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Authors

Baird-Olson, Karren
Ward, Carol

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Recovery and Resistance: The Renewal of Traditional Spirituality among American Indian Women

KARREN BAIRD-OLSON AND CAROL WARD

This article tells the story of healing from personal trauma and a tale of resistance to the cultural denigration experienced by women from the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux reservations.¹ The women's stories, obtained through in-depth and focus-group interviews, and participant observation, reveal how spirituality expressed in a variety of forms has been an important part of the resistance process. Through their spiritual practices and beliefs, these women have achieved desired changes in their personal lives and contributed to a renaissance of spiritual practices on the two Northern Plains reservations. These stories elucidate the specific experiences and perspectives of women, rather than the views of the clergy or institutional leaders of the religious groups to which the women belong. This article responds to the recent call made by Kathryn Ward² to focus on the experiences and views of indigenous women and how they resist domination and reestablish political, social, and cultural rights. This article also contributes to recent research exploring the effects of history and generational experiences or changes in religious affiliation and spiritual expression.³

The imposition of the reservation system on Native peoples in the late 1800s brought social and economic changes and cultural loss, which required

Karren Baird-Olson is of Wyandot descent and in 1958 married into the Nakota nation of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation. She is an assistant professor at California State University, Northridge, and is currently revising her dissertation, which will provide a grounded structural explanation for the high rates of criminal victimization among American Indian women, for publication.

Carol Ward has worked for several decades as an instructor at the tribal college and researcher among the Northern Cheyenne. She is an associate professor of sociology at Brigham Young University and is currently working on research documenting the negative impact of the 1996 welfare reforms on the residents of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

significant adaptations that have affected each subsequent generation. While each generation found ways to protect their traditions or challenge subordination, women in these two reservation settings provided the means to resist both personal dysfunction and further cultural loss.

Two adaptations, conformity and innovation, correspond closely to two of sociologist Robert Merton's categories of individual adaptation to the stresses or strains of American life.⁴ In the first category, women have conformed to dominant cultural expectations by joining mainstream, fundamentalist, or evangelical churches. Conformity has helped ensure physical and social survival. While innovation also helps ensure physical survival, spiritual adaptability differs by enhancing the psychic well-being of American Indian women through the protection of the essence of their Native cultures. Innovation has taken two forms: (1) the combination of traditional and mainstream, fundamentalist, or evangelical religions, and (2) a renaissance of traditional spiritual beliefs and practices.

The focus of this article is on the spiritual renewal experiences occurring among women in these two case-study populations. It is not a simple conversion story, for true conversion requires free will. Historically, Christian churches, the US military, and various governmental agencies have pursued policies of forced assimilation, often including conversion to Christianity as an important goal. Power differences endemic to these situations inhibit fully informed religious choices, thereby negating true conversion. And yet both case studies illustrate the variety of ways women have come to terms with and even overcome the consequences of assimilation efforts that led to the near destruction of their cultures.

On both reservations cultural loss resulting in traditional role changes has been intertwined with explosions of violence and often connected with substance abuse as well as social and personal power loss. Nevertheless, a sense of the sacred has persisted on both reservations. This sacredness is the spiritual foundation upon which the women have constructed new meanings for their lives and connected not only with their cultural heritages, but also with others in their communities. On both reservations, the women have led or been prominent in the healing and spiritual renewal.

If one does not believe, as one might in Indian Country, that the Grandfathers help bring certain things together for the good of all concerned, then perhaps serendipity would be a more acceptable explanation for the fact that over the last ten years, several sociologists from Indian Country are coming up with similar findings. Through mutual friends the authors of this article became acquainted and met for the first time at Dull Knife Memorial College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana. As a result of that meeting, the two researchers obtained funding to continue work on the integral role of spirituality among the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux women.⁵ In this article, the co-authors present findings on the spiritual experiences of two groups of Plains Indian reservation women as they reshape their lives, communities, and cultures.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENTIATION

Seminal researchers on American religiosity such as Nancy Ammerman and David Olson point out the need to study the complexities of American religious institutions.⁶ Nowhere is the analysis of religious practices more important than on American Indian reservations where the sacred has been a source of violence. Christianity has been used as an arm of the state, breaking down traditional cultures and forcing assimilation to the Euro-American world. On the other hand, the sacred has been central to American Indian women's survival. Recent evidence of traditional cultural persistence and renewal suggest that complete assimilation and Christianization have not been achieved. Two theoretical perspectives, social conflict and religious differentiation, help to unpack the religious adaptations made in these unique cultural and social settings.

Social Conflict

The conflict perspective provides a useful model to understand forced spiritual or religious conversion, or disaffiliation at the macro-structural or societal level. From a conflict view, the united effort of the US military and Christian churches to force a powerless racial minority to assimilate and accept Christianity is seen as a tool by which the dominant group justified its claim to American Indian resources and land. This subordination, which often involved denigrating traditional spirituality as pagan or evil, left American Indians with neither political-economic power nor cultural solidarity (the cohesion provided by a common worldview). The experience of a form of internal colonialism has been particularly destructive of the holistic ethos of American Indian cultures in which spirituality is not separated from the mental, physical, and emotional realms of knowing or the functional demands of family and community survival.

However, recent research on political and cultural resurgence in many American Indian communities, such as *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Insurgence of Identity and Culture* by Joane Nagel, suggests that cultural assimilation is far from complete; in fact, the strength of cultural traditions is increasingly evident.⁷ Nagel shows the role of cultural revitalization and renewal in the persistence of American Indian ethnic identity, as well as in the assertion of political, economic, and cultural rights by both individuals and communities.

Of particular relevance to this article is work by Britt Finley and Loretta Fowler, which demonstrates the ways in which traditional values and practices have been integrated into some non-Indian cultural settings.⁸ Such cultural revisions have been important to the efforts of Native communities to gain greater control over health and education programs, improve self esteem among Indian youth, and recognize tribal members in traditional ways for contributions made inside and outside their communities. Carol Ward, Gregory Hinckley, and Kae Sawyer discuss the renewed interest in traditional

identities and cultural practices among recent generations of Northern Cheyenne women seeking improvements in the lives of their families and communities.⁹

Sidney Tarrow's recent work exploring social movements and the role of religious conflict is helpful in understanding this development.¹⁰ He asserts that conflict over spiritual belief is not only a source of historical social rebellion, but also a structure for mobilizing social solidarity for collective action. In fact, religion provides a common meaning, a repertoire for collective action. Tarrow's work supports the idea that resistance against cultural assimilation in Indian Country cannot be adequately understood without an informed appreciation of spirituality in traditional cultures. Susan Guyette notes that understanding Native American communities "must include kinship, economic, *religious*, political, ecological, and artistic components."¹¹ Similarly, Melissa L. Meyer asserts that assessing the impact of the global economy on the dispossession of the White Earth Minnesota Anishinaabe is inadequate without a consideration of cultural forces, including organized religion.¹²

Religious Differentiation

There are a variety of orthodox Christian groups that are usually labeled fundamentalist by the general public. Ammerman has argued, however, that evangelicalism is not identical to fundamentalism; the latter is a subgroup of the former, and both are part of the orthodox camp.¹³ Daniel Olson has further defined the differences between the two camps by developing a two-dimensional schemata: personal-moral and economic-justice.¹⁴ The criteria for categorization in one of the four groups in this scheme include church members' support for or opposition to regulation in the personal-moral and economic-justice spheres. The four categories in the taxonomy—left, right, libertarian, and populist—are useful for understanding the mix of liberalism and conservatism in the Fort Peck evangelical church congregations. Populists, the fourth group in Olson's typology, are people who favor regulation in both the personal-moral and the economic-justice spheres. Given the political and social history of the reservation system, the populists most closely represent the political and social views of the Fort Peck evangelical congregations headed by American Indian pastors and may reflect also the efforts of Mennonite congregations to address both the social and spiritual needs of Northern Cheyenne members.

A final conceptual distinction concerns the organizational form and authority type of religious groups. For organizational form the categories are denominational, nondenominational, and independent, and for authority type the categories are hierarchical, democratic, and consensus.¹⁵ For the churches involved in this study, the mainstream, fundamentalist, and evangelical churches tend to be both denominational and more hierarchical while the traditional spiritual groups tend to be nondenominational or independent and more democratic or consensus-oriented.

These typologies are useful for comparing the goals and orientations of local reservation churches and traditional spiritual groups in relation to the interests of this article: understanding the spiritual experiences of American Indian women in their healing processes. Most importantly, these typologies help identify relevant dimensions of the religious contexts in which the women in these two research sites are located and to which they may turn for assistance and support in their healing and recovery.

The Cultural and Historical Context of Reservation Spiritual Renewal and Resistance

Spirituality on reservations cannot be lightly dismissed as the “opium of the people” or as desperate wartime foxhole cries for help. In fact, the various forms of spiritual and religious beliefs and practices expressed by Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women have given meaning and hope to their lives, as well as structural or institutional modes of resistance against personal and cultural loss. The cultural practices described by these women are grouped in terms of both past and present spiritual paths of resistance through conformity or innovation. Furthermore, although the experiences are similar on the two reservations, there are important differences that will be highlighted in the following discussion.

Current modes of spiritual resistance can be best understood by locating them within the historical contexts that influenced spiritual experiences in reservation communities. Indigenous spiritual experiences, which cannot be separated from the cultural ethos, since the inception of the reservation system can be linked with four historical eras: genocide (or military conquest), reorganization, awakening, and renaissance. Genocide/conquest, the first era, began with first European contact and ended with the military defeat and colonization of all Indian nations and the establishment of various reservations (in 1886 for the Fort Peck Lakota and Nakota and in 1884 for the Northern Cheyenne). As early as the 1600s, American Indian women, in contrast to most Indian men, were resisting Jesuit conversion efforts. For instance, historian Carol Devens has documented how Upper Great Lakes women who resisted Christian control were subjected to torture and hardship. In return, these women sometimes torched the homes of Christian missionaries.¹⁶

The second era coincides with John Collier’s political reorganization in the 1930s, through which indigenous peoples were granted more autonomy, although it was still largely dependent on Euro-American social institutions. As will be seen in the experiences and reflections shared by the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women, the resistance associated with this era continued throughout the past century.

The civil rights era can be linked to a period of awakening when empathetic higher education faculty, American Indian Movement (AIM) members, War on Poverty workers, radical Christians, sensitive social scientists, and social service professionals provided a relatively safe environment for the open performance of traditional ceremonies and other cultural practices.

Currently, a fourth era in the history of reservation spirituality is unfolding: the era of renewal or renaissance. In this period, the national legal effort to ensure constitutional protection of religious rights (resulting in the Religious Freedom Act) has helped ensure the expression of traditional spirituality as well as conscious synergetic combination of traditional religiosity with compatible elements of Christianity. Some Christian denominations are also becoming more inclusive of traditional ethnic spiritual rituals and views.¹⁷ This new sensitivity may be partially explained by two influences: (1) efforts by churches to address the human rights critiques of the alliance of organized religion and colonization, and (2) the influence of knowledge associated with the new medical science of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) as well as other fields which now recognize the connections between mind, body, and spirit—an intersection that traditional spiritualities and healers have always recognized.¹⁸

This era grows out of the convergence of a dramatic increase in the American Indian population and renewed efforts to gain control over local community life, including governance and other institutions, economic opportunities, and cultural and social expressions. Thus, the spiritual experiences of Indian women in these two reservation communities can be understood first as individual phenomena related to their personal healing from trauma. However, these experiences also may be linked to the recent structural changes in reservation communities, which have created opportunities for the expression of Indian spirituality in a variety of ways. Within the full range of healing experiences documented in this research, spiritual renewal, whether integrated with Christianity or not, emerges as a significant aspect of the healing process. In fact, for most women some form of traditional spirituality contributes to their ability to survive and resist cultural loss and subordination within their communities.

METHODS AND CONCEPTS

From the outset, the original two individual research projects shared the commitment that reservation women would speak for themselves; in other words, researchers would not use research methods that silence women. The two researchers also shared the goal that the findings from the studies would be returned to the women for their use as a means of empowerment. These commitments are typical of what is often called participatory research, a special type of field research that does not separate research experts from the people being studied.¹⁹ Instead, the approach demands that the research population be closely involved in various stages of the research project, and that the research process provides participants the opportunity to use their expertise as well as the research findings in a critical way to address needs and create desired changes. The researchers served project participants not only as research facilitators, but also, when asked, as educators and organizers.

The women from the reservations helped formulate the basic problems and questions for the research and contributed to various stages of the data collection and interpretation. The data for this article come from two sources:

the two individual research projects and joint research funded by the Louisville Institute during 1996 and 1997. In order to understand the nature of trauma and survival of the women on the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck reservations, the researchers followed similar paths. For instance, in order to be both culturally sensitive and respectful of the women's voices, each researcher chose ethnographic data collection techniques, although more focus groups were conducted at Northern Cheyenne and more individual interviews were conducted at Fort Peck. Therefore, when they designed the joint research project, they exchanged methodologies, primarily using focus groups at Fort Peck and in-depth interviews at Northern Cheyenne.²⁰

By conducting both in-depth interviews and focus groups the researchers were able to provide the best possible situations for obtaining data that would accurately represent the perceptions and interpretations of women's experiences with recovery and spirituality. Additional methods included participant observation in a variety of settings, such as schools, churches, public events, agencies, and homes, and the use of historical documents and other sources. Thus, the variety of methods used in this research helped clarify not only the patterns of change and continuity in this reservation community, but also illuminated women's personal experiences with healing, spirituality, and empowerment. Triangulation through the use of multiple data-gathering techniques also provides for validity checks.

Although the women in the past and present studies described their experiences of interpersonal and structural victimization and substance abuse, as well as how they coped with the traumas, the focus for this article is on the survival or recovery processes. For those women experiencing interpersonal victimization, three categories were identified: emotional abuse only, physical abuse (including spouse and child abuse), and sexual abuse (including incest). The Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women told stories of great pain, illustrating typical trauma resulting from structural and interpersonal victimization.²¹

For the purpose of this article, the concepts of survival and recovery are used interchangeably. The definition of *survival* used by Baird-Olson in her original research was the process of handling life with various degrees of constructive adaptation; to live with some dignity, to do more than just exist, to attempt to live a balanced life. The definition of *recovery* used by Ward in her original research was concerned with healing, but should not be confused with a medical model involving the treatment of helpless victims. Rather, survival and recovery are both related to growth, moving into a place of wisdom rooted in experience rather than knowledge alone.

The concept of religion is used to distinguish the Eurocentric institutionalization of spiritual beliefs and practices from the concept of spirituality, representing more fluid traditional Native American practices which involve personal interpretations of vision quests, dreams, and life experiences. The traditional ethos is holistic: the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual realms of life are not compartmentalized or rank-ordered. All forms of life are sacred and interconnected. The earth is to be respected rather than feared, conquered, and subdued.

Women in this study are described following one or more of four spiritual paths, three of which involve affiliation with Christian churches. For this study, Christian churches have been categorized as either (1) mainstream, those orthodox churches that emphasize individual salvation and moral development but recently have become more accepting of Native spiritual practices and oriented toward public service, or (2) evangelical and fundamentalist, churches that emphasize moral development and salvation but generally exclude Native spirituality and focus comparatively less attention to public service. The four spiritual paths chosen by the women include (1) attending mainstream Christian churches and, generally, not participating in traditional sacred activities; (2) attending fundamentalist or evangelical churches and not participating in any traditional sacred activities; (3) synergistically combining Christianity and traditional spirituality; and (4) participating in traditional spiritual activities only.

During the early reservation period, the first two paths were the most available, and were safest in terms of survival given the relationship of the Christian churches to the military and other agencies of the United States government. The fourth path could only be followed covertly. Human rights activism of the 1970s helped to create a less hostile environment in which followers of the fourth path could practice their spiritual traditions more openly; however, family and individual pressures from those who practice Christianity exclusively continue to split families and communities.

FRAMING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE HISTORIES AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS OF TWO PLAINS RESERVATIONS

Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women, for the most part, have actively responded to the human rights violations brought about by the imposition of the reservation system. Both groups of indigenous women have drawn on their traditional spiritualities and various forms of Christian religion to resolve their emotional and material suffering. Their actions have brought increased respect for traditional spirituality and renewed hope for the future on the Red Path as well as a new view of the role of Christian faith.

Ethnographic studies of the Northern Cheyenne and the Fort Peck women conducted over the last ten years demonstrate how the cultural and historical context of reservation life has shaped their lives. Additionally, they show how the nature and extent of women's victimization experiences, as well as culture loss or retention, have affected their strategies for survival. In particular, women's views of their spiritual experiences, rather than the views of religious leaders, provide new insights about the importance of spiritual renewal. Although the objectives and data collection techniques of the initial studies varied somewhat, the data from both reservation studies reveal three remarkably clear and parallel patterns: (1) a relationship between structural and interpersonal victimization; (2) a relationship between cultural retention and survival; and (3) the importance of spirituality and religion as a major coping strategy and a means of resistance against further cultural loss and pain.

Northern Cheyenne Paths to Healing from Substance Abuse

The initial Northern Cheyenne work was concerned with women's experiences with substance abuse recovery. The findings obtained through focus-group interviews revealed important aspects of the process: the impetus for beginning the healing process, women's experiences with specific types of treatment programs, the nature of the recovery support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and how these experiences contributed to changes in their personal lives.²² Among the most important aspects of the recovery process were Cheyenne women's discovery or rediscovery of their personal identity, power, and strength. A significant source of strength was their family and Cheyenne community. For some, personal identity and power resulted from gaining new perspectives on women's roles in current reservation life; for others, it included a reconnection with Cheyenne spiritual traditions. Women typically found their own way through the recovery process, but they often benefited from the support of AA. However, as they continued their journeys of spiritual growth, each branched out to learn from an elder or someone who offered alternative views. In this process many women gained a new appreciation of the pain and oppression, as well as the spiritual practices, of previous generations. Ultimately, each woman decided how or whether she would participate in the traditional spiritual activities or other religious activities that support recovery and growth.

These women's experiences reflect a particular context for recovery. Specifically, women on the Northern Cheyenne reservation benefited from recent efforts of the tribal college's alcohol studies program and the tribal recovery center to address the emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs of Indian clients. Traditional activities among families and communities have also become increasingly supportive of recovery. For example, the number of people holding sweats has increased. Also, some local churches have increased their support of recovery and have incorporated some Cheyenne cultural activities into religious services. In this context, women's involvement in recovery and spiritual growth has been supported by expanding opportunities to use resources to support healing and pursue different forms of spiritual expression.

Fort Peck Paths to Survival: Domestic and Structural Violence

Using in-depth qualitative interviews with fifty-two American Indian women of all ages and backgrounds, the broad objective of the initial Fort Peck study included investigation of women's victimization experiences and survival strategies in general, in contrast to the more narrow focus on substance abuse and recovery of the Northern Cheyenne study. The Fort Peck findings revealed the historical and modern extent of the misuse of chemical substances, in particular alcohol, to self-medicate, its relationship to the imposition of the reservation system and, more importantly for this study, the role of spirituality and religion in survival. These women's quotes, some of which will be noted in later sections of this article, reveal the remarkable congruency with the Northern Cheyenne stories about the importance of cultural continuity and community support. However, the Fort Peck experience with

the AA program has not always been as positive as on its sister reservation. This may be linked to the influence of certain Christian groups and their strong resistance to renewal and rediscovery of traditional spirituality.

The joint study of the role of spirituality in survival has further demonstrated the impact of the social, political, and economic dynamics of the respective reservation systems on spiritual beliefs and practices, as well as the role of spirituality in promoting cultural and personal well-being.

RECOVERY AND RESISTANCE THROUGH SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

New data collected from Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women provide additional insights into women's experiences with spiritual growth, specifically, how they have developed and followed a range of spiritual paths. While the spiritual expressions of previous generations were often severely constrained by efforts to suppress traditional Cheyenne, Assiniboine, and Sioux spiritualities, current experiences of women reveal the greater opportunity that they have to choose the path they will follow: Christian, Lakota, Nakota, or some combination of spiritual traditions. In the following sections, women's experiences are categorized according to the closeness of their association with two types of Christian churches or to their choice of alternative paths, including the synergetic combination of Christian and traditional spiritualities, and the practice of only indigenous traditional ways. However, resistance to others' efforts to suppress First Peoples' spirituality can be seen in all the paths, in various degrees, chosen by Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women.

Characterized as spiritual and religious resistance, women's actions take two primary forms: resistance by conformity and resistance by innovation. Within each of these archetypes, the expressions of resistance varies with the era in which it occurs, from the early to later decades of reservation life; thus, the forms of resistance express some generational differences. Nevertheless, each form of resistance in each historical era and generation varies by generation. The following discussion will compare and contrast the experiences of the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women within the frameworks of past and present resistance by conformity and innovation.

RESISTANCE BY CONFORMITY

At the beginning of the reservation system the Northern Cheyenne, like the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux, had little choice but to conform, at least overtly, to the mandates of Christianity if they, their families, and their band members were to survive. Given the loss of traditional means of subsistence and insufficient aid from the military, both the Northern Cheyenne and the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux surely would have perished without the help of the Christian missions. Thus, the arrival of Christianity brought both cultural loss and hope, death and life.

In the following quotes, Northern Cheyenne women of the second generation (of the three currently living on the reservation today) speak about the experiences that illustrate the loss of culture and survival strategies that came with assimilation and Christianization. Their experiences are compared with those of the older generation for whom Catholic boarding school and church were necessary to survive reservation life, but which also had consequences that, in retrospect, were not always seen as positive.

Liz, in her thirties: [M]y grandparents and my aunts and uncles were all sent away to boarding schools. My grandmother was sent to boarding schools where they taught her to be a maid. And they were taken from their parents. When she came back and had kids, they sent her kids off to a school.... It seems like they were treated very harshly in boarding schools, so the circle started from that point.

Anita, in her thirties: And so I was subjected to the Catholic religion.... We were told that if we did something bad or something, we'd go to hell and that any little thing . . . any little wrong move, we would go to hell. And I always thought that it was a really scary religion, and I was scared. I had never been hit in my whole life until I went to that Catholic boarding school where a nun slapped me straight across the face for throwing spit wads on the bus. I was reported and she slapped me . . . just smacked me across the face, and that . . . memory stayed with me for the rest of my life, 'cuz nobody had ever hit me.

Marie, in her forties: I don't believe in it. You know, the Catholics might believe in it, but I didn't believe in it because I felt it was a real cruel . . . form of religion because we had to kneel down for hours upon hours and pray all the time. They taught us how to pray in their way, but it was empty because it was in English, and it didn't mean anything to me. And I felt like we were praying to a non-Indian god. And . . . I never accepted it.

The Fort Peck women's experiences were no exception to the general pattern, although the missionary efforts varied. Christianity in Indian Country during the early decades following the inception of the reservation system helped ensure physical survival. Coming before the Catholics, the Presbyterians and Methodists, in 1879 and 1880 respectively, brought Euro-American food, clothing, and shelter along with *wasicu*²³ education and religious proselytizing. In 1889, three years after the final boundaries of the Fort Peck Reservation had been established and the year that Montana became a state, the military rations of beef to Fort Peck and other reservation Indians were cut. For all practical purposes, the buffalo were gone and the restriction to the reservations permitted limited access to other wildlife and indigenous plants or traditional gardening practices. Like other Plains Indians, most of the Fort Peck Sioux and Assiniboine did not have adequate time to successfully adopt Euro-American agriculture. Hunger became a crisis. Like the Northern Cheyenne experience, Christian conversion meant survival for most Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux. Thus, public disaffiliation from the traditional spiritual ways became a physical necessity.

In some cases the early conversion experiences were internalized. In other cases, the conversion was superficial: Christianity was practiced in public and traditional practices went underground. In the latter instance, people would talk amongst themselves about the differences between the two spiritual perspectives, recognizing that the traditional ways were more inclusive and less materialistic than the Christian ways.

In the early 1990s Virginia was in her early nineties and had lived all her life on the Fort Peck Reservation. She was a daughter of the first generation to be forced onto the reservation. Like her parents she attended a mainstream Protestant church and until the 1970s practiced the traditional spiritual ways in secret. She earned money by working at an eight-to-five job. She makes star quilts²⁴ for giveaways.²⁵ Like the Northern Cheyenne observers, Virginia compared the different values systems and behavior of non-Indians and Indians. The Fort Peck elder reflected upon her observations of the self-centeredness and greed of Whites, including certain Christians, as contrasted to Indian community centeredness and generosity:

It's, to me, like they [White people] really don't care about each other.... It's only me, you know, or I.²⁶ They don't think about anybody else. And they're materialistic. Indians are not that way. Look at those star quilts, [and] how much they cost. And what do they [the women who make them] do with them? Give them away, you know.

And they [Indian people] have the big feasts. Look at all the beef they buy. Like myself, I had these beef and just cut the whole thing and gave it all away. I came home with, you know, none of it. All those quilts. Look at how much it cost me, you know. You know, almost \$4.50 a yard. And look how many I have to make. How much that cost? Ah, but still we gave it away, you know.

Where, if a non-Indian had that quilt, they would sell it. Or, they would lock it up somewhere, you know. Like they do their jewelry. They lock! Everything's got a key, you know. And, like my house, I never lock it. But, you know, most of the time these non-Indians are always locking it. They are hoarding things. They are trying to get everything for themselves.

And their money, they take it and lock it up somewhere, you know, in a bank. And they could see maybe one of their relatives that doesn't have any food or maybe their relatives that doesn't have any clothes, shoes. Ah, but that money is still locked up, you know. And then they die instantly, the money is still there. And other people are going to get it, but still have to kinda lock it away. And they could either feed a hungry kid or buy shoes for somebody that was barefooted. Ah . . . they are just different.

Such materialism has been reinforced by Euro-American churches and their mission schools as well as the government schools designed to achieve American Indian assimilation to American culture and society.²⁷ However, the government and mission schools inadvertently contributed to personal and cultural resistance by providing a place where children and youth could make intra-tribal and pan-Indian connections. Since, in general, the schools

separated relatives in the dormitories and classes, the students used the Christian meetings and services as a place where they could connect with their relatives and clan members and begin creating alternative spiritual expressions. Students also met future marriage partners and made lifelong friends from other Indian nations.

In some cases, the schools provided a refuge, a place to be safe, both physically and emotionally. For instance, Agnes, who at the time of the Fort Peck interview was in her nineties, was sent as a child along with her brothers to a boarding school to escape the physical, sexual, and emotional brutality of their white stepfather. Agnes remembers the school as a "safe haven."

As illustrated by the previous examples, most women living on both reservations today have been influenced by one of the local Christian churches and/or mission efforts. While all but one of the women quoted above reacted negatively to these experiences, present-day women respond differently to Christian religious experiences. Their current spiritual activities include attendance at either a mainstream church, such as the Catholic or Lutheran churches, or one of the fundamentalist or evangelical churches. While these women accept and value their church involvement, they also indicate that they respect First People's cultural traditions. However, Fort Peck women from fundamentalist groups were exceptions to this pattern, reporting that they were proud to be Indian, although being Indian as their churches taught did not allow for participation in traditional spiritual or secular practices.

Fundamentalist and Evangelical Churches

Several Cheyenne women discussed their involvement in the Baptist, Mennonite, and Pentecostal churches, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. While these women were less likely to include Cheyenne spiritual traditions in their current choice of religious practices, each one indicates the importance of traditional ways and respect for the choices of others to practice them.

Laura, in her forties: Like I told you, I was raised in a Mennonite church by my grandmother, and that's always been my main support, or the main way that I choose, and that's what I've taught my children. But I've also taught my children that one way is not right and the other way wrong . . . that they need to have a mutual respect for however other people choose to worship or whatever. But it's just not . . . it's not for me.... I know my grandmother, she was the one that raised me in the Mennonite Church, and it was kind of a little odd that her mother was a real strong Christian and her father was a well-respected medicine man. And it was, you know, there was the two different worlds that she grew up in, and she made a choice then to follow the Protestant way of spirituality and that was instilled in us as we grew up, but we do have a lot of respect for the other ways . . . the traditional ways if they choose to worship that way. But it doesn't play a real big part in my life.

Debra, in her twenties: I want to go back to church [Pentecostal] too 'cuz I used to be happy and have a peace of mind and I was in harmony when I was going to church.... Well, I pray and stuff in the morning, you know, and at night it helps me not to . . . I don't know, I always just ask to have a peace of mind and encouragement and everything to help me to keep busy and focus on the kids. When I do . . . I get through the day 'cuz I really don't trust people or like to hear negative things and, you know, just live one day at a time and plan to do things with my kids, but it's hard 'cuz I have no money.

While the women quoted above do not see a relationship between Cheyenne and Christian ways, another woman specifically draws a parallel between Sweet Medicine, the Cheyenne prophet, and Jesus.

Esther, in her fifties: And so we all got ready . . . we lived right there on the Mormon hill . . . we all got ready and went to church. And this missionary . . . he was . . . more like a father to my husband. You could tell he really cared for him.... He didn't beat around the bush about anything at all. He just told him like it was and . . . so we went up there, and pretty soon I was baptized, and I knew that my search was over.

But, like that area we're living in, it's called Sweet Medicine.... When we first studied the gospel and I was getting baptized, man, that was just the greatest thing, you know, . . . being taught the gospel. And my husband, he sat down, and he told me, he said, "Who do you think Sweet Medicine was?" And I tell him, "Jesus Christ came and he visited the Cheyenne people."

[A]nd as a woman, . . . my knowledge in those [religious ceremonies] are limited, you know, . . . it's just like, for example, the Sun Dances. Those are really sacred words that they use in Cheyenne. They're very, you know, sacred . . . they're only used in the lodge in that ceremony. And you don't speak those words at any other time. That's how sacred they are. And it's just . . . I guess, I've never been to the temple, but that's the understanding I have, that they have some sacred words that they use, and I said, "That's kind of how that is." And then . . . only the men hold the priesthood, and that's kind of how I respect my tradition, you know, the ceremonies.... Only men can do that, you know, and only men can talk about things like that, you know, so I respect it to that extent.

The Fort Peck experience with fundamentalist and evangelical churches has been more mixed than the Northern Cheyenne experience. Although Tilly, in her fifties, found a refuge in a missionary school, like her elder Agnes (see page 13), the experience was not identical.

We were in boarding school . . . but all I know is my folks told me I got to get an education. Some of my older brothers and sisters came back bitter; they were disappointed with my mother. They blamed her for them being at boarding school, but I have a different attitude towards it, because at that day and time, there was no such thing as welfare,

and our father died. And how was she gonna support nine of us kids? And at least my mother, my mother put us where we'd have three meals a day and be clean plus educated.

For the last three-and-a-half decades the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) has provided some recognition of and support for sovereignty and revitalization of traditional cultures, including respect for certain traditional spiritual practices. In the early 1960s the Fort Peck Assiniboine president of the first organization of Native American college students in Montana took his club members, including a number of young Fort Peck women, to what may have been the first intercollegiate powwow at Brigham Young University in Utah. This man had been reared in the Mormon Church at Fort Peck by his mother who was placed in a Mormon foster home as a child.²⁸ At Brigham Young, the members of the clubs from both schools felt a strong sense of what was to be called pan-Indianness. The Mormon Church saw the traditional dancing as a demonstration of joy in the Lord. For Indian students, the church-sanctioned activities provided a means to legitimize and save parts of their traditional cultures.

If Fort Peck women have accepted fundamentalist or evangelistic theologies by ignoring or glossing over their questions about bigotry (racial, cultural, or sexual) within the reservation's Bible-oriented groups, they also have found a certain level of physical and emotional support within these church communities. For instance, after his release from prison the Indian pastor of a local evangelical church found a temporary spiritual home in a local Pentecostal church led by a white pastor before founding his own church. Another example is found in the experiences of a young woman, Lenore, who was brought up in the traditional manner but for a time attended an evangelical church. Eventually, she left the Christian Church because of its exclusiveness. Lenore reported with a wry smile, "I can't be proud of being Indian if I can't partake in our traditional ceremonies."

In general, the Northern Cheyenne experience with conservative, typically salvation-oriented, churches has been more positive than the Fort Peck experiences in terms of respect for traditional spiritualities. Fewer fundamentalist and evangelical churches have gained a missionary foothold on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and have obtained far less political power than have their counterparts on the Fort Peck Reservation.

Mainstream Churches

Some Cheyenne and Fort Peck women indicated that their participation in mainstream churches is particularly meaningful. These churches generally have had strong missionary orientations but have also made some efforts in recent years to support traditional spirituality. In fact, some women attending mainstream churches continue to draw spiritual strength from traditional Cheyenne, Assiniboine, and Sioux practices. In the following quote, a Northern Cheyenne Catholic woman discusses how she sees both Catholic and traditional ways as important spiritual resources.

Ruth, in her fifties: I think religion is, well, you know, before I never thought of it as being two different things. I just kind of combined them, but when I went to a [college] class this semester, it kind of . . . you know, separated them. And I think that religion, the way I see it, is going to church and praying to . . . you know, the God you believe in. And spirituality I think is something that, I don't know, maybe you were born with. And that you kind of work at as you grow up, and how you, I guess, how you believe in things and how you believe in which God to pray to. And the way I . . . see it is that we all pray to one God.... I could go into any church and pray and . . . it wouldn't have to be just a Catholic church. Or I could go into a peyote meeting and pray . . . that would satisfy me, 'cuz I know that God is everywhere.... I think there's a lot more to it, but spirituality . . . I think it's different for each person. Like I said, I think you or me are born with it. It just doesn't come to you all of the sudden, you know. It's right there . . . it just keeps growing, for the people that believe in it, I guess . . . I don't know. But to me, it's always been there.²⁹

Note the parallel interpretations of spiritual experiences reported by a Fort Peck great-grandmother married to "an Indian man who was raised Catholic" and knew little about traditional ways. She reflected upon how her husband and she found similarities in the two spiritual teachings and taught both to their children:

We combined our lifestyles raising our family according to the Ten Commandments and with respect to what the Indians believed and the honor that they had for each other. It's like when someone does something against you. Just never mind 'cause in the Bible it says, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord." In Indian Country, in the circle, when you go around the circle, it comes back around. So again, don't pay attention because it will take care of itself.

For the past thirty-five years, several mainstream churches (one of the Fort Peck Lutheran churches, the Presbyterian church, and all the Catholic churches) have shown different forms of support for cultural renaissance, including certain aspects of traditional spirituality. For instance, during the 1972 Trail of Treaties, Lutheran churches opened their doors to house, feed, and provide medical care for the participants, including Fort Peck representatives, as they traveled across the United States to Washington, D.C. This hospitality included acceptance of certain aspects of traditional spiritual ceremonies within their houses of worship. More recently Catholic churches sometimes include traditional singing and drumming during certain events such as funerals. The Dakota Presbyterian Church provides hymnals written in the traditional language and English. All the mainstream churches include American Indian motifs in their church decorations, including selected art pieces at the altar.

Overall, the Fort Peck and Northern Cheyenne participation in mainstream Christian churches has been more positive than in the more conservative fundamentalist churches. While some churches have demonstrated respect for traditional ways through identifying similarities between

Christianity and indigenous spiritualities, the primary means for showing support for or recognition of the traditional cultures has been the adoption of carefully selected cultural or sacred objects within their church services.

RESISTANCE BY INNOVATION

In addition to surviving through conformity, Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck tribal members, and nontribal Indians have adapted to the imposition of the reservation system and the assimilation policies by resisting through innovation. This innovation has often taken a synergetic form, through which the Fort Peck Sioux and Assiniboine and Northern Cheyenne have practiced both Christianity and traditional Indian spiritualities. During the early implementation of the reservation system, people went underground to practice the old ways. This covert behavior continued until the 1970s when men and women on both reservations began to honor and practice Lakota, Nakota, and Cheyenne spiritual ways more openly and to import from the Midwest nations Native American Church roadrunners who helped establish local groups among the northwest nations.

While the women who resisted through conformity generally focused more on their Christian church affiliation, many also held respect for traditional spiritual ways. In contrast, the following women make a clear choice to combine their Christian and traditional religious practices. Although the casual observer might be tempted to see this type of innovation as recent, the women's interviews reveal that adaptation actually began among those living in the early reservation period. For some, the innovation involved a continuation of their traditional spiritual beliefs and practices in a secretive, rather than open, way. For others, there has been an overt effort to combine Christian and traditional spirituality. The following quote illustrates the experiences of a Northern Cheyenne woman reared in a traditional home in the early 1900s. Evelyn, in her seventies, recalls her forced boarding school experiences in the 1930s. She also recalls her efforts to continue speaking Cheyenne and to live a traditional life while attending a Christian church.

And when I got there [Busby Boarding School], an Indian woman was there and she told me in Cheyenne that I cannot talk Cheyenne anymore, and that they were going to start teaching me how to talk English and that I would have to listen and try to get along with them, and everything would be easy thereafter.... It was a nightmare, I tell you. After we got there, I said good-bye to my grandmother and just about when I was going to go into the door, I turned around and looked and they were moving out in the wagon. I turned and ran. I ran as fast as I could. I was chasing them, and neither one of them saw me doing that. As I was chasing them, another woman was chasing me. And they caught up with me and took me back, while I was fighting and screaming.... During the winter I would be home two, three days, and so me and the other children would get together and whisper Cheyenne, you know, and as soon as we'd see this lady that

was watching coming, we'd quit...! And some would go to Catholic church or Mennonite church . . . we would go to Mennonite church. I couldn't tell the difference, until after a long time.

A first-generation reservation Assiniboine woman's story offers a parallel illustration of early innovative resistance at Fort Peck. Minerva was brought up traditionally. At the turn of the century, shortly after she turned ten, she was sent to a Mormon home in Utah where she stayed until her late teens, when she was sent home to care for her younger brothers after their mother's untimely death. She was active in the Mormon Church all her life. She also occasionally took part in traditional Assiniboine ceremonies and always supported them although often underground. In the late 1960s family was called because the local doctor said she would not survive the night. Later, she told the surprised doctor and her thankful family members, "White Buffalo Calf Woman told me that my grandchildren still need me." When she died in the 1970s her family followed her wishes: she was given the honor of both a Mormon funeral and the Assiniboine spiritual ceremonies. Only upon her death was she able to be fully open about her continued allegiance to the old ways.

As noted earlier, prior to the 1970s, the Dakota Presbyterian Church,³⁰ in contrast to the early practices of other Fort Peck churches, gave symbolic recognition to the Sioux by allowing hymns to be sung in the Native language and Indian ceremonial objects to be included in Christian services. More Indian forms of giveaways and feasts, albeit modified, at the time of a death have also been permitted in the church.

Both Evelyn's and Minerva's stories and the changes in the Fort Peck Dakota Presbyterian Church demonstrate the capability of Plains Indian women to devise creative ways of honoring Euro-American religion and Indian spiritualities. In addition, their choices graphically portray the inclusive nature of indigenous spirituality.

Contemporary Cheyenne and Fort Peck women have developed several new spiritual paths to better meet their needs. Moving beyond the Christian adoption of First Peoples' material-culture objects and token-spiritual objects, Plains Indian women have combined Christian church participation with special efforts to participate in the renewal of traditional Cheyenne, Lakota, and Nakota ceremonies and spiritual traditions. Quotes from the following women indicate their belief that there is little, if any, conflict between their church affiliation and traditional spiritualities.

Fundamentalist and Evangelical Churches

The following quotes are from Cheyenne women involved with the Mormon Church, but the ideas expressed also represent other women involved with conservative, fundamentalist churches on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. While most women involved with these churches were less likely to express support for both traditional spirituality and Christian religions, these women saw the value of both ways.

Michelle, in her twenties: You know, . . . a lot of bad things I guess people tell me is . . . they're worshipping something else. But, you know, I know that they're the same, they believe in God, you know, and that's what . . . that's who they are, and I believe that if it's helping them then I think it's good. And I didn't ever see really anything going against the two. I think they go together.

Mary, in her thirties: I think more towards what I know, the life I should be living. I know I shouldn't be drinking because that just leads to violence and it's an addiction. Even with the Mormon Church the belief that they have with not drinking coffee and all of those things, I can see where that can be really harmful because of the caffeine. I guess pulling things out that I think are good for me and my family, from everywhere, from the Native American Church, from the Mormon Church, from the Catholic Church, and from what we believe in our hearts the way we should live.

A similar pattern can be seen among some Fort Peck women. However, a religious anomaly has appeared on the Fort Peck Reservation during the last decade-and-a-half: two reservation evangelical churches have been started by Indian men and their wives. The theologies of the churches often look very much like liberation theology with its emphases on racial equality and respect for women, thereby supporting the personal-moral and economic-justice goals of the church members. However, the exclusion of traditional Indian spiritual practices, most secular activities, and practicing gays and lesbians stands in stark contrast to the otherwise inclusive and loving practices of the two churches. In spite of these restrictions, the churches have provided a haven for many Fort Peck people, Indian and non-Indian, who have been forgotten or denigrated by other Christian churches. In addition, the Indian churches have capitalized on the traditional values of generosity and sharing and the importance of extended family. Today many of the church members who were once social outcasts are now respected role models on the reservation.

A Fort Peck woman in her thirties, one of a number of church members subjected to child abuse, consequently contributing to her alcoholism, drug addictions, and parental neglect, told how the Indian pastor of one of the evangelical churches intervened on her behalf while she was in jail. Upon release from Spotted Bull, the tribes' treatment center, the church provided her with a supportive and nonjudgmental community.³¹

I didn't know what to do with my life. I had a daughter; she was just six years old.... I stayed at my sister's and we drank that weekend. And when [my cousin] was going to go home, she was going to take her [the speaker's daughter] with her. See, I woulda lost her. And I was drinking, and I didn't care.... And one morning I woke up in my cell. They put me in court and the judge told me thirty days in jail first, and then—I sat two weeks in jail and the gospel people were coming in; they were singing, preaching their word. I didn't want to read [material about God's forgiveness and love]. "I'm just gonna lay here," I thought. I did read. I just bust out crying! I could not stop crying. I

was just laying in my cell crying. That following Monday the jailer came and opened my cell. He said, "You're being released, with the recommendation of the pastor, to Spotted Bull."

The Cheyenne and Fort Peck experiences with synergetic combinations of Christianity and Indian spiritualities once again demonstrate the flexibility of the women and the importance of spirituality in their lives.

Mainstream Churches

The following quotes are from Cheyenne Catholic women showing how involvement in a church serving an Indian community can sometimes lead to participation in both Christian and traditional Cheyenne spiritual activities. In this case, the recent interest and acceptance of Cheyenne spiritual activities shown by local Catholic clergy encouraged this woman to negotiate a new way to meet her spiritual and cultural needs without leaving the Catholic Church.

Janet, in her thirties: [I]t's like today, you know, I still believe these ways. I still sweat. I go to my church that I belong to.... It was the Catholic church that got me to start sweating, you know, going to sweats because the sisters and the fathers wanted to start sweating. They started bringing traditional ways back. You know, we burn cedar in church. . . they started using shawls.... My experience with the Catholic Church really helped me to . . . learn these ways, and I owe a lot to them, you know!

Margaret, in her fifties: Yeah, I read at church a lot, but see, my parents were the ones that had me baptized in the Catholic Church because they were baptized Catholic. So that's how, you know, my faith grows strong, but . . . I learn from [my husband, the Sacred Hat Keeper] . . . that's where I learned to pray from here [her heart]. Not with him, but with what he taught me from his grandmother. I learned to pray from here, and just like, you know, good prayers.... But . . . we took care of the tipi [where the Sacred Hat was kept] together. You know, we went in and prayed together. And then like praying in the sweat lodge together, you know . . . the way I see it, like there's so many separations . . . divorces that go on now.... I feel that by praying together, you know, you pray for strength for, you know, the family life . . . you know, the home.

Jenny, in her thirties: [P]retty much I was raised Catholic, you know . . . it . . . didn't have any spirituality to it. It was their religion, you know. I think . . . in this day and age, you have to really reach out for what you can, you know, to help you. To help you stay on the road of recovery, help you stay sober, you know . . . and there's a lot.... I use Tai Chi, and I use acupuncture, and I use massage, and I use sweats and peyote meetings.... I even go to the churches, you know, and just . . . and I like it that way. You know?

The Mennonite and Catholic churches are comparatively new supporters of recovery and cultural renewal. Cheyenne women reported that the Mennonite Church has provided several avenues for Cheyenne traditional expression in its church services as well as in other church-sponsored activities. For example, a Cheyenne hymnal provides songs for church members to sing in their Native language in the church service. Additionally, ministers of both Mennonite churches on the reservation speak Cheyenne (one is non-Indian and the other is Cheyenne). Such practices clearly indicate to church members a high degree of cultural acceptance. Likewise, these clergy have taken opportunities to learn about the substance-abuse recovery process and offer help to community members obtain necessary treatment and other types of assistance. Activities designed to help community members develop and maintain strong family relationships and support youth development are also consistent with traditional Cheyenne culture. Finally, the Mennonite Church not only has been active in efforts to preserve Cheyenne language, but also has collected oral histories and recognized the role of Cheyenne leaders in the local culture. An important example of such efforts is a recent "call back" ceremony held in a Mennonite church for the family of a highly respected Cheyenne elder who had died a year earlier. During this ceremony a Cheyenne medicine man and a Mennonite minister facilitated the completion of the rituals for the elder's family. A significant aspect of the ceremony was recognition of the tribal elder's recovery from alcoholism and his commitment to both the Cheyenne people and the Mennonite Church.

While the Mennonite churches have had few financial resources to support the recovery of their members, they nevertheless provide social, cultural, and spiritual resources for such efforts. In terms of the typology of church goals and orientations, this church illustrates both the commitment to personal-moral development and to public service and the protection of the integrity and well-being of the Cheyenne community.³² However, the resources of the church have been more abundant for the former goal.

In comparison, the Catholic churches serving the reservation now contribute in more substantial ways to achieve the social, economic, and cultural goals of the tribe. In particular, the Catholic mission has provided financial resources for the development of Cheyenne institutions at crucial times in recent Cheyenne history. For example, in the areas of education and economic development, the Catholic mission not only provides support for the mission school, but also contributes to the development of the tribal college and local enterprises that employ Cheyenne tribal members. Although many Cheyenne still link the Catholic Church to their experiences of cultural loss and personal trauma while attending the boarding school, others acknowledge the more recent efforts of the clergy to incorporate Cheyenne culture into the celebration of mass, to become more knowledgeable of Cheyenne cultural traditions, to help the Northern Cheyenne address educational needs and other community issues, and to support tribal development efforts. In addition, community members utilize the mission school's chemical dependency and other counseling resources for students and their families. Thus, like the Mennonite Church, the Catholic churches continue to

emphasize individual moral development and commit resources to the collective well-being of the Northern Cheyenne.

In stark contrast to these two Northern Cheyenne churches, the other smaller churches—mostly evangelical—focus primarily on personal-moral regulation, the salvation and individual moral development of their members. For example, these churches place particular emphasis on meeting the needs of their members for religious instruction through regular church services, recruiting new members, and inspiring commitment through revivals and other special events. They are less likely to become involved in issues of economic justice or community development, although some have organized efforts to provide emergency food assistance to Cheyenne families.

Paralleling the Mennonite and Catholic experiences of the Northern Cheyenne women, most of the Fort Peck women who were members of the mainstream churches still recognized and honored traditional spiritual teachings. The women paid heed to signs that may have come in the form of an owl preparing the person for a forthcoming death, or visits from spirits carrying other types of messages. The women also were aware of the importance of learning from dreams. In the following story, a woman who was active in the Catholic Church was prepared for the death of her much-loved husband through traditional Indian means. An owl had come to the window for several nights. Later she found little black rocks in her hair although she had not been on a picnic or working outdoors, and she and her children felt cool breezes in the house although it was summer and there was no wind outside.

It was the following last of August the medicine man came to my house. And I never attended or participated in those things and stuff, and he came to my house. So I was cooking and we was sittin' there, fixed up something to eat, sittin' there and we were talking. And I told him [about the owl, rocks, and cool breezes]. He said it's because the spirits are preparing your mind for something that is coming. He said if it's something for you to do, he said, they'll come back. You know that following January my husband died. And like I said, the kids asked me how we did make it. I can't answer them, but we did.... I prayed. I had my faith in both ways.

The synergetic combination of Christianity and traditional ways continues to take different forms dependent on the Christian Church and its theology. However, today the women talk openly about living in multiple religious worlds. Janet, a Fort Peck woman in her forties, reflected:

So I came from and walked in three spiritual worlds: the half-breed world,³³ the Assiniboine, and I went to convent school, Catholic. All those combined. My folks used to tell me I was me, this was who I am. I was taught these things about our Assiniboine culture. And I never denied it and it never crossed my mind to ever want to be anything else but who I am.

One afternoon two summers ago, Rosalee, whose father is a traditional Nakota medicine person and whose mother is a devout Catholic, succinctly explained her ability to respect and practice both traditions: "I've seen miracles both ways!"

The Native American Church

In the current reservation context, other women have chosen to engage primarily in the traditional spiritual practices they learned from older generations within their families and communities. These women belong to two groups: those whose spiritual practices include various forms of the Cheyenne, Lakota, or Assiniboine traditions and ceremonies, and those who participate in the Native American Church. The categories are not mutually exclusive. One road that the new traditionalists have taken is to participate in the Native American Church. The use of peyote as a tool to facilitate spiritual enlightenment is not new. However, its use by northern peoples is relatively new. For instance, in the late 1970s a Fort Peck AIM member financially sponsored a Native American Church roadrunner (leader) to travel from Kansas to Fort Peck to conduct a peyote ceremony held in an AIM supporter's rural home located between Wolf Point and Poplar. A small but dedicated Fort Peck Native American Church community was established from this first introduction.

For some Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women, participation in the Native American Church is a significant part of their lives. And for Northern Cheyenne women the church has played an essential role in their recovery from substance abuse. This church provides opportunities for new spiritual expression which have great meaning in their lives.

Marie, in her forties: Well, definitely practicing the Native American Church religion and the sweat-lodge ceremony made a tremendous impact on my recovery. Spiritually, I grew each time I went to a ceremony or a sweat, because each time . . . each ceremony made me look at the reality . . . the reality of myself and my recovery and . . . what I needed to do. But at the same time I knew that I needed mental healing, . . . I've always been in and out of counseling, . . . I put myself into counseling and I knew I needed to heal a lot of things.

Yeah . . . the Native American Church . . . it helps you build yourself spiritually because . . . you sit there all night . . . and sing and pray all night and . . . it teaches you empathy for others, and you just sit there and you pray with a purpose.... And so I guess that's what helped me to grow . . . was the more and more I went, the more and more I realized about life and the importance of a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle which the Native American Church really . . . really pretty much emphasizes, you know.

Susan, in her thirties: And then there's the Native American Church.... At the beginning I never understood what it all meant or what it represented, . . . you know up to that point of when I went in,

'cuz I was so sick, you know, I was thinking, "Well, you know, . . . if this meeting really helps me and stuff, and there's something to it, then I'm always coming." It's really good for me, and really helps people out, like they say. And I've always wanted to be a part of it. So that's what I did, you know . . . it helped me get well. And even though all that night I had a hard time trying to stay up all night, it was something about those songs, too, that just sort of helped me. Even though I really didn't understand that whole meeting, it was sort of explained. . . . I guess for me I learned it kind of almost on my own and some of the pieces kind of filled in. I asked some questions, you know, just talking to people, and you ask them, "What does this mean?" and they tell you. So when you go back into a peyote meeting, and you know that, then it really makes sense. So it started to fall into place. It's real, you know? And you're there and it really makes sense.

As these quotes suggest, participation in the Native American Church became an important resource for women, supporting their recovery from substance abuse, often following their participation in AA or other programs. As seen earlier in the Fort Peck woman's story about her recovery from alcohol abuse, the recovery process often began with a woman's realization that drinking (substance abuse) was interfering with the need to care for her family, which in turn led to medical treatment and/or participation in Alcoholics Anonymous. However, recovery was often difficult, since these women often faced it with little support from family members or friends. Unlike the Fort Peck experience, initial participation in AA for the Northern Cheyenne women was often crucial in providing a new kind of "family" or reference group to which they could turn for understanding and support. A number of women also discussed experiences with domestic violence and its relationship to their recovery.³⁴

However, many Northern Cheyenne women eventually became critical of AA, indicating that while AA groups had served them well in the early stages of their personal growth, the groups often failed to meet important personal and cultural needs. Like the Fort Peck women, a number of the Northern Cheyenne women had questions about their personal identities as American Indians. Such questions are essentially outside the parameters of AA's twelve-step program. As a result, some women turned to alternative sources for assistance, including tribal elders and tribal ceremonies and rituals, including fasts, Native American Church meetings, sun dances, and sweats. Drawing on these sources, women developed new understandings of their cultural heritage, spirituality, and place in the Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck communities. Practicing traditional spiritual activities was new for some women while for others it represented a return to ways they experienced as children but had set aside for a time over the years.

The New Traditionalists

Some women meet spiritual needs discovered in the recovery process through traditional ceremonies and prayer. For Anita, in her thirties, the healing process gradually led her to participate in Cheyenne traditional ceremonies.

A lot of it had a lot to do with religion and spirituality. In my recovery, not really going to church, but praying in my own way, you know, and asking for strength. And going to Sun Dances, 'cuz they had their own thing there, too, you know. And everything, just kind of like all fell . . . falls into place, you know, to have respect for the higher power.

At Fort Peck, as noted earlier, all the women use the material culture of the Euro-American society while retaining remnants of their traditional cultural values. The new traditionalists incorporate spiritual beliefs and practices into their lives. They recognize that part of living successfully in two worlds includes the recognition of two different worldviews. Many women, professional and nonprofessional, have become bicultural or transcultural, respecting their own wisdom as much as, if not more than, the thinking of White society. For example, one successful Fort Peck professional woman who has a master's degree described how she lives successfully in two worlds:

I have two people that I am. I have my traditional person. Then I have my work-a-day person that makes money to live on. Even that person is not mainstream American. I'm working in a job that is bicultural, etc. Still it is a eight-to-five job, make the reports, be on time.... Still people don't know who I am. I shock them. They see me as my work person and see me in my full buckskins. With me I just have these two people that I am. And I feel comfortable with it. I'm kinda performing all the time in the work-a-day world. I play a part. I choose to give part of me, but not all of me. Some, not all. I choose whom I give out information to.

Like the Northern Cheyenne women, the Fort Peck women thought that White men and women, even professionals such as counselors and some church people, did not connect their heads with their hearts. In other words, Whites were seen as more cognitive than feeling and caring. A Fort Peck woman described the compartmentalization of their lives, the lack of a holistic or balanced life, which includes a recognition of the spiritual:

They're carrying all kinds of titles. And then that makes them think that they're better than somebody else. Unmm, it doesn't. I mean, a person, what they are is what's coming from in here [she touched her heart area and the interviewer asked, "Your heart?"]. Yeah. Not from the mouth, but from the heart. When it comes from the heart, then it's good. When it comes from the mouth, it's not. Because to me someplace along the line, those White people got their connection cut, you know. Between the mouth and the heart, it's cut off somewhere. What is coming from the heart is not coming through.

At Fort Peck during the last several decades the strongest and most organized support for women retaining and relearning their traditional cultural roles came from American Indian Movement members. The first support group for the new traditionalists, the Walks Far Society, was formed by AIM women.³⁵ By publicly challenging the stereotypes that traditional spiritual

practices were pagan and evil, AIM members helped pave the way in the mid-1970s for openly practicing ceremonies such as the Yuwipi and the Sun Dance.

Younger women among the new Fort Peck traditionalists such as Sarah, in her early thirties, also reflected upon her appreciation for the spiritual strengths and sacrifices of the older women:

Being a Native American I have a lot of pride as a Native American woman. I do understand the history, you know. I'm not a dancer or singer but I can understand the moral fiber of what our ancestors were all about and the history and that was integrated into my growth and development. I've also trained my children in it. Ultimately, to me, it's compassion for your neighbors, human beings, and morals. Those are the things that are really important to me and I teach my children those things. It reinforces the meaning because that's part of what a culture is all about. I don't know the life history of a lot of the other women, but I know what it is to be a Native American female today, to be a single parent. And that's pretty much what we all are right now and it's a long, long road. It's a hard road, you know.... But my beliefs help me.

The following description of the revitalization of the teachings of White Buffalo Calf Woman and the Sun Dance among the Assiniboine, Sioux, and Cheyenne begins to document more specifically the beliefs and practices of new traditionalists. Fort Peck women are now more actively and openly participating in the seven sacred ceremonies brought by White Buffalo Calf Woman. Nakota and Lakota women are participants as well as leaders in the Inipi, the sweat lodge used for mental, physical, and spiritual purification, and the Yuwipi or Lowanpi, healing ceremonies that, like the Inipi, enlist the aid of spirits. Like Northern Cheyenne women, Fort Peck women have taken part or are preparing to take part in the complementary women's roles in the Winwanyag Wachapi, the Sun Dance. More recently Fort Peck women have also been dancers, the supreme act of sacrifice, asking for healing (for others as well as one's self) and giving thanks to the Creator for all the gifts of life.

One young Fort Peck woman shared a familiar story of how she came to find and accept herself as an Indian woman after a long struggle with alcohol abuse, a fight that almost killed her:

My prayers were answered. I said to myself, "Do I have to be ashamed of me being Indian now that I put my faith in you?" I mean, you created me! I should be able to go to church, attend any church. You know that I was raised up in the Presbyterian and Catholic churches and told that I should not go out and Indian dance and I was raised traditionally. But it really messed my mind up. And I imagine that there's a lot of kids out there too that, you know, my age, that it bothered them too. You know, some of them had confusion. But finally at thirty-six years old, finally I had an answer to all of the prayers and all of the confusion. And I finally settled that the answer was: "No, I didn't have a reason to be ashamed that I was an Indian." And if I wanted to

practice and to support my heritage as an Indian woman, I could, you know. So it took that long to get an answer, but I'm really grateful that I got it.

Fort Peck college-educated leaders, who were either brought up in traditional homes or learned the old ways through other means, have helped in the movement to restore traditional spiritual practices. The traditional spiritual community is still small and receives much opposition from evangelical and fundamentalist churches. Families are split, but the old power of those Christian churches to demonize the traditional spiritual ways is rapidly losing strength.

The findings from this recent research supported earlier Fort Peck research results that the women living the most balanced lives are following indigenous spiritual ways such as the White Buffalo Calf path.³⁶ White Buffalo Calf women exemplify the best of the traditional and Euro-American worlds. Like the choices being made by Northern Cheyenne women, a growing number of Fort Peck women choose to recreate the path given in the teachings of their spiritual mentor. White Buffalo Calf women serve as role models of integrity, courage, honesty, and generosity. Traditionally wise women living successfully in a modern world, they are strong, spiritual warriors who balance familial, community, and personal needs. Knowledge combined with experience, respect for traditions, and social support has created today's wise women of Fort Peck.

It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the wisdom of White Buffalo Calf Woman. However, several critical points must be made. White Buffalo Calf women realize if they give up their mystic gifts, they will become materialistic, like members of White society, or fail to show respect for others, which White Buffalo Calf women do not want. LaDonna is a professional woman who compared Whites to Indians:

I can be this mystic and I can be this other person. If we give up mystic to be "equals"—I myself just would never do it. Because even if they say, "I'm not racist," just the way they treat you. If you're talking, they'll interrupt you. Then they don't give respect. Walking in front of you, they don't give equal respect. They just don't perceive another human being as being worthy of respect.

In addition to receiving mystical gifts, sometimes called extrasensory perception, other important qualities include being "grateful for everything I have been handed"; being "at least a little humble" (said with a smile); realizing that "I am not the total planner"; and, perhaps most importantly, keeping control of what psychologists call ego.

Finally, becoming a traditional wise woman is not easy. It is not learned in four or five years at college; it is a lifelong endeavor. White Buffalo Calf women teach more often by doing than saying: they model and provide examples of desired attitudes and behavior. For instance, they honor the old prophecies by respecting their truths. One evening a traditional woman reminded the interviewer:

Long time ago, the Indians knew the cars were coming. They knew all these things, you know. And they even knew about this AIDS that was coming. Hmm. He [a medicine person] said, "The White people brought a disease [smallpox] and the Indians all got it. Now, there's another disease coming and it's going to kill off all the White people, you know. And it's going to kill part of ours. If the Indians live by their tradition, it would never affect them."

In summary, both the Northern Cheyenne and the Fort Peck women realize that they are living in two worlds. They are bicultural or multicultural. The women who live the more balanced lives rely on some of the old ways, especially the spiritual worldview and practices.³⁷ When they have been unable to take part in ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, they have done such things as burning sage or sweet grass, praying and purifying themselves, in their urban homes and offices. Their lives are examples of the phenomenon of "ethnic reorganization"³⁸ or "retraditionalization."³⁹ This process of personal change, adapting elements of the traditional culture to the present, provides evidence of a type of cultural renaissance in which renewed spirituality has played no small role.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on data from these two case studies of American Indian women allows us, first, to see the importance of listening to the women themselves rather than relying solely on formal institutional reports, and second, to see that there are both historical and current social conditions that affect the healing processes and roles for women in these two communities. For example, women in the Northern Cheyenne community have benefited from the efforts of the tribal college and health care programs to train alcohol counselors and provide meaningful counseling services. Because both programs have increasingly incorporated elements of Native spirituality and culture into their approach to treatment and services to alcoholics, the women who have attended the training programs or who have been served by the counselors have had relatively greater opportunities to address these dimensions in their recovery. Additionally, some local churches—typically mainstream churches—have supported the growth of their members in a variety of ways, including greater acceptance of traditional spirituality.⁴⁰ These churches exemplify new religious efforts to support personal, cultural, and community goals that are meaningful for the Northern Cheyenne. Generally, women's spiritual renewal found more support among those mainstream churches that embraced some elements of traditional spirituality.

Although Fort Peck Tribal College has provided some support other than educational, its role is not as central to the lives of Fort Peck women as the college at Northern Cheyenne. Since its inception in the late 1970s, Fort Peck College has sponsored short-lived support groups. In the last several years there has been one support group for Indian and non-Indian women, which meets weekly in Poplar. The fate of this support group depends on financial resources. Furthermore, many Fort Peck Reservation women have

not felt as comfortable in AA programs as have the Northern Cheyenne women. Others have found meaningful support in the Catholic Church, Dakota Presbyterian Church, the Blue Skies Ministry, the Overcomers Church, the Mormon churches, and, in recent years, the Poplar Lutheran Church. In contrast to Northern Cheyenne, the Fort Peck tribes' chemical-dependency treatment center works more closely with the churches than with traditional medicine people. However, recently the fundamentalist Christian monopoly on spiritual support during the treatment process is being challenged by traditionalists.⁴¹

In both the Northern Cheyenne and the Fort Peck cases, there is more to learn about the social and historical dynamics that created the environments in which a spiritual renaissance could take place. What is clear is that the women's spiritual activities on both reservations, at both the personal and cultural levels, have been acts of resistance to cultural loss and personal dysfunction. However, women's spiritual expressions have been shaped not only by personal beliefs, but also by social and historical forces affecting each reservation context.

These findings lend credence to previous critiques in the mental health and social service literature⁴² indicating, first, that problems are more likely when the client's culture is not considered, and, second, that Indian clients may need to be directed to community healers and traditional practices as part of their services or treatment programs.⁴³ However, the empirical findings presented in this article also support an important new direction in medical research regarding survival and healing—the centrality of spirituality. Among American Indians who have experienced intensive assimilationist and deculturalization efforts, processes of healing and growth may necessarily involve attention to both physiological and emotional survival. In fact, addressing cultural and spiritual needs is often central to the process.

Other implications of these research findings concern women's roles in tribal communities today. Again, these findings support recent efforts in the humanities and social science literatures, which have begun to clarify Native women's roles and experiences in historical and current times.⁴⁴ Although the comparative research summarized above also relates to work by such scholars as Teresa LaFromboise⁴⁵ indicating how Native American women have responded to recent situations of stress by using traditional ways, our new research findings identify some of the specific social and cultural dimensions of the process. This research documents cultural changes as well as continuities across generations of Indian women and identifies the meanings associated with women's roles today. Women of each generation on reservations today have resisted cultural loss and trauma in their lives. However, their expressions of resistance have been shaped by both their location within a specific cultural and social context and their time period. Thus, although the first two spiritual paths were easier to follow during the early reservation period, there was variation within the generation experiencing this historical era. Later age cohorts followed increasingly diverse spiritual paths as different eras made possible more choices. The variation demonstrates that reservation women have always maintained some autonomy in their lives in spite of the

powerful colonial forces of each time period. In other words, in keeping with the traditional roles of strong women, women as a group were never passive victims, as they found ways to practice varying degrees of free will, or free agency, since the inception of the reservation system.

Most importantly, the findings reveal the centrality of women's spirituality in their efforts to survive, heal, and grow. Of particular interest is that Native women are contributing to social and cultural changes through the creation of new forms of religious and spiritual expression. These new forms represent not only the results of their efforts to resolve personal problems or oppressive situations, but also the effects of particular generational experiences and historical eras that laid the foundation upon which new forms of spiritual renewal could be built. For example, the Native American Church is an alternative form of spiritual expression that continues to be meaningful to new generations. Similarly, the new traditionalists represent important forms of spiritual expression that are independent of church denominations but provide continuity with older generations in the women's cultural communities.

Finally, all these forms of spiritual expression developed by Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck women signify resistance to degradation of Native family and community life. Thus, the findings point to cultural institutions—in addition to political and economic structures—as important arenas in which indigenous women challenge their subordination and the colonization of their communities.

NOTES

1. The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation and Northern Cheyenne Reservation are two Plains Indian reservations located in northeastern and southeastern Montana, respectively. Although the majority of the Sioux were forced onto reservations in the Dakotas, the US Calvary retained a group of Lakota and Dakota on a high Northern Plains area located on the western side of the Missouri River, approximately one hundred miles south of the Canadian border in the northeast corner of the newly created state of Montana. The Assiniboine nation, the Nakota, also was split. One group of Assiniboine were held on the same Montana site with the Lakota. The other Assiniboine were further separated on another reservation in central Montana and a reserve in Canada. The Fort Peck Reservation was formally established in 1886.

After being forced to join the Southern Cheyenne in Indian Territory where they faced gradual starvation, a group of Northern Cheyenne fled back to the north in the late 1870s. Pursued by the military, this small group of Cheyenne, led by Little Wolf and Dull Knife, avoided capture until early winter. After splitting into two groups, the group following Dull Knife was captured by the military and taken to Fort Robinson where they were held for return to Oklahoma. Preferring to try to survive on their own rather than return to Indian Territory, this group broke out of their barracks prison. Many were shot in the back as they fled. The survivors witnessed a significant outcry against this episode and were given the right to choose the site of their reservation in Montana. The Tongue River Reservation in southeastern Montana was established by Executive Order in 1884.

2. Kathryn Ward, "Reconceptualizing World-System Theory to Include Women,"

in *Theory on Gender/Feminism on Theory*, ed. Paula England (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1993), 43–68.

3. See Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boomer Generation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); William Hoeg and Neil Strauss, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069* (New York: Quill/William Morrow, 1991); and Joe Ausin and Micael Willard, *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

4. Robert Merton's typology includes conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," in *Delinquency, Crime, and Social Progress*, eds. Donald R. Cressey and David A. Ward, [New York: Harper and Row, 1938], 263). As adapted in this article, the schema is used to demonstrate personal and cultural resistance, or both *response* and *avoidance* of the problems produced by cultural conflict.

5. The Louisville Institute funded the joint research project. This article is a summary of that collaboration and earlier research done by each author.

6. Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); id., *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1993); and Daniel V. A. Olson, "Dimensions of Cultural Tensions among the American Public" (paper presented at the Chicago Area Group Studying Religious Congregations, Chicago, 30 September 1995).

7. See Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Insurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Stephen Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

8. Britt Finley, "Social Network Differences in Alcohol Use and Related Behaviors among Indian and non-Indian Students, Grades 6–12," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 13:3&4 (1989): 35–48. Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778–1984* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987).

9. Carol Ward, Gregory Hinckley, and Kae Sawyer, "The Intersection of Ethnic and Gender Identities: Northern Cheyenne Women's Roles in Cultural Recovery," in *American Families: Issues in Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Cardell Jacobson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 210–227.

10. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

11. Susan Guyette, *A Guide for Native American and Rural Communities: Planning for Balanced Development* (Santa Fe: ClearLight Publications, 1996), 3. Authors' emphasis.

12. Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

13. Ammerman, *Bible Believers*.

14. Olson, "Dimensions of Cultural Tensions."

15. These dimensions of religious groups and associated categories are based on a typology developed by Richard Flory in *Gen X Religion* (New York: Routledge University Press, 2000).

16. Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

17. During the last three decades the literature on traditional spiritual beliefs and practices, including commentaries on the severe consequences of the imposition of Christianity has been growing rapidly. This increasing awareness is having no small impact upon receptive Christian communities. See early works such as Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red* (New York: Grossett and Dunlap, 1973); and Doug Boyd, *Rolling Thunder* (New York: Delta, 1974), and more recent works such as Mark St. Pierre and Tilda Long Soldier, *Walking in the Sacred Manner: Healers, Dreaming, and Pipe Carriers—Medicine Women of the Plains Indians* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); Carl Hammerschlang, *The Dancing Healers* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988); and Martin, Demaillie, and Powers in *Religion and American Culture*, ed., David G. Hackett, New York: Routledge, 1995). In addition, at powwows one can find tape recordings on traditional teachings made by medicine people (see, for instance, Martin High Bear, “The White Buffalo Calf Woman as Told by Martin High Bear, Lakota Spiritual Leader” [recorded December 1983 in Pipestone, Minnesota]).

18. Carl A. Hammerschlang, *The Theft of the Spirit* (San Francisco: Turtle Island Press, Inc., 1998).

19. Peter Park et al., *Voices of Change* (Westport, Ct.: Bergin and Garvey, 1993).

20. During July and August 1996 six videotaped focus groups, lasting from one to two hours each, were held on Fort Peck. Four sessions were held in Wolf Point, the largest town on the reservation, and two were held in Poplar, the agency/BIA town where most of the tribal and federal government offices and the tribal community college are located. The women’s ages ranged from early twenties to early seventies. When Fort Peck *winkte* women, who adopt another gender role, and some traditionalists were hesitant to participate in the seven focus groups because of negative experiences with mainstream, evangelical, and fundamentalist Christian men and women, several individual interviews were conducted with these women. These interviews were essential for two reasons: to obtain a representative sample and to respect the traditional *winkte* role, which may or may not include sexual orientation. Today, given the influence of the dominant culture’s homophobia, *winkte* find little overt community support, and the support that is available is most particularly lacking in church communities. Fort Peck *winkte*’s spiritual experience is similar to the dominant culture’s gay experience of seeking spiritual meaning (see David Shallenberger, “Reclaiming the Spirit: The Journeys of Gay Men and Lesbian Women toward Integration,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19: 2 [1996]: 195–215).

During the same summer, Ward interviewed approximately fifty women individually at Northern Cheyenne, and three additional focus groups were held. The individual interviews were designed to be comparable to the earlier interviews conducted at Fort Peck (Karren Baird-Olson, “Survival Strategies of Plains Indian Women: Coping with Structural and Interpersonal Victimization on a Northwest Reservation,” Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1994), providing the women the opportunity to express in greater detail their personal stories of recovery, which would help to clarify the recovery and survival experiences.

21. The following five quotes from Fort Peck women are typical of reports of interpersonal and structural victimization.

Lori, in her twenties: I think every woman on this reservation has went

through pain and hurt. I mean look at the stats. We've been brutally hurt. Has this [tribal] administration been good for it? No!

Maxine, in her sixties: A big bureaucracy like the BIA will just go along, grinding along, grinding people slowly but surely . . . putting little pebbles under this big steamroller.

Francine, in her thirties: There are closed systems. Groups of reservation families have closed systems to benefit themselves as well as tribal, BIA, city, county, state, and federal closed systems to benefit White people.

Joanna, in her twenties: Knowing these things comes easy, because you've lived it. Everyday you've been a victim one way or another living on a reservation. Reservations are just like one big concentration camp because we are told . . . what to do.

Joanna's and Lori's observations have been supported by recent statistical data published by the US Department of Justice in Lawrence A. Greenfield and Steven K. Smith, *American Indians and Crime* (February 1999, NCJ 173386). Highlights of the report include the following findings: (1) "American Indians [including Alaska Natives and Aleuts] experience per capita rates of violence which are more than twice those of the US resident population"; (2) "Rates of violent victimization for both males and females are higher among American Indians than for all races. The rate of violent crime experienced by American Indian women is nearly 50% higher than that reported by black males"; and (3) "At least 70% of the violent victimizations experienced by American Indians are committed by persons not of the same race—a substantially higher rate of interracial violence than experienced by white or black victims" (pp. v-vi). However, the authors' explanations for the high victimization rates are extremely problematic.

22. See Carol Ward, Elon Stander, and Yodit Solomon, "Resistance Through Healing among American Indian Women," in *A World-Systems Reader*, ed. Thomas Hall (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

23. People of Caucasian or Euro-American descent. Literally, "he reaches for all things" or "he reaches for the fat."

24. Fort Peck star quilt designers utilize American Indian symbols such as eagles or the Morning Star and/or adapt Euro-American quilt patterns or cultural symbols.

25. Giveaways are ceremonies used primarily at two different times: in appreciation of good things that happened to the sponsors or their family members, or in honor of a loved one who has moved into the Spirit World. Giveaways provide an opportunity to practice generosity (sharing and giving), an attribute highly admired among the Nakota and Lakota.

26. The use of the phrase *you know* among Fort Peck and Northern Cheyenne women in the interview context is not an indication of a faulty speech pattern, but an indication of respect for the interviewers. The speaker is acknowledging that the interviewers understand them.

27. Fort Peck children were sent to schools not only on the reservation but also to schools as far east as Carlisle in Pennsylvania and Haskell in Kansas and as far southwest as the Mormon homes and schools in Utah.

28. This information is from 1996 and 1997 interviews with John W. (Smokey) Olson and a review of documents such as "Indian Students Form Council at State College," *Great Falls Tribune Montana Parade*, 12 November 1961, front page.

29. Emphases added.

30. Fort Peck has two types of Presbyterian churches: one for Indians and the other for non-Indians.

31. Alcohol consumption and reported symptoms of alcoholism among First Nations women has considerable variation between and within American Indian communities. On Fort Peck, women's drinking is more open as much of it is done in public establishments. However, those few women who practice abusive drinking, called "no good drinking," are shunned by most Christians and, to varying degrees, by those who practice social drinking. In addition, a number of social service workers have perceived the women as "hopeless drunks," reflecting the dominant culture's double-standard.

32. Fred Kniss' recent work (*Disquiet in the Land: Cultural Conflict in American Mennonite Communities*, [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997]) on conflict in the history of the Mennonite Church provides a way of categorizing the goals and views of different church congregations. Specifically, he outlines two paradigms, "traditionalism" and "communalism," which "address two central issues in any moral order. The first is the locus of moral authority, and the second is what constitutes the moral project" (123-32). Traditionalism places the locus of moral authority in the collective traditions, which identify standards of goodness, truth, and beauty. Communalism focuses on the community, or public good, as the moral project. Thus, while traditionalism emphasizes a more separatist, salvation orientation often associated with the political right, communalism emphasizes a more activist, socially progressive stance. Important for this analysis is the idea that churches often seen as similar theologically can be quite different in their attention to or emphasis on personal salvation or moral development relative to their support for community development or social issues. For example, historical events prompted Mennonites to turn toward communalist goals from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, despite traditionalist protests. In fact, it was this orientation that supported the reservation's Mennonite church efforts to address such needs of the Northern Cheyenne community as respect and understanding of tribal cultural heritage. Similarly, Catholic churches on both reservations have increased their attention to the needs and cultural interests of minority racial and ethnic groups, including reservation communities. Nevertheless, a primary emphasis of local Catholic and evangelical churches has continued to be the personal salvation of their members.

33. The speaker is referring to the racial concept of "half-blood" or "mixed-blood." In this case she means that she is "one-half" Indian and "one-half" White, although the terms are also used to refer to any degree of blood quantum or combination of multi-cultural or racial/ethnic ancestry.

34. According to the 1994 Northern Cheyenne Domestic Violence Program funding proposal to the US Department of Health and Human Services, "Domestic violence has been occurring with alarming frequency at Northern Cheyenne in recent years."

35. Unlike Northern Cheyenne, Fort Peck may have a disproportionate number of early AIM members. For instance, in 1986 twenty-six Fort Peck people, the majority of whom were women and their children and grandchildren, traveled to Washington, D.C. at their own expense to take part in the four-year reunion in remembrance of the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties activities.

36. A summary of part of those research findings can be found in Karren Baird-Olson, "Survival Roles of Plains Indian Reservation Women," *Family Perspectives* 27: 4 (1993): 445-470.

37. This finding is supported by recent findings suggesting that multicultural people who are comfortable with their diverse cultural experiences are better adjusted than those who deny or gloss over one or more parts of their racial/ethnic heritages. See Joan Ferrante and Prince Brown Jr., *The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1998); or Naomi Zack, ed., *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

38. Joane Nagel and C. M. Snipp, "Ethnic Reorganization: American Indian Social, Economic, Political, and Cultural Strategies for Survival," in *Racial and Ethnic Studies* 16 (1993): 203-235.

39. T. LaFromboise et al., "Changing and Diverse Roles of Women in American Indian Cultures," *Sex Roles* 22:7&8 (1990): 455-476.

40. This finding is supported by Sarah Shillinger's research in progress (Ethnic and Racial Studies, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse) on synergetic combinations of Catholicism and traditional spiritualities and Paul Steinmetz's theological and Jungian reflections on the association of the Sacred Pipe with images of Christ (*The Sacred Pipe: an Archetypal Theology* [Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1998]). However, Steinmetz is not as aware of the ethnocentric bases for his comparison as is Shillinger, whose work is more grounded in indigenous realities. One cannot help but speculate with a touch of wry humor on how far Catholic liberalism would go when the question of acceptance of White Buffalo Calf Woman as a holy woman or avatar arises.

41. In addition to the women's observations, this challenge to the Christian hegemony is graphically illustrated in articles, letters to the editors, and Fort Peck tribal board minutes in the 1997 and 1998 issues of *Wotanin Wowapi*, the tribal newspaper.

42. See J. G. Red Horse, "Family Structure and Value Orientation in American Indians," in *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work* (October 1980): 462-467; S. Manson et al., "The Depressive Experience in American Indian Communities: A Challenge for Psychiatric Theory and Diagnosis," in *Culture and Depression*, eds. A. Kleinman and B. Good (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); A. Holmes with G. McPeck, *The Grieving Indian: An Ojibwe Elder Shares His Discovery of Help and Hope* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Intertribal Christian Communications, Inc., 1988); P. B. Pedersen et al., *Counseling across Cultures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); and C. Kasl, *Many Roads, One Journey* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992).

43. See also Hammerschlang, *The Dancing Healers*; and G. A. Paniagua, *Assessing and Treating Culturally Diverse Clients* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994).

44. See Rebecca Tsosie, "Changing Women: The Cross-Currents of American Indian Feminine Identify," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 12:1 (1988): 1-37; Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

45. Teresa LaFromboise, "American Indian Mental Health Policy," in *Native American Resurgence and Renewal*, ed. Robert Wells Jr. (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994),