather, he decided to use his time to act as a discussant for the talks that had been given at the event. To contextualize the tensions manifest in the event, he broadly addressed the notion of "colonizers" trying to engage in political resistance with "colonized" peoples. To contextualize his point, he discussed the massive, international "March for Science" that would be happening soon. Though he admitted to having felt some early enthusiasm for the march, P decried the erasure of indigenous peoples from discourses about science. In his enthusiasm, he had reached out to members of the Indigenous community to rally their participation in the march. However, he was disappointed to find out that many members of his community were completely unaware that this event was taking place, which led him to question who and what this event was actually for. After sharing this, he noted the

inherent absurdity of colonizers marching on indigenous land, ostensibly to defend something that they call "science." He directly addressed attendees who were members of what he called colonial culture.

> We have been here since time immemorial. We have been doing "science" since time immemorial, keeping balance in all things. If you are willing to leave that out, if that is not important to you…. If you do not understand that people have been here, doing science, since time immemorial, I hate to say this but you need to decolonize your thought. We all need to decolonize ourselves, decolonize our speech, our action, think from here (pointing towards his heart), act from here, that is what our old people said. Eliminating the word "tribe" because it is not in our languages, it is not in *ours* (referring to the language of his own people). The teachings are important. The colonial world, colonial people *must* start thinking about ancient teaching. It has been annihilated by the education system.

After P spoke, the Indians got together to sing a concluding song and the event ended.

The significance of the Standing Rock event was imprinted on everyone who spoke at the gathering but the demarcation between veteran and indigenous experience that was there was not difficult to discern. This seems to contrast what one veteran there told me, when I asked him about the sociopolitical tensions that might exist between veterans and non-white indigenous peoples. He shared his perspective that the struggles experienced by veterans and Indians are remarkably similar and thus conducive to a productive relationship between the groups. "Take the problems, the

suffering, the struggles experienced by Indians and replace the word 'Indian' with 'veteran' and you will see that it is not really that different."[4]

Almost every veteran who spoke at this event described how participation in the protest at Standing Rock helped them heal from military-related trauma. The near-universal narrative shared by the veterans began with some sort of trauma in the military, which was followed by a period of extreme alienation and suffering during a difficult transition period, moving from military to civilian life. The witnessing via public media of state-sanctioned violence against civilians at Standing Rock was stirring; even triggering, and led veterans to travel there to fight oppression, even in cases when they admittedly did not understand everything that was happening there. Though several veterans went to Standing Rock with the expectation of enduring horrific physical violence, the embodied experience of communal life and banal (though meaningful and important) service there seemed to prompt an unexpected but powerful sense of relief from trauma symptoms which had been suffered for years in some cases. Though it was expressed quite explicitly by some and less so by others, the triggering witness of state-sanctioned violence against civilians at Standing Rock was connected to the sense held by many of these veterans that they were themselves guilty,

[4] I believe that this veteran was referencing the experience of being lied to and betrayed by the United States government, under traumatic conditions, leading to a mutual distrust of Washington by both veterans and American Indians.

during their own service, of similar acts of transgression. Fighting against similar abuses allowed the restoration of personal honor that had been lost during military service, leaving the veterans with a lingering sense of dishonor. It was a profound and restorative learning experience for the veteran that the restoration of this honor could even be accomplished, amongst people committed to a warrior ethos, through means such as community service and the experience of communal solidarity.

This is a compelling narrative, which speaks to the experience of trauma and healing by military veterans that is very far removed from the biomedical PTSD discourse that is common in the western world. PTSD diagnostics and treatment are notoriously distilled of ethical discourses, framing PTSD as an adaptive biological response to extreme fright that becomes pathological when it expresses in inappropriate situations. The fact that many combat veterans described a discernible decline in symptoms after their service at Standing Rock challenges extant frameworks for PTSD and offers hope for veterans struggling with "treatment-resistant" PTSD.

However, the indigenous people who spoke at the event related to it, and the presence of white military veterans there, in a different kind of way. While they spoke of fighting similar structures of oppression, the Indians spoke more of the inherent need to resist oppression, or strategies for doing so in the future, rather than focusing on how doing so might provide individuals with healing. While the veterans universally found

participation at Standing Rock to be empowering, some Indigenous people such as Dawn described the experience as terrifying and traumatizing; adding to rather than healing extant trauma. Both groups spoke of the United States government with marked disdain but did so in a different register. While both decried actions taken by the government, the Indians did so by connecting this with a systemic pattern of abuse, while the veterans were more likely to see these violences as aberrations that betray valuable, deeply held "American" values. Every Indigenous person who spoke at this event expressed sincere appreciation for the veterans who traveled to Standing Rock, in spite of the reservations held by some that they may not have belonged there. For the veterans, their presence at Standing Rock felt like a matter of duty and their decision to go there was non-negotiable, perhaps even non-voluntary. Standing Rock provided unexpected but welcome healing for veterans suffering from deep military trauma. For the indigenous people there, trauma was described as inherited and going to Standing Rock, if anything, may have just added to it.

6.5 Encounters with Power

Both constituencies here, however, did relate their experiences at Standing Rock to extant suffering and injustice. Though the underlying mechanisms were understood differently, everyone committed to resistance against a common oppressor that was mutually seen as threatening both the environment and the dignity/sovereignty of

America's first peoples. For anthropology, sociopolitical resistance is itself a standard and conventional object of study or even cause célèbre. This compels cautious consideration of a social formation such as this one, where an ostensibly unusual allyship constituted itself in confrontation to a mutually opposed oppressor. In 1990, Lila Abu-Lughod wrote about a tendency within anthropology to disproportionately concern itself with "unlikely forms of resistance" and she cautioned against theoretical studies that "are ultimately more concerned with finding resistors and explaining resistance than with examining power" and how this might "not explore as fully as they might the implications of the forms of resistance they locate" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 41). By reading all forms as resistance as indistinct indictments against the evils of power in general, that can be seen as celebrations of human agency, we "collapse distinctions between forms of resistance and foreclose certain questions about the workings of power" (42). She goes on to argue in favor of using resistance as a diagnostic of power. It is important to distinguish different forms of resistance and to be careful not to project inappropriate analytics where they do not belong. In Abu-Lughod's case, working with Bedouin women in a strictly patriarchal and gender-segregated society, it was important not to project "forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience - something like a feminist consciousness or feminist politics - or devaluing their practices as pre-political, primitive, or even misguided" while acknowledging the

importance of accounting for the reality that sometimes our interlocutors can both "resist and support the existing system of power" (47).

In this vein, it is important to recognize the distinct forms of resistance present in the collective protest against the DAPL. At the event that I attended, the rubrics of PTSD and healing that were offered, for the purpose of contextualizing the experiences of DAPL resistors, were universalized and presented as the connective tissue holding these two groups, veteran and Indian, together. However, Dawn explained that the PTSD framework (at least in the form that is provided to military veterans) is not available to her and she never described any part of the protest as "healing" for her. Her testimony also lacked the sense of empowerment that animated the testimonies given by veterans at this event. For her, protest at Standing Rock was another of a long, heavy list of ineludible movements by her people that are necessary for them to simply continue existing. As Abu-Lughod warns, however, it is important not to use this to frame the veteran perspective here as unenlightened or a matter of false-consciousness. Rather, we must recognize that these different parties engaging in resistance together are subject to "overlapping and intersecting forms of subjection whose effects on particularly placed individuals at particular historical moments vary tremendously" (52-53).

P's unexpected usage of "science" as a theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of this event, is useful here. It helps us to move beyond the simple

lionization of resistance itself and points us towards an even more fundamental diagnostic of power in our society (which I believe was the intent behind his statement). It encourages us to reconsider not only the "where" of power, but also the "how" and the divergent ways that different resistors might be compelled to imagine what power even is. P decried the inability for colonial society to recognize that indigenous people have been conducting science for millenia. However, in doing so, he provided a definition and rationale for "science" that differs considerably from those that are commonly accepted in European and American scientific discourse.

Distinguished historian of science Edward Grant once wrote "it is indisputable that modern science emerged in Western Europe and nowhere else" (Grant 1997, 105).[5] Undoubtedly, the modern science referenced by Grant is the same science being marched for in P's story, as a professed act of resistance. The boundary between that kind of science and the knowledge-practices of indigenous people has been explored by anthropologists for generations with diverse and, often, unsatisfying conclusions. Malinowski struggled with this in *Magic, Science, and Religion*, eventually concluding that the boundary between these two realms is ultimately unimportant (Malinowski 1948). Evans-Pritchard concluded in *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among*

[5] Science more broadly defined (not just modern science) is not exclusive to Europe in Grant's view but he does attribute science with an exclusive genealogy that traces through Ancient Greece with ultimate roots in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt.

the Azande that this is a relativistic problem and the answer will differ based on the diverse ways that knowledge-practices are contextualized in different societies (Evans-Pritchard 1976). Of course, this ultimately makes it possible for western society to privilege and to draw an unassailable boundary around its own notion of science.

To Vine Deloria:

> Every human society maintains its sense of identity with a set of stories that explain, at least to its satisfaction, how things came to be. A good many societies begin at a creation and carry forward a tenuous link of events, which they consider to be historical - which is to say actual experiences of the group that often serve as precedents for determining present and future actions. Sometimes these stories incorporate moral teachings and what we have come to call religious traditions, the actions of the higher spiritual powers or invisible forces that were important actors in the more spectacular and memorable events of their history. A good many societies speak of catastrophic events or of the movement of their people from one planet to another. Monsters and strange creatures also appear in stories and beg credibility when these tales are recited.

Furthermore, speaking to contemporary Western science:

> ....we are the first society to accept a purely mechanistic origin for ourselves and the teeming life we find on planet earth. Science tells us that this whole panorama of life, our deepest experiences, and our most cherished ideas and emotions are really just the result of a fortunate combination of amino acids happening to coalesce billions of years agoand that our most profound expedriences are simply electrical impulses derived from the logical consequence of that first accident."

And:

> We thus stand alone against the cumulative memories and wisdom of all other societies when maintaining this point of view. We justify our position by accusing our ancestors and existing tribal societies of being superstitious and ignorant of the real causes of organic existence. Do we really have a basis for this belief? (Deloria 1997, 23-24).

Reading this book is a fascinating exercise for me. Published in the 1990s, *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* is a Latourian critique of

science that goes so far as to not only question the process through which scientific facts are constructed, but also many well-established scientific beliefs. His thesis is clear and one that post-1980s anthropology would regard kindly: Western science has ignored/belittled the wisdom of Indigenous peoples globally, often making grave errors under the spell of its own hubris. For me, it is difficult to juxtapose his polemical attacks on the Theory of Evolution…. I admit that I am rather convinced that humans evolved alongside our other ape cousins from a common primate ancestor…. and the fact that some of the theories he attacked (which were considered practically unassailable in his day) have been falsified precisely by Western science. The Folsom Point Blitzkrieg Hypothesis is currently on its way out, and it is now becoming canon that humans first populated the Americas through following the western coastline in boats. I wish that I could go back in time to tell him that his instincts on these subjects have been validated. However, I also find that Deloria builds a kind of dichotomy between Indigenous knowledge and Western science that can't be followed to its logical conclusions without collapsing under a multitude of contradiction. I am reminded of Zoe Todd's critique of Braiding Sweetgrass and the pitfall of flattening Indigenous thought (though, notably, she explicitly cites Deloria's work as the exact sort of scholarship that gets pushed out of flattened, white-friendly narratives of Indigenous philosophy).

It is hard for me to not feel like there is something of value in Science, and that sometimes attempts to subvert it can create more problems than they solve. I remember a few years back when the social media page for a prominent anthropological association I am a member of shared a piece on the human genome and the lack of Neanderthal DNA in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many people, including a few prominent anthropologists, enjoyed this very much, with some people speculating that Africans "are the most human people on earth" and some going so far as to suggest that the violent colonial behavior of Europeans may be genetically innate, due to our beastly genetic heritage. What the people making this argument don't know (because, unfortunately, even some cultural anthropologists I know who claim genomics as an area of scholarly expertise are not particularly fluent in genomic science) is that science has also shown that every human on earth carries the DNA of various non-Homo Sapiens ancestors with whom our ancestors reproduced; the Eurasian Neanderthals are simply the species for whom we have the most paleontological remains. Small populations of phenotypically "white" Indigenous peoples still exist and they, in spite of their phenotype, behave similarly to other Indigenous people around the world. Also, the population of humans today with the highest ratio of non-Homo Sapiens DNA is a vulnerable non-white Indigenous population under numerous colonial and

environmental threats. I will put myself out there and wager that we should *not* set the stage to frame these people as any less "human" than anyone else on earth.

I recall a different kind of Indigenous science in de la Cadena's *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. When her Andean informant Nazario appealed to the World Bank for funds to irrigate his village, he explained that climate change was the result of the angered mountain spirit Ausangate, who was enraged by the ever-increasing number of airplanes in the sky. In response to the confused World Bank officials, and after listening to how others discussed climate change, Nazario concluded "Now I know that people call this that the earth is heating up; that is how I will explain it to them next time" (de la Cadena 2015, xxii).

For Nazario, there was something remarkable in his ability to transcend the binaries and knowledge barriers that our world tries to impose (even de la Cadena described his action as a visitation, from one world to another, instead of an act of radically inclusive vision).

Of course, a great failure of Western science is its inability to theorize power. It *sort of* can, if we limit our definition of power to transfers of energy measured in watts. However, from economically asymmetrical determinants in human/environment-destroying extractive projects to acts of exploitation and harassment in its labs, science seems dreadfully unable to deal with the presence of

sociopolitical power in our world. Likewise, concepts such as goodness, love, and particularly sacredness seem to be far beyond its scope. This was Deloria's concern when he observed that "we are the first society to accept a purely mechanistic origin for ourselves." This was P's concern when he saw our impulse to save "science" as lacking something important.

And of course, this is the fundamental issue with the biomedical PTSD diagnosis. Our society seems unable to treat any affliction as legitimate if it cannot be accounted for by a limited set of scientific criteria. Even the moral injury discourse (with the exception of Rita Nakashima Brock's work) cannot manage concepts like "atrocity" or "wrongdoing," preferring to rely on schemas based on either personal or societal *beliefs* about right and wrong. It seems like science, at least as it is being practiced, cannot tell us what is right or wrong or good or bad, other than to tell us that science is good.

In 1974, Eagle Feather (the intercessor for the Rosebud Reservation Sundance) shared a vision with Sundance researcher Thomas Mails:

> And I'll tell you something else, I believe the psychiatrists of today, through their books and teachings, are going to ruin this beautiful world of ours if we do not get rid of them. Your White grandparents, my Indian grandparents, and our great-grandparents lived without psychiatrists, and look how beautiful their world was by comparison. Psychiatrists are tearing this beautiful country apart.
>
> Another vision I have had is of men throwing a huge bomb up at the moon one day. It will blow a hole through the crust and there will be water up there. When human beings have completely ruined this world, they will move up to the moon and stay there for a number of years until they finally spoil it. Then they will be forced to come back to

> this dirty world they ruined. This is my vision, and even through I hate to tell it, I just can't help it, for this is the way it will be for our world.
>
> Perhaps, though, we deserve such a fate. We want to know too much and we constantly try to advance ourselves at the expense of others in every way." (Mails 1998, 137-138).

"We want to know too much." This idea is anathema to science, to which the pursuit of knowledge is the only *good* thing that exists. I admit that I am both intrigued, and confused, by the idea that "we want to know too much."

6.6 SACREDNESS

In 1977, the Haudenosaunee (Iroqois) people gave an address at the UN Conference on Indigenous Peoples. They stated:

> In the beginning, we were told that the human beings who walk about on the Earth have been provided with all the things necessary for life. We were instructed to carry a love for one another, and to show a great respect for all the beings of this Earth. We were shown that our life exists with the tree life, that our well-being depends on the well-being of the Vegetable Life, that we are close relatives of the four-legged beings.
>
> The original instructions direct that we who walk about on Earth are to express a great respect, an affection and a gratitude toward all the spirits which create and support Life…. When people cease to respect and express gratitude for these many things, then all life will be destroyed, and human life on this planet will come to an end. (Mander 1991, 191).

Back at the post-Standing Rock event, amidst a gathering where the abuses of extractive industry were at the forefront of everyone's discussion, the "science" to be marched for could very well be the same science that produces the hydroelectric projects that flood villages, extracts the oil to be piped across continents and waterways, and

analyzes the bone fragments of human beings pulled from their graves without the consent of their families and communities.

But it is also the same science that shows us, in molecular form, that we *are* all related, all human, all indelibly connected within the webs of life that span the earth's biosphere. It shows us in empirical quantitative form the damage we are doing to our ecosystems, and it proves that the 9,000 year old human remains held by researchers *is* the ancestor of the people claiming him, to whom he was returned (Green 2017).

Can we have a science of the sacred? While pondering this idea (while writing this conclusion), I discovered that a book has been published by this title. *The Science of the Sacred: Bridging Global Indigenous Medicine Systems and Modern Scientific Principles* was published by Indigenous (Deninu K'ue First Nation) physician Nicole Redvers in 2019 (Redvers 2019). The fundamental argument in this work is that science and traditional Indigenous knowledge are complimentary, and that we should expect that the tools of Western science will ultimately affirm traditional Indigenous knowledge. Redvers put a lot of work into her study and I don't want to argue with her conclusions. However, I am wary again of the pitfall of flattening Indigenous knowledge(s), which do not always agree with each other and, thus, cannot be universally affirmed by science as it is currently practiced. I think that there is something else at stake that I am concerned

with and that the science of sacredness I am grasping for is something different than the subject of Redvers's study.

I want to know what I can say that would be satisfactory to a secular scientist, to convince them that the telescope they want to place on top of Mauna Kea shouldn't be there (due to spiritual beliefs that their scientific method does not appear to affirm). I want to know what I can say that would be satisfactory to the researchers who want to study the DNA of a man who has been dead for almost 10,00 years, to convince them that they shouldn't. I want to know what I can say that would satisfy the anthropologist who urged me to press the Elders at American Lake to allow me to bring audio recording equipment onto their sacred site. I *know* what the right answer to all of these situations is, but I have not yet figured out how to use the scientific method to arrive at those conclusions. I can look at these though, and begin to understand what Eagle Feather meant when he said that we want to know too much.

Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ

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Biography

Christopher Webb was born in Oconee County, South Carolina. He grew up in the Southern Appalachian Mountains and enlisted to serve in the U.S. Army as an Infantryman in 2003. After being wounded in combat and retired by the military, he used the G.I. Bill to pursue higher education. He graduated from Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College in 2012 and then transferred to UNC Asheville to complete his B.A. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from UNC Asheville in 2014 with distinction in anthropology. In 2015, he began his pursuit of a PhD in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. He has been the recipient of grants and scholarships from the National Science Foundation, the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass fellowship fund, the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. His publications include "The Wounds that Never Heal: Transgression, Liminality, and Ethical Ruin in Battlefield Thresholds" in *Ethnos* "Death Rituals: The Grief Fetish and Military Service" in *Critical Military Studies*, and "How Sweat Lodge Ceremonies Heal War's Wounds" in *Sapiens*. In 2022, he will begin work as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado.