

AN ANALYSIS OF HEALING AND HONORING CEREMONIES PRACTICED BY
LAKOTA VETERANS ON THE PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

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San Marcos, Texas
May 2010

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the all Native American people and Veterans, but particularly to the Lakota men and woman who have served our country.

Thank you for your bravery and service.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who helped me finish this thesis, which is a dream come true. First, I would like to thank the White Plume Family, who were my first connection with the Lakota people and the Pine Ridge Reservation. Their support was invaluable to me during my summer research, and I wish them luck and love in all their future endeavors. I would also like to thank Randy Ross for allowing me to rent his home in the Black Hills and for connecting me with many people who allowed me to interview them. Lastly, I would like to thank all the veterans, and friends' and families who have stayed in touch (that's you Peg), for allowing me to use their stories and words. They opened up their world to me, and without them, I would not have had such a rewarding and incredible experience.

I would also like to thank my committee members, particularly Dr. Warms. Although we did not always agree, his guidance helped me become a more thoughtful and

critical writer, to which I am grateful. I will never again use "scare quotes", I promise.

Also, I want to recognize my fellow graduate students. Many, such as Whitney Lytle and Amy Benton, have become my closest friends. I am so thankful for all your support, laughter, and friendship throughout this process. I wish you all the best of luck in your future, though I know you don't need it. In addition to my graduate school friends, I would like to thank all my other friends for listening to me, acting as sounding boards, comforting me, and encouraging me. In particular, thank you to Linda Logan, the Executive Director of the Native American Children's Alliance, for your immense support of the work I do and for your commitment to end child sexual abuse in native communities - I admire you so much. I am so grateful for you all!

Lastly, this thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my family, especially my mom, dad, and sister Renee. And where would I be without my partner in crime, best friend, and soul mate Chris? Thank you for your support, love, kindness, and even critiques throughout this process. Mom, dad, Renee, and Chris, you supported me both financially and emotionally, and I

dedicate this labor of love to you all. I am indebted to you for allowing me to pursue this dream. You are the most incredible family and I am who I am today because of you.

Thank you to everyone.

This manuscript was submitted for committee review on April 12th, 2010.

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ABSTRACT

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April 2010

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This thesis is an analysis of the healing and honoring ceremonies practiced by Oglala Lakota veterans on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. After a brief history of the Lakota people, Indians in the military, and the reservation, I discuss contemporary reasons that have led some Lakota men and women to join the service.

I then focus on the healing and honoring ceremonies that many veterans participate in, and how these practices have helped them reintegrate to society. These practices include the use of the sweat lodge, Sun Dance, Pow Wows, horseback riding, the Native American Church, music, and Wiping of the Tears ceremony. I argue that the practice and participation of these ceremonies and rituals help veterans heal mentally, physically, and spiritually from the stress of being in the military and/or combat. Additionally, I believe the continued use of these practices allows Lakota veterans to maintain ties to their culture through speaking the Lakota language, bonding with other veterans and community members, and passing traditions on to younger generations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I will explore the role and function of healing and honoring ceremonies among Oglala Lakota veterans on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I will argue that Lakota healing and honoring ceremonies play a vital role in helping Lakota veterans reintegrate to society. I will also discuss how the meaning and value of these ceremonies has changed throughout the years, as well as discuss the controversies surrounding them today.

I will use the terms Indian and Native American interchangeably, as both phrases are common on the reservation. In fact, most of the people I spoke with referred to themselves as Indians, even stating that they "spoke Indian" (as opposed to Lakota or English). When speaking specifically of the residents of Pine Ridge, I will usually use the term Oglala, Lakota, or Oglala Lakota. The term "Sioux" is the term that most Americans recognize though, because it refers to the name given to all Siouan speaking people by French traders. I feel it is much too

broad a term, however, and it will only be used when discussing the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST), which is officially designated with that name.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

My interest in this topic began in the summer of 1999 when I travelled to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation with my high school. As excited as I was about traveling to the reservation, I was not prepared for the culture shock I would experience. I had never been in the minority before, and though I was with friends from home, the reality of life on the reservation was hard to handle. Initially, I couldn't wait to leave; I was homesick, unprepared for the extreme poverty, and uncomfortable knowing that many people did not want us there.

However, like other people I have met who have visited Pine Ridge, by the end of the trip, I did not want to leave. My feelings of isolation and sadness were replaced by a love, excitement, and passion for the people and the land. I quickly realized that the people I interacted with on Pine Ridge are some of the most generous people I have ever met. I loved the people I spent time with, their lifestyle, and their vision of life, despite the hardships they faced.

Upon returning home, I continued my interest, and began to focus my studies, in Native American history. I knew that I wanted to return to Pine Ridge Reservation, so I decided to pursue a master's degree in cultural anthropology with a focus on Lakota culture. Interestingly, I had no idea how sheltered I had been during my first visit. When I returned on my own during the summer of 2008, at the age of 25, it was a much more enlightening experience, but also a much more difficult one. The reality of poverty, crime, politics, and prejudice was evident everywhere I went. However, as on my earlier trip, I realized that there is so much more to the lives of the Lakota men and women whom I interviewed and spent time with. They are surviving in their own way: teaching their language to the younger generation, attempting to build a better economy with the help of nonprofit organizations and for profit businesses, and by continuing to participate in traditional ceremonies and rituals.

The thing that impressed me the most was the amount of laughter I heard everywhere. Though times are tough, there is still a great deal of humor on the reservation, particularly among the older generation. One of my favorite memories is of a group of elderly women who were telling me "Indian jokes" (such as; "How did the Indian get their

first corn?" "By wearing moccasins that were too small!"). The memory of them laughing so hard at these jokes still brings a smile to my face.

Like most Americans, Pine Ridge residents struggle with ideals, values, and morals, but they set this struggle within the context of Lakota history and society. There is an overarching sense of pride in their heritage and an urgent desire to combat the barriers that many Lakota face, such as alcoholism, poverty, obesity, diabetes, and crime.

My decision to focus on veterans was due to my feeling that there seemed to be a contradiction between being an American soldier and a Native American. I was intrigued by the large number of veterans I had met the first time I visited Pine Ridge. The more I researched the use of traditional ceremonies and rituals that Native veterans participate in, the more I realized this was the topic I wanted to study.

I also wondered if the healing and honoring ceremonies that Lakota veterans practice have any effect on their ability to reintegrate to society, particularly for combat veterans. My concern for combat veterans stems from both personal and professional experiences. Personally, I saw how much difficulty friends and family members had after returning from the most recent Iraq and Afghanistan Wars.

These difficulties included self medication with drugs and alcohol, as well as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In addition to my previous experience on Pine Ridge, my job at Front Steps, the non-profit organization that manages the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless, influenced my decision to work with veterans. Seeing the vast number of homeless veterans made me wonder what can be done to help them. Many of these veterans struggle with severe mental illness, PTSD, and a wide range of physical disabilities. They frequently self medicate with drugs and alcohol. I wondered if non-Indian American veterans could benefit from the alternative honoring and healing techniques used by Lakota veterans on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Capitalism, Christianity, missionization, and globalization have had a profound effect on Lakota individual identity and culture. In my analysis of ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, Pow Wow, and Sun Dance, I found that many of the ceremonies and rituals offer an insight into the way that Lakota men and women, particularly veterans, are able to maintain ties to their culture and heritage.

DATA

The ethnographic data presented was collected during the summer of 2008 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, particularly in Kyle, Manderson, and Pine Ridge, SD. On the reservation, I attended sweat lodges with veterans, Pow Wows, went horseback riding, and attended a Sun Dance.

I interviewed 16 individuals, 13 men and 3 women, in their homes and at their places of work. All, except one, had been born to Lakota families. The remaining participant has Seneca ancestry, but was adopted into a Lakota family and thus considered himself Lakota, though he is not an enrolled tribal member. I interviewed veterans who were drafted and volunteered for WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, as well as non-combat veterans. I interviewed people who were in the Army, Marines, and Navy.

My process for selecting participants to interview stemmed from two main people, Alexandria White Plume and Randy Ross. I went to high school with Alex and knew members of the White Plume family from my previous trip. She was able to introduce me to people who were willing to be interviewed by me. Randy Ross, whose home I rented in the Black Hills during the summer of 2008, is a member of the Ponca Tribe, a veteran, and has lived and worked on several Indian reservations, including Pine Ridge. He also

gave me the contact information for people he thought would like to be interviewed. From there, my informants suggested other veterans for me to talk to. In addition, I randomly interviewed people at Pow Wows and other social events I attended.

PARTICIPANTS

With the exception of a few people who allowed me to use their full names, I will primarily use the first names of the participants (in some cases these names have been changed per their request and I will indicate these as pseudonyms). To learn more about the people I interviewed and give some context to their statements and answers, I will briefly describe the background of each participant, in the order that I interviewed them.

The first participant I interviewed was Wanda, a Gulf War veteran of the Navy who served from 1989-1993 (interviewed 7/5/2008 at the Batesland Pow Wow). Though she had grown up on Pine Ridge, she had only recently returned to South Dakota from San Antonio, TX. Wanda enjoyed her military service, particularly traveling all over the world and living in Japan.

I also interviewed two veterans of WWII at the Batesland Pow Wow. One was Wanda's grandmother, Lily Mae

(interviewed 7/5/2008), who was born in 1921 and lived on Pine Ridge most of her life. She joined the Army during WWII and was a truck driver in California. After her father passed away in 1945, she was discharged and returned to the reservation.

Sitting next to Lily Mae was Isaac (interviewed 7/5/2008), who was born in 1925 and served in the Army from 1944-1947. He was in the infantry and was a rifleman in the Pacific. Isaac had a very thick Lakota accent and lived most of his life in Porcupine, a small town on the reservation. He was the only person I interviewed who specifically stated that he joined the service to "help his country".

The last person I interviewed at the Batesland Pow Wow was Jerry (7/5/2008), a non-combat Marine Corps veteran who served from 1972-1976. Though he was drafted into the Army, he volunteered for the Marines because, as he said, "I didn't want to serve in the Army." He is a tool and model maker now, and travels though out the Dakotas and Colorado with American Legion Post 1862, an all Native American color guard team that visits Pow Wows, funerals, and other social events "doing culture", according to Jerry.

The next veteran I interviewed was Daryl (7/13/2008), a 51 year old Marine Corps veteran from Kyle, SD. He was in

the military from 1981 until 1997, and was stationed mostly in San Diego, CA. Since returning to Pine Ridge, Daryl has been a tribal police officer.

I then interviewed Frank Bull Tail Scout (7/15/2008), at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home in Hot Springs, SD. Frank had been in the home since 1990, after suffering a debilitating stroke. Though he had a difficult time speaking, I was still able to interview him, particularly with the help of Peg Sperlich, the Veterans Home Business Manager and a good friend of Frank. Frank passed away in 2009, at 79 years of age. A brief description of his military service from his memorial can be read below:

For his service to his country with the United States Marine Corps from 1952 to 1954, Frank received the Korean Service Medal with three bronze stars, and was awarded two Purple Heart medals for wounds received in Korea. He spent two years recovering in a hospital in California. Just this last September [of 2009] he was inducted into the Military Order of the Purple Heart. From the Hot Springs (SD) Star article, "The order had come down to Frank's unit that they were to defend the hill, and not allow the (enemy) to advance. During the long, frigid night, Scout was shot twice, but remained on duty. Many members of his unit were killed in fighting and 17 of his comrades froze to death. He was one of only four survivors." (Peg Sperlich)

Frank was also the author of GRANDFATHER'S BEDTIME STORIES—Three Traditional Sioux Folktales. Though I only spent a short amount of time with Frank, I have received

continued support and updates from Peg, who kindly sent me the transcription of Frank's memorial service and obituary announcement. My interview with Frank was one of my favorite memories. Though he had difficulty smiling due to his stroke, he tried as hard as he could until we got a picture with him smiling (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Dawn and Frank

While attending a Sun Dance, I was introduced to Pete, an Army veteran who served from 1972-1974 (interviewed 7/20/2008). Pete works for the Oglala Sioux Tribe and was Jerry's cousin. Interestingly, Pete's mother was interviewed by the anthropologist Marla Powers in the 1980's for her book *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (1988). Pete then introduced me to the next several veterans I interviewed, including Frank M and Bryan.

Frank M (interviewed 7/21/2008), a retired Marine Corps veteran who served from 1959 - 1963, worked at the Homeless Veterans Shelter in Pine Ridge. Interestingly, Frank M stated that his number one reason for joining the Marines was because it was a goal of his ever since seeing John Wayne in *Sands of Iow Jima* (1949) as a child.

Frank was also a cousin of Bryan, whom I interviewed on his sweat lodge property outside of the town of Pine Ridge, SD. Bryan (pseudonym), is a Marine Corps veteran (interviewed 7/21/08), who served in Vietnam and runs a sweat lodge for veterans, which I was able to participate in twice. Though he grew up on Pine Ridge, he was sent to the Flandreau Boarding School in 1949, something that he stated had a profound effect on him. Because of his experiences and candor, this was another of my favorite interviews. In particular, he was able to tell me about Lakota spirituality and practices, such as the sweat lodge, in great detail. I learned a lot from Bryan, and perhaps because I spent more time with him than other veterans, I refer to my interview with him frequently in this thesis. He was also one of the first veterans to express concern over the commercialization of Lakota spiritual practices.

The third woman that I interviewed was Melanie, who I met through the White Plume family. Melanie is a 44 year old female Dessert Storm veteran, who served in the Army (interviewed 7/21/2008). I learned a great deal from her, as she gave very different answers than many of the other veterans I spoke with. She also let me stay at her home, where we had several informal, highly valuable conversations about contemporary Pine Ridge life. Melanie is the director of KILI radio, a non-profit organization and the only radio station on the reservation.

The next person I interviewed was Richard, a Vietnam Era Air Force veteran in his 60's (interviewed 7/31/08). Although Richard is not Lakota (he is one quarter Seneca), he has spent the past thirty years participating in Lakota ceremonies on Pine Ridge. He is also nearly fluent in the Lakota language (which is not something that can be said of all the people I interviewed) and raised his children on and near the reservation.

Richard was recommended to me by both Pete and Bryan (they all attend Bryan's sweat lodge for veterans three times a week). In addition to being a veteran and having in-depth knowledge of the Lakota culture (he was mentored by two Lakota people named Hilda [a Hunkpapa Oglala woman]

and Everett [a Cheyenne Lakota man]), he also worked as a social worker at the VA hospital in Hot Springs. He started the first sweat lodge ceremony at the VA hospital, which both Native and non-Native veterans participate in to this day. My interview with him was also invaluable; not only does he have an intimate, if outside view, of Lakota spirituality, but he also had experience working with Native veterans through the VA system. Because of this, I reference his interview often throughout my thesis.

At the Oglala nation Pow Wow, I interviewed two veterans very briefly. Their names were Chris and Bill (pseudonyms) (interviewed 8/7/2008). I had the most difficult times with these interviews, as neither participant was forthcoming with their answers. Though both of these veterans were members of the Color Guard, and represent Native veterans at various military events and Pow Wows, neither participated in ceremonies such as the Sun Dance or sweat lodge. Bill stated that he served in the Army during the Korean War as well as during the Vietnam era. Chris served in the Army from 1968-1970 and joined because he was "looking for work". Both felt that the Pow Wow served as an important honoring ceremony for Native veterans, which is one reason they continue to participate.

Two of my last interviews on the reservation were also some of the best ones. Mike (pseudonym) (interviewed 8/7/08), was the Administrative Assistant to the Vice President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Mike is a 61 year old Army veteran who served in the late 1960's in Europe. Like Melanie, he gave me some of the most candid answers about contemporary reservation life, which I appreciated. He was willing to discuss things such as litter, animal abuse, domestic violence, and suicide - difficult subjects for some people to talk about. Though he had been an active Sun Dancer in the past, he doesn't participate anymore because of his concern over the commercialization of ceremonies and practices on the reservation.

The last person interviewed on the reservation was Alexander White Plume (8/7/2008), the uncle of my friend Alexandria, and an incredibly active leader on the reservation and in the Indian community. Alex is a veteran of the Army who spent four years in Germany in the mid 1970's. His participation in healing and honoring ceremonies and his experiences in Germany during the 1970's proved to be invaluable for my thesis as well. Because of my close connection with him and his family, I reference him often throughout my thesis.

I met Uncle Alex, as he is referred to on the reservation by friends and family, during my first trip to Pine Ridge in high school. He owns a small buffalo and horse ranch, as well as land where people can camp (Kiza Park). During my first stay, there was a couple from South Africa, and during my second stay, there were a number of people from all over the United State staying on his property. As the former Vice President, and then President of Oglala Sioux Tribe, and an Indian activist, Alex White Plume is a fairly prominent figure in the community. Recently, he has been in the news quite a bit regarding his lawsuit with the Unites States government over growing hemp on the reservation. More information can be found regarding this case by visiting <http://www.pbs.org/pov/standing/filmdescription.php> and <http://standingsilentnation.com/home.html>. *Standing Silent Nation* is a film that documents this lawsuit. Though I only formally interviewed Alex once, I spent a great deal of time with him and his family. Their passion and activism for Native rights are inspiring.

Due to a minor accident two nights before I was to return to Texas, my last interview was performed via email. This interview was with Ed McGaa (8/20/2008), an author and friend of Randy Ross. Ed sells his books and jewelry at the

Crazy Horse Monument in Crazy Horse, SD. Ed is a veteran of the Marine Corps, and his military experience can be read below:

I enlisted in 1953- served in Korea- rank Corporal. Got out and got to go to college on the G I Bill. Went back in after graduation to go to flight school and hopefully become a Marine aviator - a wish since I was a little boy. Served from 1953 to 1973, Reserves and Active Duty. I Flew 110 combat missions as an F4B Phantom pilot out of Chu Lai Vietnam. (Ed McGaa, interviewed via email 8/20/2008)

I appreciate and value all of people who allowed me to interview them, and still keep in touch with several people, both veterans and non-veterans, whom I met while I was there.

To prepare for my thesis research, I interviewed five Native American veterans in the Austin and San Antonio area in the spring of 2008. These veterans are members of the Navajo, Apache, Cherokee, and Kiowa tribes. Though these interviews and data are not included in this thesis, it is important to note that many of their experiences mirror the data I collected on Pine Ridge.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

My approach to the analysis of this data rests in part on the materialist perspective of authors such as Kathleen Pickering (2001) and to some extent, Eleanor Leacock

(2008). I have used these authors in relation to understanding contemporary life on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Kathleen Pickering's work and analysis of contemporary Pine Ridge life and economy is helpful in understanding how the transition from an egalitarian and nomadic lifestyle to one on an Indian reservation has affected the culture and livelihood of the Lakota people.

In particular, Kathleen Pickering's essay "Alternative Economic Strategies in Low-Income Rural Communities: TANF, labor migration, and the case of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation" (2000) was useful in understanding modern reservation life. Pickering discusses how, in the popular press, unemployment and welfare are often associated with lack of motivation or inexperience. However, at Pine Ridge, Pickering found that the key issue was actually lack of jobs. She also describes how the strict regulations of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) may cause more harm for communities such as Pine Ridge, which rely on flexible income, "fluid household composition", and extended families. Pickering believes that the current welfare system does not reflect the reality of poverty on reservations. This article supports the idea that many Lakota join the military for economic necessity, due to the

lack of employment on the reservation, rather than for ideology, such American Pride.

I follow Leacock (2008) in believing that societies such as American Indians must be viewed within their own historical perspective and with particular regard to colonialism and capitalism. Like Leacock, I understand social processes as being driven primarily by material and economic forces. I also agree with her that it is important not to romanticize American Indians and that doing so ignores their active participation in post-colonial America and glosses over their individual struggles with colonialism and capitalism (2008:446). In the first chapters of this work I will briefly describe the history of the Lakota people, the participation of Indians in the military, and contemporary reservation life using a materialist analysis.

In addition, I have utilized the "applied humanistic" approach of Lawrence Gross in regards to the ceremonies and rituals practiced by Lakota veterans. Although Gross' article, "Assisting American Indian Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan Cope with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" (2007) deals mostly with the issues of mental illness and stress disorders in American Indian Veterans, it also compares and contrasts the experiences of Vietnam veterans to present

day Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Gross discusses different healing techniques and practices, such as the emotional and physiological effects of sweat lodges, rituals and ceremonies, Pow Wows and storytelling. Gross hopes to use his analysis of these ceremonies to aide American Indian veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. Though I do not anticipate that my thesis will be used to help veterans, I do hope that it can shed a light on how Lakota veterans use these ceremonies as coping mechanisms in modern reservation life.

I will use authors such as Raymond DeMallie (2001), whose work I consider to be an accurate representation of Lakota history and will reference him throughout my thesis to establish historical facts about the Lakota people, particularly in reference to their pre-reservation life. DeMallie's work is especially useful in describing the change and continuity in healing and honoring practices from pre-reservation times until present day.

I will also reference Theresa O'Neil's article, "'Coming Home' among Northern Plains Vietnam Veterans: Psychological Transformations in Pragmatic Perspective" (1999). O'Neil, a psychological anthropologist, researches the issues of coming home from war for Vietnam Veterans on a Northern Plains Reservation. This article is very useful

for a number of reasons. Not only is she researching Vietnam Veterans, but her goal is to find out how their military experience has changed every aspect of their life, and how they express it when they return home to the reservation.

Another key author, particularly in establishing the history of the sweat lodge as well as its contemporary practice, is Raymond Bucko. In, *Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice* (1998), Bucko delivers an extensive and detailed description of sweat lodges on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Though he is a Jesuit priest, he is also an anthropologist and is highly aware of his biases. He not only provides an invaluable ethnohistory of the sweat lodge, along with primary documents, but discusses the value and meaning behind the songs, rituals, and symbols. He also discusses the change and continuity in Lakota culture that the sweat lodge reflects today and how the influence of Christianity has affected the sweat lodge ceremony on Pine Ridge.

CHAPTER TWO

In Chapter Two, I focus on the history of the Lakota people and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, as well as

discuss contemporary reservation life. I begin by describing the history and life of the pre-reservation Lakota, including their religious and spiritual beliefs. I also discuss the history of the ceremonies and rituals that are the focus of this thesis, such as the sweat lodge and Sun Dance.

In order to fully understand contemporary Pine Ridge, I will briefly discuss the history between the Lakota people and the US government and military, including events such as the Dawes Allotment Act and the creation of the Pine Ridge Reservation itself. I further describe contemporary reservation life, and include statistics regarding poverty, health, and the economy. Understanding contemporary reservation life is integral to understanding why some modern Lakota men and women join the military.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter Three explores the history of Native Americans in military and the motivations of contemporary Lakota men and women for joining, such as lack of economic opportunity and wage labor on the reservation. To begin, I will discuss the history of Indians in the military, beginning with WWI. However, it is important to note that Native Americans, as

friend or foe, have been involved with the US military for hundreds of years.

After discussing the history of Indians in the military, including stereotypes regarding their ethnicity and culture, I will analyze contemporary reasons for joining the service. Though some of the veterans I interviewed were drafted, the majority voluntarily signed up. It is the factors that led my participants to volunteer for the military that I will discuss the most. These factors include, but are not limited to, lack of economic opportunity on the reservation as well as the desire to be a warrior or man in their culture.

A key author for this chapter includes Thomas Britten's book, *American Indians in WWI: at home and at war* (1998) Britten's work is essential in understanding the first international conflict Native American soldiers were involved with. His book describes the resurgence of healing and honoring ceremonies, victory dances, patriotic regalia, as well as the emergence of Indian Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organizations and American Legion Posts on Indian reservations. He also discusses various reasons that Indian soldiers joined the military, their experiences in the service, and their lives when they returned home. Additionally, I have used Russel Barsh's essay "War and the

Reconfiguring of American Indian Society "(2001) when discussing the history of American Indians in the military.

CHAPTER FOUR

In Chapter Four, I will discuss the barriers and challenges that Lakota veterans face when returning to Pine Ridge. First, however, I discuss veteran identity, since this is something that I found to be important and relevant during my research. Then, I will discuss the various challenges that veterans face when returning home, such as the lack of economic opportunity, alcoholism, PTSD, and barriers to the Veterans Administration (VA) system.

Using a combination of ethnography and firsthand accounts from authors such Tom Holm (1996), I will discuss what Lakota veterans' experience, and how they live their lives, when they return to Pine Ridge. In, *Strong Hearts Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War* (1996), Holm explores the roles and relationships between Native Americans, the military, and warfare from prehistory through the Vietnam War. Though his main concern is with the "forgotten warrior" of Vietnam, he explores the history and context of Native Americans and warfare, the idea of a "warrior" identity, and how Native Americans were affected by the Vietnam War.

A Native American Vietnam Veteran himself, Holms brings unusual personal insight to his topic. Some of the veterans I interviewed served in the Vietnam War, or during the Vietnam Era, and express the same concerns Holms discusses in his book. Authors, such as Holmes, help put the barriers and challenges that Lakota veterans, who are returning to Pine Ridge, face in perspective; particularly PTSD, alcoholism, and unemployment.

CHAPTER FIVE

In Chapter Five, I will describe the role and function that healing and honoring ceremonies play on the reservation, particularly for veterans. Some of these ceremonies are traditional to Lakota culture, such as the sweat lodge and Sun Dance. Others, such as participation in the Pow Wows or memorial horse rides, are more modern practices. Though I pay particular attention to the sweat lodge and Sun dance, it is important to note that these are not the only coping mechanisms practiced on the reservation, and the use of lesser known ceremonies is important too, such as "Wiping of the Tears".

Throughout Chapter Five, I will use Gross to show that the use of these ceremonies fulfills psychological, physical, and emotional needs for Lakota veterans,

particularly in combating alcoholism and PTSD. I will also heavily reference Bucko (1998) throughout this chapter, in regards to the use and practice of the sweat lodge ritual among the Lakota people.

CHAPTER SIX

In the final chapter, I will briefly discuss some of the controversies that surround ceremonies and rituals in contemporary reservation life. In particular, I will discuss the influence of Christianity on Lakota ceremonies.

At the end of this thesis, I hope to have given a holistic perspective of how the healing and honoring ceremonies, which the Lakota veterans whom I interviewed participated in, have helped them address some of the difficulties they face, such as rampant poverty, alcoholism, and PTSD. I also hope to show how the continued use of these ceremonies helps Lakota veterans maintain ties to their culture and heritage in a rapidly changing, and ever more difficult, society.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHNOHISTORY OF THE OGLALA LAKOTA PEOPLE AND THE PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION

In this chapter, I will give a brief ethnohistory of the Oglala Lakota Sioux as well as the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. In order to understand the factors that have led many Lakota men and women to join the military, a history of the reservation, the economy, and the Lakota's relationship with the US government is pertinent. Also, since the focus of this thesis is on contemporary healing ceremonies practiced by Lakota veterans, a brief history and explanation of these ceremonies has been included. Though the structure and practice of many of these ceremonies and rituals has changed due to the influence of Christianity and colonization, I have found that many of the values and meanings of these ceremonies has remained the same as those recorded in the early 20th century.

HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE PRES-RESERVATION LAKOTA

The Oglala people who live on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota are descendents of a culture known as the Teton, or Lakota. The Teton culture included the Oglala, Brule and Minneconjou bands of the Siouan speaking people (DeMallie 2001:794). The Oglala Lakota, as well as other members of the Sioux (which include the Dakota and Yankton-Yanktonai bands), belong to the Siouan linguistic family and can trace their history to present day Minnesota and the Great Lakes Region. According to historians, the Sioux were originally egalitarian hunter-gatherers, who were pushed westward in the late 1700s by white settlers and traders, as well as other displaced tribes, (Gibbon 2003:2-3). However, when I asked friends on Pine Ridge their origin story, they fully believed that the Lakota were created in the Black Hills and have always been Plains Indians.

After arriving in the Black Hills, or *Paha Sapa*, the Lakota people soon considered this mountain range "the center of their world, a sacred place that was home to powerful spirits" (DeMallie 2001:794). Each band of the Sioux adapted differently to their new plains environment. The Lakota became expert horseman and bison hunters, moving nomadically through what are now North and South Dakota.

Although the Lakota did not become Plains horsemen until 1750-75, they quickly adapted to this new lifestyle and prospered, outnumbering all other Sioux bands by the 1800's (Gibbon 2003:4-5).

Though the buffalo had always been a staple of the Teton diet, the Lakota people in South Dakota also hunted deer, bighorn sheep, wolves, red fox, beaver, otter and porcupines for their meat, fur, quills, and hides. In the spring, prairie turnips, which are an "edible starchy root of *Psoralea esculenta*, a leguminous plant of central North America" were eaten, as well as wild artichoke, a member of the *cynara* family (<http://dictionary.reference.com>). The Lakota also received corn, squash, and melon through trade with the Arikara people (<http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/native/ari.html>). The Arikara were sedentary farmers who had lived on the Plains for hundreds of years before the nomadic buffalo hunting people, such as the Sioux, arrived (Calloway 2008:290). In the summer and fall, the Lakota ate wild plums, chokecherries and *wasna*, a protein rich combination of berries, nuts and fat (DeMallie 2001:803-804).

Since at least the beginning of their lives of the plains, warfare has been a part of Lakota life and "[f]ighting the enemy was the most honorable duty in a

man's life" (Sword, cited by DeMallie 2001:805). For men, success as warriors was essential for status in the community; a status that was shared by female relatives. According to Theresa O'Neill, "The bravery of the *akicita* waste (good soldier) reflected on more than the soldier alone; it also brought honor to his family and tribe" (1999:448). The Lakota placed a high value on counting coup, which refers to touching the body of a living, or sometimes dead, enemy. Honor could be acquired through a number of practices such as counting coups, scalping the enemy, killing someone in face to face combat, being wounded in battle, wounding an enemy, rescuing a comrade, serving as scout against the enemy or capturing the enemy's horses. Lakota accounts of warfare in general highlighted honorable actions during war, particularly individual acts of bravery (DeMallie 2001:805).

Lakota religion reflected the importance of hunting and warfare and many religious ceremonies and rituals represented these aspects of their lives. Traditional Lakota religion, as we know it today, was developed mostly in the 1700's, though the roots of rituals, ceremonies and figures such as the White Buffalo Calf Woman, may be prehistoric (Gibbon 2003:133). The Lakota origin story begins with the Sacred Buffalo Calf Woman, who was sent as

a messenger from the Great Unknown (Gibbon 2003:132). The Sacred Buffalo Calf Woman introduced the pipe, also known as *chanupa*, which "established kinship between the buffalo and the people" and became the "tangible symbol of the unity of the Sioux as a people" (DeMallie 2001:799-800). She also brought the seven ceremonies that were the foundation of Lakota life. These include the Sun Dance, the sweat lodge or *inipi*, vision seeking, keeping the ghost, making relatives, throwing the ball, and preparing a female for womanhood (Gibbon 2003:132).

The Lakota believed that all forms of being, including plants, animals, humans, and inanimate objects, were related, and the incomprehensible powers that made everything were referred to as the *Wakan Tanka*. *Wakan Tanka* is translated as both the "big holy" (DeMallie 2001: 806) or "the Great Unknown" (Gibbon 2003:131). According to DeMallie, one of the driving forces in Sioux culture was a quest to understand *Wakan* which he describes as "the animating force of the universe and the common denominator of its oneness" (DeMallie 2001: 806). Humans were able to relate to *Wakan* through prayer as well as through the pipe, which is a direct link between people and *Wakan Tanka* (DeMallie 2001: 806). According to Gibbon, *Wakan Tanka* is also a cosmic life force, existing in both humans and

animals (2003:131). Since this life force is much stronger in animals than humans, animals must be shown great respect. In order to do this, the Lakota would pray, dance, chant, smoke the pipe, fast, or weep to show humility (Gibbon 2003:131).

Spirituality was an integral part of Lakota society and culture, and for some, is still a very important part of their lives. Many ceremonies continue to be practiced today, such as the sweat lodge and Sun Dance, though in an adapted form. For the purpose of this thesis, I will only discuss the ceremonies and rituals that my informants discussed with me or that I personally witnessed. It should not be assumed that these are the only ceremonies practiced by the Oglala Lakota.

The *inipi*, or sweat lodge, was a ritual designed to purify and strengthen an individual's life force. Raymond Bucko describes how the sweat lodge had been long been used as a curative force (1999:27) and I would argue that this is still its main purpose. However, it has many other purposes, and continues to be used before and during Sun Dances, vision quests, and other sacred ceremonies. Bucko describes how it was used to "achieve ritual purity" in the nineteenth century, particularly after killing someone or touching a dead body, as well as to prepare a warrior for

war, to consecrate weapons, and even to prepare to steal horses (1999:30). Used to heal and purify both the body and mind, even the missionaries in the nineteenth century were aware of the numerous dimensions to the ceremony. According to Bucko, the missionaries cautiously accepted the hygienic affects, such as cleansing, but did not approve of nor accept the religious aspect of the sweat lodge (1999:30).

The *hunka* was an adoption ceremony, used for both inter and intra-tribal relations. When used intra-tribally, the *hunka* ceremony forged stronger tribal relationships and bonds. The "spirit keeping" or "keeping the ghost" ceremony was performed to delay the departure of a loved one, particularly a child (DeMallie 2001:807).

The Sun Dance, or *wuwayag wac ipi*, which translates to "sun-gazing dance" (DeMallie 2001:807), has been practiced since the 18th century and continues to be practiced today. It was and continues to be one of the most important Lakota ceremonies. It not only celebrated tribal unity, the buffalo, and was a time for prayer, but also provided a time for nomadic *tiospayes*, or extended families, to come together and perform smaller ceremonies (DeMallie 2001:807). According to Gibbon, the Sun Dance "was especially intended to secure the protection of the holy beings for all Lakota people" (2003:132). Today, the Sun

Dance is an intense five day ceremony that requires the dancers to fast, attend sweat lodge ceremonies and dance in the heat of the day staring at the sun. A tree is erected in the center of the circle and dancers pierce themselves with pieces of wood attached to ropes hanging from the tree. People also tie tobacco offerings to the tree trunk and stand under an arbor surrounding the dancers. Whether the sacrifice is for the dancer, their family, or the tribe as a whole, it is still an intensely emotional and physically exhausting ritual.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

With the expansion of European colonists and other displaced tribes into Lakota territory in the 1700 and 1800's, life changed rapidly for the Lakota. Confronted with US Government expansion, they signed a series of treaties with Washington, many of which were not upheld by the US government. Hostilities between the Lakota, US military, and settlers surrounded the development of the Oregon Trail in the 1850's and the Bozeman Trail in 1862 (DeMallie 2001:795-796). The Bozeman Trail cut through Sioux territory to gold mines in Montana, and was protested by the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho people in 1866.

Besides disease, concessions made through treaties and the subsequent failure of the US Government to honor its treaty obligations had, perhaps, the most devastating effect on the Oglala Lakota people. For example, the first Ft. Laramie Treaty in 1851 promised an exchange of 50 years of annuities for lands on which the US would build roads and military posts (DeMallie 2001:795). One year later however, in order to receive the annuities the Sioux were forced to sign an amended treaty that reduced the exchange of annuities from 50 to 10 years with a possible 5 year extension at the discretion of the president (DeMallie 2001:795). After the second Ft. Laramie Treaty in 1868, in which the United States recognized the Black Hills as part of the Great Sioux Reservation (though this is still in debate), the reservation was further separated into six smaller reservations (<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sioux-treaty/>). These include the Pine Ridge, Lake Travis, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, and Yankton Reservations (see Fig. 2).

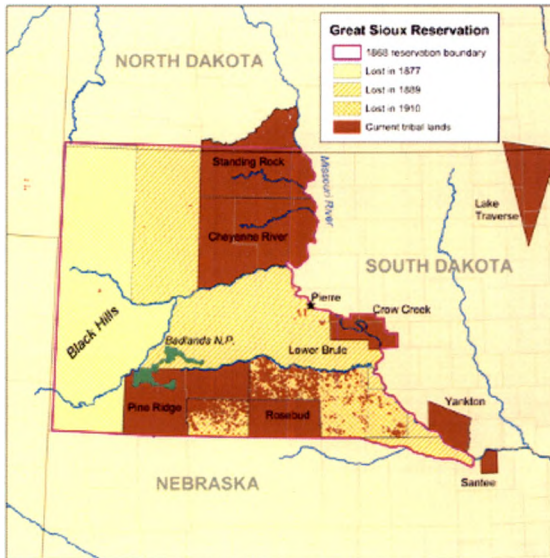


Figure 2: Great Sioux Reservation

In 1874, a mining expedition to find gold in the Black Hills, led by General George Custer, proved fateful:

Once gold was found in the Black Hills, miners were soon moving into the Sioux hunting grounds and demanding protection from the United States Army. Soon, the Army was ordered to move against wandering bands of Sioux hunting on the range in accordance with their treaty rights. In 1876, Custer, leading a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry, encountered the encampment of Sioux and Cheyenne at the Little Bighorn River. In one of the most famous battles of American history, Custer's detachment was annihilated, and he was killed. However, the United States would continue its battle against the Sioux in the Black Hills until the Sioux were defeated and the government confiscated the land in 1877. To this day, ownership of the Black Hills remains the subject of a legal dispute between the U.S. government and the Sioux.

[\(http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sioux-treaty/\)](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sioux-treaty/)

In 1887, Sioux land was further divided by the Dawes Allotment Act. This act "forced families and individuals on

to 160-acre or smaller allotments and opened the remaining land to non-Indian settlement" (Gibbon 2003:6). Millions of acres were lost, which not only affected the total amount of reservation land, but also broke up kin groups. Though it was often the US government's stated intention to provide benefits to the Sioux, including the provision of food, healthcare, schools, and tools (Gibbon 2003:119), the US rarely followed through on these promises. The US government did force the Sioux onto small plots of unusable land, outlawed their native language, ceremonies and rituals, their religion, and their way of sustaining themselves and their families by forcing the Sioux to farm, rather than hunt and gather (Gibbon 2003:6).

On December 29, 1890, in another famous battle, a group of 300, mostly unarmed and ill, Sioux men, women, and children were killed by the U.S. Army at Wounded Knee, SD. This group, led by Chief Big Foot, had previously been participants in the Ghost Dance ritual; "a ritual that held out the hope of an Indian resurgence, a ritual that frightened white settlers and soldiers" (Hooks and Smith 2004:565). Some residents of Pine Ridge today speculate this massacre was in retaliation for Custer's death, since it was the Seventh Cavalry who killed the men, women, and children at Wounded Knee. Although there was no direct

connection between the battles at Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee, the fact that the Seventh Cavalry was involved in both probably increased the death toll at Wounded Knee.

Though the Dawes Allotment Act in 1887 was intended to help Indians, such as the Lakota, assimilate into American culture by encouraging land ownership and farming, it was not successful on Pine Ridge. First, the land in South Dakota is not suitable for farming, and though ranching is an option, it required much more capital than the Lakota had. Therefore, without the ability to provide for themselves by hunting or gathering, a culture of people dependant on the government was created from the very beginning of the reservation system. Biolsi (1995) supports this argument, stating that the Lakota came to depend on US rations for subsistence after the destruction of their pre-reservation mode of production and the power shift to the Office of Indian Affairs (1995:28).

In the case of the Oglala Lakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the loss of their ability to provide food, shelter, and clothing for themselves had a devastating effect on their identity. This was particularly true for males (DeMallie 2001:812; Gibbon

2003:120). People, who had once been nomadic hunter-gatherers and had lived an egalitarian lifestyle, were now forced to rely on the government for their basic needs. They were not allowed to participate in their traditional gender, political, or religious roles. As a consequence, conflicts between traditional leaders and new reservation police, Bureau of Indian Affairs representatives and the US military arose in the late 19th century and continued into the 20th century (DeMallie 2001:814).

The US government controlled more than the just the way Oglala Lakota Indians received access to basic needs; they also sent their children to boarding schools, thus establishing cultural and moral divides between children and their families. The main purpose of boarding schools was to acculturate Indian children. Methods used included cutting their hair, banning their native language, and devaluing their native culture and traditions (Calloway 2008:383-386; Gibbon 2003:6). If the children returned, it was to families who spoke different languages and had an entirely different view of the natural and spiritual world than the one they had acquired at school (Robertson 2006:31-34). Several of the veterans I interviewed, such as Daryl, Mike, and Bryan, were sent to boarding schools. Even in 2008, they described the trauma of having to cut their

hair, being away from family members, not being allowed to speak Lakota, and learning about Christianity.

Though the Lakota had much to readjust to in the late 1800's, not all reservations were immediately impoverished. In fact, some Sioux even prospered in the 1920's by leasing lands to cattle ranchers as well as ranching themselves. It was not until the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression in the 1930's, when the price of cattle fell drastically, that the devastating cycle of poverty on reservations, such as Pine Ridge, evolved (Gibbon 2003:8). Though the US government may not have realized the effect these events would have on Indian people, the result of projects such as the Ft. Laramie Treaty and the Dawes Allotment Act, have resulted in the Lakota people being one of the poorest populations in the US.

CONTEMPORARY PINE RIDGE RESERVATION LIFE

"Poverty, we never knew it. Then we got educated. Then we knew poverty. If you don't have a penny in your pocket, you don't know you're poor. So, we've always lived it, but we had little gardens, family gardens, and we all shared crops for the winter." Mike
(8/7/2008)

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is one of the largest Indian reservations in the United States, encompassing about 2.7 million acres, or 11,000 square

miles (Schwartz 2006). The topography includes a variety of landscapes, such as the Badlands (Fig.3), rolling hills (Fig. 4), and vast prairie land (Fig. 5). It is not unusual to come across a herd of horses or buffalo on reservation roads (Fig. 6). About 40,000 people live on Pine Ridge and about half of these are registered Tribal members. Other residents include white ranchers and their families, non-registered tribal members, and teachers, doctors, and nurses. Tribal members own about 1.7 million acres on the reservation (Schwartz 2006). Approximately 200,000 acres are part of the Badlands National Park and other land is owned by white farmers and ranchers.



Figure 3: Badlands



Figure 4: Rolling Hills



Figure 5: Prairie Lands



Figure 6: Horses on
Reservation Road

The history of the Oglala Lakota people and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has created a situation where the people living there reside in one of the poorest counties in the nation; the average annual income on Pine Ridge is between \$2600 and \$3500. They suffer rates of diabetes and cervical cancer 800 percent higher than the national average, have 150 percent higher teenage suicide rates, and have 300 percent higher infant mortality rates. The average life span on Pine Ridge is 45 years, compared to 77.5 for the rest of the United States. According to USDA Rural Development documents, this is the lowest life span of any US population (Schwartz 2006).

In 1997, approximately 90 percent of reservation income came from the Federal government, and nearly as much was spent outside of the reservation boundaries (Aoki et al 1997: book 1, page 3). Additionally, Aoki et al. predicted

that poverty rates would exceed 60 percent (in 1997), and in 2006, approximately 97 percent of people on Pine Ridge did, in fact, live below the federal poverty line. 50 percent of homes are considered substandard, with about 33 percent lacking basic utilities such as water, electricity, and heat. Pine Ridge schools factor in the bottom ten percent of federal funding and have a dropout rate of 70 percent. Approximately 8 out of 10 families on the reservation are affected by alcoholism (Schwartz 2006). On average, about 17 people (and often many more) occupy each house. There are no banks, there is but one small grocery store, one public library, and one non-profit radio station, KILI 90.1. There is also a vast amount of pollution on the reservation, a result of military bombing in the Badlands as well as uranium mining (Schwartz 2006, Hooks and Smith 2004:565). Recreation facilities are scarce. For example, one of my informants reported that she had to take her children 60 miles to Hot Springs, SD in order to go swimming.

There are a variety of reasons for the extreme poverty on reservations such as Pine Ridge. Robert Miller discusses some of these reasons in his article, "American Indian Entrepreneurs: Unique Challenges, Unlimited Potential" (2008). Miller believes that the lack of small businesses

and capital on reservations, coupled with the lowest per capita rate of private business ownership of any ethnic group in the US, may explain this near absence of economy (2008:1).

Kodras (1997) discusses yet another reason that may have led to the extreme poverty of Pine Ridge. She states that factors related to geography and history have also had a negative effect on the economy of Pine Ridge. She argues that poverty rates on the Great Plains reservations increased in the 1970's, due to shifts in federal funding policies of health, education, housing, and job training, as well as Native Americans "unique relationship to the federal government" (Kodras 1997:81). As she states, reservations such as Pine Ridge are unique because they generally do not receive state aid yet are not considered local governments, and therefore cannot "levy taxes to provide for municipal needs" (Hertzberg, cited in Kodras 1997:87).

Kodras also emphasizes the geographic isolation of Pine Ridge and the fact that much of the land is held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). This prevents many Oglala Lakota residents of Pine Ridge from selling or mortgaging their land. Lastly, Kodras cites various

examples of federal cutbacks in the 1970's and 1980's, such as grants from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Economic Development Agency (EDA), which all lost funding. In the 1980's alone, per capita income on Pine Ridge declined by 25 percent to about \$3,417 per year (1997:87). Considering the per capita income in 2006 was between \$2600 and \$3000 (Schwartz 2006), it is obvious that there has been no improvement.

Additionally, Hooks and Smith discuss the correlation between pollution and hazardous waste sites on Indian reservations in their article "The Treadmill of Destruction: National Sacrifice Areas and Native Americans" (2004). They define a treadmill of destruction as the "creation [from capitalist and military states] and deposition of toxins in the environment" (2004:562). For example, they describe how reservation lands tend to be in areas that are "too dry, remote, or barren, to attract the attention of settlers and corporations (2004:563), yet are also the perfect place for the military to practice bombing and other dangerous activities. They discuss how the Lakota Sioux in particular have had a long and violent history with the US military. Fifty years after the Wounded Knee Massacre, the US military seized about 342,000 acres on

Pine Ridge to use as bomb training for WWII pilots, which forced 125 Oglala families to sell their farms and ranches for about three cents an acre (2004:565). Though this caused massive destruction to the land, and left much of it unusable, the clean up was delayed due to "the large number of unexploded ordnance[s] there" (Gladdy 1997, cited in Hooks and Smith 2004:565). Hooks and Smith concluded that the use of reservation land, and areas nearby, for military experiments have left a toxic legacy on many Indian lands, including Pine Ridge.

I was told by my friend's mother that the reservation is "like a vacuum that sucks all the happiness out of you", yet the people who live there are extremely resilient. There has been a resurgence in the Lakota language, which is now taught in elementary schools, as well as in the culture in general. The Lakota people with whom I worked are generally happy, funny, and generous, despite their poverty.

However, the Lakota are also very aware of the desperation on the reservation; the unemployment, alcoholism, lack of economy and wage labor, high rates of crime, suicide, diabetes, and obesity, among other health issues. In addition, they are aware of considerable strife among Lakota. According to O'Neil, the "history of

colonialism has made an indelible impression on the contemporary reservation. Nowhere are its results more evident than in the economic realities of reservation life." (1999:449). She goes on to discuss how the various ways that people on the reservation have adapted to modern life has caused contention and infighting. For example, some individuals and families have chosen to "try to succeed within the administrative system imposed and supported by the dominant society" (1999:449), while others have chosen to distance themselves and follow a more traditional path.

This division often falls along blood lines; i.e. full bloods or traditionalists vs. mixed bloods or progressives. However, it is important to mention that people with full Indian blood might also consider themselves progressive, and vice versa. This division is significant, however, because many of my informants discussed this topic. According to Bryan, a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran (interviewed 7/25/08), "mixed bloods are better off than full bloods in this district", even though he associates "mixed bloods" with gang violence, drug distribution, gangster lifestyles and "slang talk". Conflicts over blood lines were not the only ones that that became evident, however. There were also conflicts between those who

identify as Christian and those who do not. This is significant because the issue of authenticity was often associated with this disagreement, and will be discussed in further chapters.

With these various factors in mind, Chapter Three will focus on how these factors have led many Lakota to join the US Military.

CHAPTER 3

INDIANS IN THE SERVICE AND CONTEMPORARY REASONS FOR JOINING THE MILITARY

In general, American Indians join and serve in the military in disproportionately high numbers compared to other ethnicities (Holm 1992, 1997; cited in Robertson 2006:21). According to Bryan Bender, "There are about 22,000 Native Americans in all the services, a proportion corresponding to roughly twice their share of the population" (2007). To put this into perspective, the 32nd Annual (FY 2005) Department of Defense (DoD) report on social representation in the U.S. Military Services states that "African Americans were equitably represented in the military overall", while "representation of 'Other' minority enlisted accessions (American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and those of two or more races) stood at just less than 8 percent, equal to their share of the civilian population. Hispanics, on the other hand, continued to be underrepresented" per their population size

<http://prhome.defense.gov/poprep2005/summary/summary.html>).

With these statistics in mind, I will discuss the reasons that contemporary Lakota join the military, as well as the historical background that may have factored into these decisions. First however, I will give a brief background on American Indians in the military. For this section, I discuss Native Americans in general and Sioux in particular. There is little information about the Lakota specifically, but I have included it when appropriate.

WORLD WAR I

Indians fought alongside Americans in the Revolutionary War and have fought in every war since (Barsh 1991:276). The reasons for recruiting Indians ranged from the need for more manpower to the hope that "discharged soldiers would serve as models of virtue in their communities and as agents of positive change" (Barsh 1991:277). Though it was still rare in the late 1800's for Indians to serve in the US military, by 1918 nearly 1/3 of the adult male Native American population was in the service (Barsh 1991:277).

By WWI, at least 23,822 Indian men had registered for the service, though the exact number of those who volunteered verses those who were drafted is unknown. The

participation from each tribe varied, with about 1 percent of the Navaho and Pueblo population serving, compared to 10-15 percent of the South Dakota Sioux (Britten 1997:82) and 30-60 percent of the Oklahoma tribes, such as the Osage and Quapaw (Barsh 1991:278-279).

Barsh presents evidence that the key reasons why Indians joined the military in World War I include providing for their families, American pride and patriotism, as well as conscription. Indian schools, such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, PA, encouraged military service (Robertson 2006:33-34) and nearly 90 percent of students from Indian schools volunteered for military service (Barsh 1991:279). Though non-citizen Indians were entitled to deferment, only about 1 percent of those who were drafted actually deferred. The literature suggests, however, that many Indians were not made aware of this option nor given the chance to defer (Barsh 1991:281).

Stereotypes about Indian warriors and soldiers were not new in 1918, and the media put great emphasis on the bravery and stoicism of Indian soldiers in WWI (Barsh 1991:283). Their perceived reasons for joining the Army Air Service (the forerunner of the Air Force) can be seen in this quote from a 1918 Newspaper article:

The Aviation Corps of the Army makes an appeal to the red-skinned youth as fully as to the pale-face. There is a sharp fascination to youthful imagination in learning to take to the clouds like birds of the air. And then there is a kinship with nature, too, in the religion of the genuine Indian, which makes the ability of human beings to rise and go skyward doubly alluring. (Sunday Star, 25 August 1918, cited in Barsh 1991:280)

Though this quote can be read as ignorant stereotyped gossip, it may reflect what some Americans thought about Indians during WWI.

While about 1 percent of the American serviceman died in WWI, or about 320,518 casualties (<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0004617.html>), about 5 percent of Indian soldiers lost their lives. There are a variety of reasons why more Native American soldiers died in WWI than soldiers of other ethnicities, beginning with a higher percentage per population represented than other ethnicities. Indians in WWI served in all branches of the military, though particularly in aviation, as well as in the medical corps, military intelligence and as engineers (Barsh 1991:278-279). Indians received numerous purple hearts and medals of bravery for their service during World War I. Their success as soldiers earned some a new place in American history, as acculturated and civilized Indians.

CITIZENSHIP AND WORLD WAR II

Regardless of the validity of statements such as the one above, Christafferson does suggest that Native American service in WWI may have led to citizenship being granted to all Indians in 1924 (Christafferson 2001: 821). Franco, in his essay "Empowering the World War II Native American Veteran: Postwar Civil Rights" (1993), states that this argument has also been supported by Vine Deloria Jr. who believes "that Congress passed this legislation as a reward for Native American military participation in World War I" (1993:32). However, Franco also states that this argument has been rejected by historian Gary Stein, who believes Indians were granted citizenship for political reasons. The US was unable to draft non-citizen Indians, or those who were members of Sovereign Nations. By granting citizenship the US could draft most male American Indians (Franco 1993:32-33). In 1940, with an impending war, the US passed the Nationality Act, which once again declared all Indians citizens. Franco believes that the purpose of this act was to "reinforce the 'duties' aspect of citizenship, namely military service" (1993:33). Therefore, by WWII, all Indians had been granted citizenship and were both being drafted and volunteering for the service.

Both men and women served overseas and on the home front. For example, an 87 year old female WWII veteran (interviewed 7/3/08) I interviewed said that the military "really wanted girls to sign up", which she did in 1945, along with other native women throughout the country (Gouveia 1994). Indian women on reservations not only worked in military supply factories and served as nurses, but also took over primarily males roles on the reservation to provide for their families (Gouveia 1994).

Navajo code talkers from WWII are well known to some Americans from movies such as "Flags of our Fathers" and "Code Talkers". One relatively famous Indian was Pfc. Ira H. Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona, who helped raise the flag on Iwo Jima and was depicted in the movie "Flags of our Father" (2006). However, Native soldiers from many different tribes served in WWII, and their bravery was honored and recognized by the United States (see chart 1).

Of particular interest is a story about Indians of the First Marine Division participating in ceremonial dances in Okinawa during WWII. The story, written by Ernie Pyle, describes how Indians from the Navajo, Sioux, Comanche, Apache, Pima, Kiowa, Pueblo, and Crow tribes danced the Apache Devil Dance, the Eagle Dance, the Hoop Dance, the War Dance, and the Navajo Mountain Chant in front of their

fellow "grave" Marines (<http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/indians.htm>). This is significant because Pyle, a Pulitzer winning reporter, was a gifted and respected war correspondent who brought this unique story to Americans back at home, many who may not have known that Indians were fighting for the United States in WWII.

THE VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War also saw a huge number of Native soldiers, and, according to Holm's, their low level of education often placed them on the front lines where they saw the most intense combat (1996). According to tribal sources, approximately 42,000 American Indians served in Vietnam.¹ Additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs, in 1992, estimated that "nearly one in ten of all living American Indian Veterans are veterans, a rate that may be nearly three times higher than that for non-Indians (O'Neill 1999:445). In addition to being drafted, Indians also volunteered at a very high rate for Vietnam, compared with other ethnicities:

During the Vietnam War era, American Indians were more likely to enlist voluntarily than either African

¹It should be noted that the numbers are hard to calculate since there was no category for American Indians until after Vietnam. Therefore, Indians had to place themselves in other categories, such as White, B, or Asian (Gross 2007:375).

Americans or whites, and, among those who enlisted, more likely to justify their enlistment in terms of family and cultural traditions, and gaining self-respect in their own communities (Holm, cited in Barsh 2002:376).

STEREOTYPES AND ETHNICITY

One topic that arises in the literature, particularly in regards to the Vietnam War, is the use of Native Americans in stereotypical roles. Holm discusses this quite extensively in *Strong Hearts Wounded Souls*, in what he refers to as the "Indian Scout Syndrome" (Holm 1996). This type of stereotype was originally perpetuated in WWII when Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior wrote that Indians were "uniquely valuable" because they had:

Endurance, rhythm, a feeling for timing, coordination, sense perception, an uncanny ability to get over any sort of terrain at night, and better than all else, and enthusiasm for fighting. He [the Indian soldier] takes a rough job and makes a game of it. Rigors of combat hold no terrors for him; severe disciplines and hard duties do not deter him (Holm 1996:89).

Another topic that emerged during Vietnam was the struggle that Indian veterans faced regarding their ethnicity and identity. For example, it became quite apparent to Indian soldiers that they physically resembled the Vietnamese; they had the same hair, skin, and eye color (Fig. 7). According to Holm:

Enemy controlled areas in Vietnam were habitually called 'Indian Country' and some Native Americans ironically took part in relocating entire Vietnamese village populations. 'Just like they did to us,' one veteran commented. Several had the experience of a Vietnamese looking at them and saying 'you, me...same, same.' (1995:83)



Figure 7: Indian Soldiers in Vietnam

One of my informants in particular, Bryan, a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran (interviewed 7/25/08) expressed the grief and shame he felt about this and how hard it was to kill people that resembled himself and his family members. He said that it reminded him of how it must have looked when his ancestors were being killed by the US Army. To this day, he struggles with coming to terms with his service in Vietnam.

To put these feelings in perspective, it should be noted that Indians had been killing each other in warfare for thousands of years, and they certainly resembled each other; just as Caucasians, Africans, South Americans,

Asians, and many other people have been fighting and killing each other throughout history. Perhaps these feelings had more to do with Indian identity than physical appearance. For example, as Muhammad Ali famously stated, "No Viet Cong ever called me a nigger". These feelings may represent the racism that American Indian soldiers had experienced on the home front and therefore identified with the Vietnamese as victims, seeing their ancestors' faces in the face of the Vietnamese.

Regardless of why Bryan felt this way, he, like many Indian Vietnam veterans, had difficulty retuning to civilian life. While approximately 80 percent of returning Indian veterans struggled with depression, another 81 percent experienced alcohol related problems, sleep intrusion, flashbacks, and anger management issues (Gross 2007:375). Many Sioux veterans, like other non-Indian veterans, returned home with PTSD, physical disabilities, and depression. As in previous wars, Indian veterans often returned home to reservations and still faced extreme poverty, unemployment, racism, discrimination (both on and off the reservation), and increased alcoholism (Christafferson 2001:824). Sadly, many returned to reservations with little access to Veterans Administration (VA) resources, and combined with other difficulties they

faced, had a difficult time readjusting to society. The healing and coping mechanisms that they practice to readjust will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

CONTEMPORARY REASONS FOR JOINING THE MILITARY

As a result of the poverty and isolation on the reservation, one of the only options left for Oglala Lakota people is joining the military. With an 80 percent unemployment rate (Schwartz 2006), many of my informants stated the military was, and is, one of the only stable jobs available to them. Not only is it a stable job, but it is available to almost anyone, and offers an opportunity for Lakota people to make money and provide for themselves and their families. The following pages discuss the reasons my informants gave me for joining the military. Perhaps the single most cited reason, in both the literature and in the ethnographic interviews, was the lack of employment and extreme poverty on the reservation.

THE ECONOMY

Indian reservations are some of the poorest communities in the nation (Miller 2008:2; Leichenko 2003:368). According to the U.S Department of Commerce in 2004-2005, approximately "25.7 percent of American Indian

and Alaska natives live below the poverty line compared to 24.9 percent of African Americans, 22.6 percent of Latinos, 17.7 percent of Native Hawaiians, and 9.1 percent of White Americans" (<http://www.census.gov/statab/www/sa04aian.pdf>). Interestingly, as stated above, Latinos (or Hispanics) are underrepresented in the military while African American enlistment rates mirror Caucasians (per population). For some reason, American Indians enlist at much higher rates than other ethnicities, even those in similar economic situations. I would argue that a tradition of service and notions of warriorhood, that are absent in these other communities, lead to this result. Additionally, I would argue that impoverished people who live in urban areas have more opportunities than those who live in rural areas. For example, I believe there are more opportunities to find employment, attend school, access social services, and develop a network of support in urban areas, than those who are in isolated rural communities, such as Indian reservations.

The situation in many reservations, including Pine Ridge, has been compared to third world conditions. For example, they have some of the highest rates of infant mortality, unemployment and malnutrition, as well as the

shortest life expectancy and lowest per capita income and formal education levels of any group in the United States (Churchill and LaDuke, cited in Miller 2008:4). While this may seem hopeless, there are non-profit organizations, such as The Lakota Funds, that are working hard to change this situation. According to a study by five university economists, "The Lakota Funds has succeeded in raising real per capita income of Shannon County residents consistently and significantly throughout the 1987- 2006 study period." (<http://www.lakota funds.org/>). However, there is still much work to be done:

Even so, there are still only 13 businesses per 1000 reservation residents compared to 83 businesses per 1000 people in the rest of South Dakota. That means only 16% of the businesses in our communities [continue] to provide job opportunities and to provide goods and services. No wonder unemployment on the reservation is estimated to be over 80% and, while improving, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is still one of the poorest regions in the US.
(<http://www.lakotafunds.org/>)

With a reality such as this, it is not surprising that contemporary Lakota men and women join the military. While other factors certainly exist and will be discussed further, I found this to be the most common. For example, at least six of sixteen people I interviewed stated that they joined the military *primarily* because it was the only job they could find, while other veterans I interviewed

said that it was *one of the only* stable occupation they could rely on to provide for their family.

DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

According to both my informants and my personal experiences, Rapid City, SD, one of the closest cities to the reservation, is very prejudiced. Before hearing my participants discuss the discrimination they faced in one of the only places they could find employment, I witnessed it myself.² For example I was told by a white woman at a local store, "I'm not racist, but I don't have time for those Indians".

However, throughout my interviews, many people told me that the discrimination and prejudice is just as prevalent on the reservation as it is off. And in some cases, even more so. For example, nearly everyone stated that while they faced some discrimination in the military itself, (being called "Chief" or being asked to perform duties that may seem natural to an Indian) they said the worst prejudice they faced was on Pine Ridge itself. There is a huge divide between people who consider themselves traditional and those who consider themselves progressive.

² For more information on this topic, see "Native Americans in South Dakota: An Erosion of Confidence in the Justice System" 2000

There is also turmoil between light skinned and dark skinned Lakotas, and between Christians and non-Christians.

Many of the veterans I interviewed said that they found the prejudice towards them, including nepotism, to be worse at home than in the military. According to my informants, since there are so few jobs and wage labor on Pine Ridge, there is also a lot of political corruption. Those who may not agree with the way the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) is handling reservation business and affairs may find themselves without a job. This constant turmoil led many of my informants to choose a more secure job with the military, despite their feelings towards the US and America in general. For example, one participant described how the only job available to him was to be a police officer, but the nepotism was so bad that he feared he wouldn't be able to get a job on the reservation. Interestingly, after his 16 year military career, the only job he found upon returning was that as a tribal police officer.

It should be noted that the discrimination my informants discussed was more related to political corruption and nepotism, rather than racial or ethnic prejudice. However, the term most often used was prejudice, which is why I have used it here. It is true that everyone working for the OST or the tribal police are Lakota, but

again, the difference in blood which O'Neill discussed (1999:449), causes considerable rivalries and discontent among Pine Ridge residents.

Interestingly, according to Ed (8/20/2008), he didn't face any discrimination; "As an officer and a pilot, especially in combat you were treated with a good deal of respect. For me to rise all the way from Corporal to a Captain flying a big Fighter Bomber, I hardly think I faced prejudice."

BEING A MAN

Another common theme among my participants was that joining the military provided an outlet to be "a man" in their society. As the Lakota were placed on reservations, traditional gender, political, and religious roles changed. Men could not hunt for food; they had to rely on government rations for themselves and their families. Family and community structure also changed. Men had no real means of providing for their families, yet women were still needed for more domestic duties (DeMallie 2001:812). This led to the emasculation of men in their community.

Leacock describes exploitation and the transformation from production for use to production for exchange in her

essay "Interpreting the Origin of Gender Inequality: Conceptual and Historical Problems" (Leacock 2008:450). She describes how commodity production and labor division gave rise to class stratification. Though Leacock does not write about the Lakota specifically, I found that they are a good example of this theory. They moved from an egalitarian society to one based on capitalism; instead of hunting and gathering food to eat, they needed to earn wages to exchange for government rationed food, clothing, and medicine (Pickering 2001:45). Men's roles as providers and hunters were drastically changed and virtually eliminated. In contrast to Leacock's assertion that women became the subordinate gender with the establishment of capitalism, I would argue that Lakota males may have become the subordinate gender in early reservation life, though this would eventually change. Women were still valued in Lakota society, as mothers and providers, yet men were left with virtually no options save joining the military. Joining the military offers an opportunity to be a man once again by providing for their family and reclaiming their gender role in society.

Many of the men I interviewed who said that they joined the military to "be a man", had fathers and other male relatives who had served in the military. They stated

that it was something that they felt compelled to do. For example, according to Jerry, (interviewed 7/5/2008), "As a young man, you want to prove to prove you are a man" in your community. Additionally, Pete, an Army veteran who served from 1972-1974, stated that it was a "family tradition" for the males in his family to serve in the military. Lastly, according to Mike (interviewed 8/7/2008), in addition to wanting to be a man, he stated that he joined the military as a challenge:

Mike: At that time, during my time, in the early 60s, we kind of dared each other. Who was going to be in first, and who was going to come back first.

Dawn: I haven't heard that before.

Mike: Well, it was a challenge for the, I guess, the men, or the boys at that time. We challenged each other.

I believe that this ties into the lack of economy of Pine Ridge. It was, and is, very difficult for the men to provide for their families on Pine Ridge. This can lead to a feeling of hopelessness, boredom, and despair, which often leads to alcoholism and crime. Nearly every one of my participants stated that they have, or had, a problem with alcoholism or substance abuse, and some have spent time in jail.

One way to avoid this cycle is to join the military, which not only offers a steady paycheck, but also teaches

skills and discipline, gains status in the community, and commands respect. For example, Alex (interviewed 8/7/08), described how the military taught him to be a leader:

I guess the Army taught me to be a leader, a combat leader. That encouraged me to come home and lead my family in a good way. When I came home, I was the eldest male and had to become a leader. The army gave him the initiative I needed to do this.

BEING A WARRIOR

Men also lost their roles as warriors when they moved to reservations. In a society that highly valued and respected warriors, and placed great honor on courage and bravery during battles, the loss of this role was detrimental to male identities (Demallie 2001:805). Men no longer had any control or power; rather they were subordinate to reservation police, the BIA and the US military. In the words of Jerry (interviewed 7/5/2008), joining the service allowed him to be "[a] modern day warrior" and to follow the "warrior tradition" once again. Additionally, Richard, a Vietnam Era Air Force veteran in his 60's (interviewed 7/31/08) stated, that although the United States had nearly annihilated American Indians, they still join the services, because they can continue their warrior culture; something he believes can now only be fulfilled by joining the military.

Joining the military also provides Lakota men with an opportunity to participate in warrior ceremonies and rituals once again. Beginning with WWI, there was a resurgence of victory dances, "going away" and "coming home" ceremonies, and death rituals throughout Indian reservations (Britten 1997:152). For example, in 1918, a victory dance was held for the first time since 1876, at Ft. Yates in North Dakota (Britten 1997:150). Modern day Lakota veterans participate in many of these warrior ceremonies such as the warrior dance and the veteran parade at Pow Wows, as well as attend sweat lodges, Sun Dances, memorial horse rides, and the "wiping of tears" ceremony. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

During WWI, returning Indian soldiers were highly recognized and celebrated in their communities, with "organized scalp dances" on the Plains and potlatches in the Pacific Northwest (Barsh 2001: 379). Some of these celebrations continue today, according to the veterans whom I interviewed. Four out of sixteen of the veterans I spoke with stated that their community welcomed them home as heroes, sometimes holding parades in their honor. I also witnessed this on several occasions during the time I spent on Pine Ridge. Veterans are always recognized first at Sun

Dances and Pow Wows, always offered food first, and highly thanked and appreciated at any event or gathering.

The only informant who stated that this was not the case was a 44 year old female Dessert Storm veteran, Melanie, who served in the Army (interviewed 7/21/2008). She felt that her community did not recognize, appreciate, nor thank her for her service. Besides being honored by her parents at a Pow Wow and given an Eagle feather by her uncle, she said that no-one held "anything special" in her honor. She felt that this was because she was a female and that perhaps male veterans are not yet ready to welcome home female veterans.

However, Wanda, a Gulf War veteran of the Navy who served from 1989-1993, stated that she was welcomed home by her family and community and is very proud to a native veteran. Additionally, nearly every other veteran I spoke with said that they welcome and honor their female comrades, and consider them to be warriors just as much as they are. In fact, Frank M, a retired Marine Corps veteran who served from 1959-1963, said that he has more respect for the female soldiers and veterans because they were mothers and had children at home.

CHANCE TO TRAVEL AND/OR LEAVE THE RESERVATION

The military also offers an opportunity to leave the reservation and see the world. Joining the service gives people an opportunity to meet new people and experience new cultures. Most of the veterans I interviewed stated that they enjoyed visiting other countries and parts of the United States, and that the military offered a unique opportunity for them to travel. Wanda stated that one of the main reasons she joined the service was to see and explore the world. She says she truly enjoyed her time service and loved "meeting all different ethnicities", which was something that was new for her after growing up on Pine Ridge.

Interestingly, Mike, Richard, and Alex all stated how much respect they received from Europeans; many of whom have a fascination with Native American culture. For example, Alex, who was stationed in Germany in the 1970's, said that he and another Indian soldier came across some German Indian hobbyists. He said that these Germans were dressed in Plains Indian attire, called themselves Ziocks (their pronunciation of Sioux), and that the women were bare breasted, tanning hides, and literally "playing Indian". When Alex and his friend asked to join the festivities, the German hobbyists had to hold a council

meeting to decide if that was acceptable, even though Alex and his friend were the "real Indians". Eventually they were allowed, but only after they "got into costume" by taking their shirts off. Though he said it was odd, he also really enjoyed seeing the kids shooting bows and arrows and people acting out what they thought the Sioux lifestyle was like.

FACTORS FOR FEMALE ENLISTMENT

While most of this chapter has focused on the male perspective, it is important to include the female participants as well. In pre-reservation times, Plains Indians women had "had valuable roles to fulfill, as sisters honoring their brothers through modesty, as wives and mothers bearing and caring for the warriors and the maidens of the next generation as grandmothers with important teaching and spiritual roles (Powers, cited in O'Neil 1999:448). As the Sioux were moved to reservations, lost their horse-raiding and warring traditions, and as traditional spiritual practices came under fire, these family and gender roles changed (O'Neil 1999:449). However, women still had vital roles as caretakers and providers. According to Demallie, male roles were undermined by lack of economy and skills, and with little to do, a deepening

apathy combined with poverty led to a devastating reservation life for men, while women became the breadwinners for their families (DeMallie 2001:818).

In more recent times however, while men have been able to utilize the military to resume some of their roles as providers, warriors, and leaders in their society, women on the contemporary reservation do not have as many options. Combined with low education and skill levels, alcoholism, high rates of domestic abuse, and single parenting, life is harsh for many women on the reservation. Therefore, with few other ways to make a living, many Lakota women have opted to join the military as a way to provide for their families.

Of the three women I interviewed, one is a WWII veteran and two are Gulf War veterans. As with the men, joining the military was an opportunity for them to help and provide for their family. One Gulf War veteran said she joined in order to see the world and the other joined out of economic necessity. Both of these women said it was a good experience and that it helped them provide for their families in an otherwise difficult economy. The Lakota women with whom I spent time with realize that, in contemporary reservation life, they cannot rely on the men in their lives to take care of them.

CONCLUSIONS

Lack of economic opportunity, combined with extreme poverty has drastically changed the lives of Lakota people. Increased reliance on the government and decreased ability to self-sustain led to a change in family structure, gender roles, economic opportunity, and an increased interest in the military.

Many Lakota, though proud of their service to this country, believe there is a contradiction in their situation. Some, like Alex, stated that "There is that nagging feeling of serving my enemy". For some, they returned to the reservation with guilt and shame. However, many others enjoyed their experience in the military and found life harder when they returned to a reservation steeped in poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, and discrimination, of which many blame on colonization and capitalism. Though life may have been difficult for pre-reservation Lakota people, they at least had the ability to provide themselves with food, clothing, shelter, education and the free practice of their religion. The military is one option that allows Lakota people to reclaim traditional values and ceremonies, while also providing them a means of survival in an economically impoverished community.

Culture is not static, and Lakota culture is changing as much as the rest of the world. Bourgois says Puerto Rican crack dealers in NY City are caught in a technological time warp. They have developed mainstream American definitions of survival needs as well as emotional ideas of job and job satisfaction (2008:609). This is just as true for Lakota people on the reservation. They are interested in the same things that other Americans are; having a steady and secure job, traveling the world, buying nice things, meeting new people, and making money, yet some also want to hold on their traditional ways. The military provides these things for many Lakota people; a chance to live in the modern capitalist economy while still participating in valued ceremonies and rituals upon returning home. However, Lakota veterans also face many challenges when they return from military service, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RETURNING HOME: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR REINTEGRATING TO SOCIETY

"In short, Native American Vietnam veterans have experienced both the spirit-wounding trauma of combat and the highly stressful adjustment to civilian life". (Holm 1995:83)

While many American veterans face difficulties returning to civilian life, Lakota veterans face even more challenges. They are generally returning to Pine Ridge where there is little to no economy or access to VA resources, and like other veterans, some turn to drugs and alcohol to self medicate. For example, according to Gross, "in 1991 American Indians discharged from Veterans Affairs hospitals had a 46.3 percent rate of substance abuse compared to 23.4 percent for all veterans [and] Ninety-seven percent of American Indian veterans' substance abuse problems were with alcohol" (2007: 376). This, coupled with the economic difficulties they face, makes it very difficult for Lakota veterans to return to society as functioning, healthy adults. Some of the challenges my

informants on Pine Ridge face are lack of employment, alcoholism, PTSD, guilt, shame, and physical and mental illness.

VETERAN IDENTITY

Before I can discuss how Lakota veterans on Pine Ridge reintegrate to society and the ceremonies in which they participate, it is imperative to discuss just what it means to be a "veteran". O'Neill describes how Plains Indian veterans often view their world based on "promoting the family good and honor, but also by the ever-present reminders of the threats historically endured by the tribe - poverty, lack of jobs, and racism, to name a few". She further states how their world view glorifies youth, courage, honor, brotherhood, and tribal community, yet within a "historical context of defeat and limited means for displaying honor" (1999:450). I believe it is within this context that many veterans view their identity.

On more than one occasion, when I stated that I was at Pine Ridge to interview veterans, people asked what kind of veterans I meant. I learned that there are veterans in the traditional military sense; those that served in the US armed forces. However, there are also veterans of the Wounded Knee Occupation in 1973 and veterans of the

American Indian Movement (AIM). Some veterans I spoke with are veterans of all of these, or have family members who are. This is important, I believe, because it highlights the internal battle many Lakota veterans face; the conflict they feel between being Native Americana and being US soldiers. For example, Ed, Alex, Mike, and Bryan all mentioned the importance of resistance and revolutionary movements during the 1970's. For example, Ed stated:

Those were MLK days and we fought to get our religion unbanned by the government due to the nut lobbying missionaries who infested our reservations. I was heavy into that fight- see my books. We eventually won. I participated in and stood up for the Sun Dance 6 years in a row and fought back at the missionaries and their sell out followers who tried to stop us. Our valiant efforts led to the Freedom of Religion act- 1978. (8/25/2008 via email)

I believe participation in events like these helped many of these veterans form strong Lakota identities. It is important to note that six out of sixteen people I interviewed were sent to boarding schools in the 1950's and 60's. I believe that the boarding school experience, growing up on the reservation during a revolutionary time, and being in the military has made it difficult for many of my participants to know who they really are. Many are yearning for stability in their lives, and as Bryan stated, some veterans may need to learn how to "walk a balanced Indian and Non-Indian life". While some, such as Frank M,

are attracted to a more modern life, others such as Bryan, Pete, and Alex, tell me they yearn for a more traditional life. While some are able to combine the two lives, others are struggling with this balance.

O'Neill discusses this imbalance and states that while many Plains Indian veterans are able to return the reservation, find jobs, marry, raise children, and becoming leaders in their community, others struggle with isolation, fear that they may be dangerous to their friends and family, as well as a loss of faith (1999:450). She describes how, like some of the veterans I interviewed, many returned from their service and "live crazy, sad lives punctuated by the arrival of welfare checks, nonstop drinking, fighting, [and] sickness" (1999:450). This is supported by Mike, who described how "There is a lot of shame for men (veterans), they come back and abuse their wives. A lot of men face abuse charges and there is a lot of sexual assault".

The notion of veteran identity is also something that Holmes discusses (1995). He describes how veterans often identify themselves in the same way other people do in terms of their profession, ethnic groups, or political affiliation (1995:84). And while some veterans are able to separate their personal identity from that of someone who

served in war or the military, others have trouble understanding themselves as anything but a veteran. I would argue however, that this may be representative of all veterans, both Indian and non-Indian. However, I think when combined with the warrior tradition, there may be stronger than normal connection to the veteran identity. In fact, several interviewees referred to veterans in the Lakota word for warrior, "Akicita". Holmes further describes how, "In tribal societies, the ceremonies of cleansing and honoring essentially provide a means by which the entire community intellectually shares the experience and absorbs the trauma" (1995:84). The ways in which these ceremonies accomplish this will be discussed further.

ECONOMY

Other barriers my informants, and other Indian veterans face, is the poverty, lack of economy, and unemployment on Pine Ridge. It was very hard for many to leave the disciplined life of the military and return to Pine Ridge, yet they do because, as Daryl stated, "It's home". Additionally, Frank M also stated that despite the hardships of reservation life, there is "Something about Indians, they gravitate towards the rez. Its home and people just go there."

However, when they do return home, they face several economic difficulties. Besides the lack of jobs, there is also the politics of the reservation that my participants felt prevented them from taking or keeping jobs for which they were qualified. They stated if they didn't want to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and if no jobs were available with the tribe, one of the last options was to be a tribal police officer. Of the sixteen people I interviewed, twelve currently live on the reservation and six either have or had jobs with the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Two were tribal police officers.

ALCOHOLISM

Perhaps one of the biggest barriers for veterans is the rampant alcoholism, which affects about 9 out of 10 families on the reservation (Schwartz 2006). Though the reservation is dry, the town of White Clay, NB, located about 3 miles outside of Pine Ridge, regularly sells alcohol to reservation residents. In fact, in 2007, nearly 12,000 cans of beer a day were transported from Whiteclay, NB (pop 14) to Pine Ridge Reservation (Abourezk 2006). According to reporter Kevin Abourezk:

In June 2005, 15 Nebraska senators signed a letter calling upon the state to do more to address what they called the devastation caused by alcohol sales in the

border town. The letter pointed fingers at both those who drink and buy alcohol in Whiteclay, and at the state of Nebraska for licensing alcohol sales within 200 feet of a reservation that allows neither the sale nor consumption of alcohol (Lincoln Journal Star 2006).

Though there has been protest about these stores over the years and outrage surrounding the lack of oversight, by both Indian activists and non-native groups, Pine Ridge residents still frequent White Clay's liquor stores. Many activists, both Indian and non-native, believe that it is wrong for these stores to sell alcohol to reservation residents. Further, although it is legal for reservation residents to buy alcohol in Whiteclay, many alcohol related offences including public consumption, public intoxication, selling to intoxicated people, or minors, and buying alcohol on credit, are not prosecuted vigorously.

I believe the presence of liquor stores is detrimental to the reservation residents on two levels. First, Lakota people are bringing illegal alcohol back to the reservation where it is fueling the alcoholism epidemic and second, over \$4 million dollars a year are leaving both the reservation and the state. On a personal note, I witnessed people buying alcohol in Whiteclay and consuming it on the reservation on a number of occasions. I found it very difficult to know what my role as anthropology student was.

If I accepted a beer, was I helping to perpetuate the endless cycle or was I enjoying a beer with a friend? Was I condoning illegal behavior, even if I did not purchase or consume alcohol? Did I even have the right to judge people who chose to drink? It was a tough choice to make, and one that I often struggled with.

Alcoholism is discussed extensively in the literature. Woody Kipp, in his autobiography *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee* (2004), describes his battle with alcoholism upon returning home from Vietnam and throughout his experience in the American Indian Movement (AIM). Sherman Alexie (2005), a Spokane Indian poet and novelist, often writes about alcoholism on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Though he has been criticized and "vilified in certain circles for my alcohol-soaked stories", he says he wrote them because he was "a poor Indian growing up in an alcoholic family on an alcoholic reservation" (2005: xviii). In other words, his poems and stories reflect the reality of many Indian reservations today, including Pine Ridge. Dr. Beatrice Medicine, a Lakota anthropologist and professor, discussed alcoholism from a native perspective in *Drinking and Sobriety among the Lakota Sioux* (2007). She states that performing "yet another research project" on the Lakota was painful for her because "dependency and despondency are

salient features that have been attributed to American Indian people under consideration" (Medicine 2007:8). With this in mind, the goal of her study was to develop new coping strategies that would benefit the Lakota people.

Nearly every veteran I interviewed stated that he or she suffered from alcoholism. For example, in Mike's own words:

Dawn: So what did you do when you left the military?

Mike: When I left the military, I was a drunk.

Dawn: I hear that a lot, so don't feel bad.

Mike: Yeah, that was just...

Dawn: Self medication?

Mike: It's, how do you say, depression?

Dawn: Uh huh

Mike: It was depression a lot of us came back with, a jobless country. From my teachings, and from my growing up, my dad always said, you gotta learn to work; you gotta get out there to work, and make a living. If you don't do it, you'll die of starvation or you'll die as a drunk. I guess I stayed drunk for about a month after I got out of the military, then I went to work.

While some have become sober, it is a long, hard battle, and the fact that they have little or no access to resources such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) makes it all the more difficult. Also, AA's perceived religious philosophy makes it difficult for non-Christian veterans to participate in. To some, it is yet another act of

missionization and acculturation. Although AA is not, strictly speaking, a Christian organization, the veterans I worked with did associate it with Christianity and often rejected it for that reason.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Like alcoholism, PTSD is often discussed among scholars and veterans alike. According to Frank M. at the Homeless Veterans Clinic on Pine Ridge, even veterans who have not served in combat have PTSD, due to other stress and tragedies in their lives. This statement was supported in both my pre-thesis and thesis research; some of my informants stated that they suffered from PTSD even though they had not been in combat. Rather, they said that the stress of being in the military and the other situations in their lives caused them to develop the illness.

Holm analyzed PTSD in the essay "PTSD in Native American Vietnam Veterans: A Reassessment" (1995). He states that PTSD among Native American Vietnam Veterans is quite common, and often severe. Holm describes how nearly 80 percent of Native Vietnam Veterans suffered from depression, about 77 percent reported sleep intrusions, and about 71 percent dealt with feelings of rage. According to

Holm, the veterans also reported that these feelings led to substance abuse, including alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and barbiturates (1995:83).

Holm attributes the high rate of PTSD to the disproportionate number of American Indians that serve in the military. For example, he believes that low education, high unemployment levels, and low test scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Examinations, placed native soldiers "in non-technical military operations, thereby enhancing their chances of being assigned to infantry or direct infantry support units and see combat duty" (1995:83). While this was not an unusual placement for soldiers with lower skill and education level, Holm also believes that the stereotypical roles native soldiers were placed in during any war, such as scouts or long range reconnaissance patrols, placed them in more danger (1995:83).

It should be noted, however, that Holm's opinion that Native soldiers being placed in low level, yet highly dangerous positions, contradicts Barsh, who stated that many Indian soldiers were actually placed in highly technical roles, such as engineers and pilots. It is my opinion that both authors are partly right. For example, Indians who were recruited or drafted from reservations may have entered the service with lower skill and education

level, thus supporting Holms, while those recruited from urban areas or from boarding schools may have entered the service with higher education and skills levels, thus supporting Barsh. Like any topic regarding Native Americans, I believe it is important not to homogenize the group and allow room for all situations and possible considerations.

While the horrors of combat are hard for any soldier to adjust to, returning to reservation life, with limited access to healthcare and VA resources may have made the transition more difficult for some Indian soldiers.

BARRIERS TO THE VA

American Indian veterans, such as the Lakota I worked with, deal with a number of barriers to VA care that are unique to their situation (Gross 2007:377). According to a study performed by Joseph Westermeyer et al. (2002), the top five barriers to VA care, as reported by Upper Midwest American Indian veterans, include:

1. The VA system being difficult to use.
2. The VA system having no outreach to American Indian veterans.
3. American Indian veterans lacking resources to access the VA.

4. American Indian veterans distrusting the VA system.
5. The VA system not being in American Indian communities. (Gross 2007:377)

I heard nearly every one of these reasons during my interviews, but number 5 was particularly common. The VA, as well as state and other federal resources for veterans, are often located miles away from the reservation. For example, the nearest VA Hospital and State Veteran's home are, at the shortest distance, 60 miles away, and at the furthest distance, over 200 miles from Manderson and Pine Ridge, where I conducted the majority of my interviews. For this reason alone, many of my informants were unable to take advantage of VA resources.

Additionally, I was told by both Pete and Bryan that the VA is a revolving door and that they have been unable to receive the care they need, whether for disability benefits, counseling, or mental health services. According to Bryan, "The VA hospital's treatment program became a revolving door, and it wasn't getting me nowhere". This sentiment may actually reflect their dissatisfaction with previous VA care experiences, rather than lack of faith in the VA itself. For example, if the treatments they had received on previous occasions didn't work, the cost of

going to the VA is greater than the benefit they perceive they will receive from going.

The lack of faith, access to VA resources, as well as previous negative experiences, can lead veterans to self medicate with drugs and alcohol, which in turn tears apart families, causes people to lose their jobs, perpetuates abuse, and can ultimately lead to homelessness. However, in 2004, a \$503,620 grant was received to build the Homeless Veterans clinic in Pine Ridge (<http://johnson.senate.gov/sd/county/shannon.cfm>). During the summer of 2008, when I was conducting interviews on Pine Ridge, I visited this Clinic. It was a small building across the street from the Oglala Sioux Tribal Building, and helped homeless veterans learn about and apply for disability and VA benefits, as well as offer a place to stay while in transition.

Frank M, employed by the Homeless Veterans Clinic, says that many veterans just don't know what resources are available to them. He states how difficult it is to get benefits from the VA and that Lakota veterans often give up on the process. O'Neill supports this sentiment when she describes how Tony, the Vietnam veteran she worked with, also had trouble navigating the VA, "in part because he

found himself unable to endure their bureaucratic procedures". She further states that many Indian veterans, in general, have a difficult time "negotiating the system in order to claim their benefits" (1999:446). Frank M's role is to help Lakota veterans work through the frustrations mentioned above, so that they get the benefits they deserve. He also mentioned how his organization is working to honor all veterans with medals for their service, including female veterans, whom he refers to as "warrior-ettes".

Interestingly, Frank M also mentioned how it is difficult for the veterans he works with to receive benefits because many will not acknowledge, or are not aware, of their illnesses. This includes both mental and physical illnesses, but particularly PTSD. He believes this is because of the stigma attached to mental illness, something that is reflected in society at large (Westermeyer et.al. 2220: I-70). He believes that many of the veterans, particularly combat veterans, keep their emotions bottled up inside and do not feel comfortable talking to someone who has not served in combat or "been in their shoes".

Faced with these barriers, it is no wonder that many of my informants, particularly the combat veterans, began

to seek alternative methods. In some cases, such as with Pete, Jerry, and Bryan, they needed help combating alcoholism and/or substance abuse. For some, lack of faith in the VA and the government drove them to seek alternative healing methods for mental and physical trauma and PTSD. These healing and honoring methods, (some used in lieu of VA resources and some in conjunction) such as the sweat lodge, Sun Dance, horse rides, Pow Wows, and "wiping of the tears" will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PARTICIPATION IN WARRIOR RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

In this chapter, I will discuss the ceremonies and rituals the veterans I interviewed participated in. While these are not the only healing and honoring ceremonies that Lakota veterans practice, these are the ones most often discussed, and include the sweat lodge, Pow Wow, Sun Dance, "wiping of the tears", and horseback rides.

SWEAT LODGE

By far, the most discussed activity practiced by my informants was the sweat lodge, also referred to as the *inipi*. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is a ceremony that was practiced in the pre-reservation era and continues to be practiced today. There is a vast amount of literature regarding the sweat lodge, much more than other ceremonies I will be discussing. Though the sweat lodge was a customarily male ceremony, more and more women have recently been participating. Some even hold their own sweats, though many follow traditional protocol and do not participate when they are menstruating.

On a personal note, I was lucky enough to go to a sweat when I first visited Pine Ridge in 1999 and again in 2008. However, the experiences were incredibly different and attest to the fact everyone does it their own way. Since I was lucky enough to attend two sweats with veterans from Pine Ridge, I am able to speak to the healing nature of these ceremonies from a personal standpoint.

In the early twentieth century, Charles Eastman and Wilson Wallis both described the almost universal use of the sweat lodge, by both US and Canadian tribes (1999:32-33). Interestingly, Eastman, a Dakota man who was trained on the East Coast and worked as a physician on Pine Ridge during the Wounded Knee Massacre, also compared the sweat lodge to a Christian baptism (1999:33). While this may have been due to his education and upbringing on the East Coast (thus, not by his Dakota family), Bucko states it may also have to do with the way Native Americans used to draw parallels between their practices and Christianity in an attempt to legitimize, and therefore continue practicing them (1999:34).

Despite the fact that missionization and Christianization have certainly affected many portions of the sweat lodge (for example, one veteran included Christian prayers at the sweat I attended), aspects such as

cleansing, healing, and purifying are still prevalent today. While the topics prayed about inside the sweat have changed and now include prayers to help with alcoholism, substance abuse, warfare, economic difficulties, and other contemporary issues, the central notion of cleansing and purifying oneself is evident (Bucko 1991:59). For example, when my friend's son was very sick during the summer of 2008, she and her female relatives held a sweat in his honor in order to help heal him. They also took him to see a medical doctor in Pine Ridge. Their use of the sweat was another attempt to help him get better when the hospital visits and medications weren't working. It is my belief that this is an example of what Bucko refers to as "return to the power of the past and an addressing of present needs, which are combined to create tradition" (1999:41).

Bucko discusses another interesting concept, which he refers to as "cultural purification" (Bucko 1999:41). The veterans I spent time with were well aware that this ritual was performed before the Europeans came and that it has changed throughout the years, yet it has continued to be a significant part of their lives. Even the VA Hospital in Hot Springs utilizes a sweat lodge for both their native and non-native veterans.

Gross discusses the sweat lodge extensively in "Assisting American Indian Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan Cope with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" (2007). He states that the sweat lodge is an important ritual practiced by the Lakota, one that may help enable the veterans to "reformulate their memories from being a source of anguish to being a wellspring of pride" (2007:379). For example, he argues that going through these ceremonies is "a way for veterans to purge the taint of war and so make the possible reintegration into society...thus helping to give meaning and purpose to their sacrifice" (2007:379).

The sweat lodge aids in the process of reintegration to society in a number of ways. First, it incorporates cultural practices that encourage a sense of "release, rebirth, and personal renewal of spirit" (Gross 2007: 379), such as group songs that allow the warrior to express themselves as an individual returning from war. Second, the sweat lodge offers psychobiological effects by producing altered states of consciousness that "bring about a positive mood state" (2007:380). While intensely emotional, the physical effects are similar to that of a sauna; you are symbolically sweating out the imperfections, stresses, and negative energy. When you leave a sweat, similar to when you leave a sauna, your skin feels clean and clear and

your body and mind feel relaxed. By acting as a holistic ritual for healing the "wounds of the body, mind and heart" (Gross 2007:381), the sweat lodge allows veterans to return to society as a positively transformed individual.

Most important, Gross states, is how the ritual maintains and strengthens human connections and bonds, particularly for veterans, by reestablishing the connection between the veterans and their communities. Gross believes that "the sweat lodge ritual makes it possible to transform the warriors and return them to society as vital functioning contributors to the overall good of the community" (2007: 380).

Gross's ideas are clearly supported by my informants. For example, seven of the veterans I interviewed stated that the sweat lodge helped them reintegrate to society by helping (along with other practices) them become sober, reconnect with their heritage, and express their feelings. For example, Daryl stated that he participates in the sweat lodge because "You let out what you have been holding in, what you have seen and encountered", which he said helps him to relieve stress. Bryan told me that he participates in and holds his sweat lodge for his own well being, as well as for the other veterans who attend. He believes that he was called to become a spiritual healer, and after many

years of drug and alcohol abuse and jail, has found his calling back on Pine Ridge running his sweat ceremony. He stated that he enjoys speaking his Lakota language, bonding with other veterans, and passing the ritual on to others.

Pete stated that "the sweat lodge is the main thing that kept me focused" in recent years. He has been going to Bryan's sweat twice a week for five years and believes that he "would be locked up or dead" if it wasn't for the sweat lodge. Pete stated that attending the sweat lodge has helped him deal with feelings of forgiveness, shame, loss of loved ones, and grief. He believes he has "found his purpose" by attending the sweat, mainly because the veterans who attend are "all there to help each other". Additionally, Pete stated that he had been in VA treatment for alcoholism seven times, and it was only when he started attending the veterans' sweat lodge that he was able to become sober. It is important to note however, that he also stated that all the different approaches helped in some small way. It was only when he used "his own way" (attending the sweat after years of VA treatment), that he was able to succeed.

Richard, who was a social worker at the Hot Springs VA, worked with many Native American patients, and though he had to "jump through hoops", he was finally able to

construct a sweat lodge for the VA out-patients in 1992, which was conducted by his adopted Lakota brother, Dewey Braveheart. Richard discussed how this sweat was open to anyone, and that even some nuns and priests would attend this "humbling experience". In his own words, Richard also describes how the sweat lodge ceremony helped a non-Lakota friend of his who was a Vietnam veteran:

A friend of mine, who was a Colonel in the army, had three tours in Vietnam, was a ranger airborne, and was engaged in firefights in Vietnam. He wrote me, emailed me, and by then he was a PhD. Superintendant of schools in Massachusetts. He's superintendant of schools in Tempe, AZ now. I had to go up there to run some sweats, teach him how to do it.

Anyway, he wrote me, emailed me, and because I had been telling him about my son's ceremony (Richard's son had participated in a sweat lodge when he returned from Iraq), and he said, 'I've never told anyone this, but the first time I was in Vietnam, I was with the Montagnards' (like American Indians there, aborigines). He said 'We were out in the boonies, I sent my Sergeant with half the soldiers to the left around this hill and I went to the right. And he ran into the VC and he got killed.' And he said 'For over 20 years I've carried that with me. If I had gone that way, the Sergeant would be alive'. He said 'Do you think such a ceremony would help me?' I said sure, so we set up a ceremony for Andy, that was his name.

And he and his wife flew out here, and Nathan Chasing Horse (Medicine Man on Pine Ridge) came with his singers and we had a special sweat for Andy. And in the sweat lodge, Nathan said, there are four parts to a man, and Andy left one part of him in Vietnam, so we're going to bring that part back tonight and reunite him. And he did. Andy has a very important job, as a school superintendant. And he's totally relaxed. And what he did after that, he went back to Mass, and he built a sweat lodge in his yard. So I flew up there and taught him how to conduct a sweat.

Gave him all the necessary materials including a pipe, sweet grass, sage, cedar, bear grease. You said you wanted to know how we do things, normally I don't discuss this.

Dawn: It's perfect. And bear grease is?

RG: Bear grease we use in the healing round in the sweat lodge. We rub it wherever we might ache, hurt or have a pain. And we're healed, we're fixed. So we had that ceremony for Andy and it took care of him after 20 years of hurting, emotionally hurting.

When asked why he thinks these ceremonies help veterans so much, Richard stated that they "spiritually help veterans because they believe in it". Perhaps it is this faith in the ceremony, combined with the biological (for example, Frank S (interviewed 7/15/2008), stated that the sweat lodge helps your "bones and lungs") and psychological effects, which make the sweat ceremony such an enduring and powerful ritual. From personal experience, the bonds created in such an environment (extreme heat and intense emotion along with rhythmic drumming and chanting) are quite strong. As Gross states, it may be that "reestablishing the connection of the veteran with other members of the community and with the culture as a whole" (2007:381) is what makes the sweat lodge such an important ceremony.

POW WOWS

My experience with Pow Wows ranges from attending these events in Massachusetts as a child to attending them in Central Texas and on the Pine Ridge Reservation as an adult. During my stay on Pine Ridge, I attended two Pow Wows. One was a small community Pow Wow in Batesland SD and the other a large, three day event in the town of Pine Ridge called the Oglala Nation Pow Wow. In her essay "Performative Power in Native America: Powwow Dancing", Ann Axtmann (2001), describes the Pow Wow:

Throughout the United States and Canada people go to Native American intertribal powwows. At powwows women, men, and children execute rhythmic movement, drumming, and song as they experience and express sensory stimuli. The aroma of sage incense pervades as Indians and non-Indians socialize, share fry bread, and sell, buy, or "window shop" at concession stands. Vendors display T-shirts, fur, turquoise, silver, and beaded jewelry as well as artwork, CDs, and Ecuadorian and Peruvian items. All participants enjoy storytelling, comedy skits, Indian rap and country music performances, and Mexican "Aztec" dance presentations along- side rituals such as giveaways, the Eagle ceremony, or the Veterans dance. These social and spiritual celebrations occur in increasing numbers across North America.
(2001:7)

This is a fairly accurate representation of the Pow Wows I attended on Pine Ridge, excluding (perhaps) the Ecuadorian and Peruvian items. From personal experience, most Pow Wows are set up in the same way, with an inner circle devoted to dancers, an outer arbor for family

visitors to sit, an MC, a drumming circle, and the vendors located just outside of the circle.

At the Batesland Pow Wow, a *hunka*, or adoption ceremony, was performed, the first and only one I have witnessed. At the Oglala Nation Pow Wow, there was a campground, barrel racing, carnival, games, and vendors, among many other activities. While these Pow Wows varied in size and activities, the general agenda and purpose were very similar. Both Pow Wows had an arena, food, an MC, gourd dancers, a veterans' parade and dance, as well as the distribution of gifts. The gourd dance is described in detail by James Howard in his essay, "The Plains Gourd Dance as a Revitalization Movement" (1976). Though the gourd dance is not indigenous to the Sioux people, it has become a sort of Pan-Indian dance performed at most Pow Wows:

The "Gourd Dance," which was formerly performed exclusively by certain warrior societies of the Plains, has recently become very popular with Native Americans over a wide area. In its recent manifestations it is largely secular and intertribal in nature, and it has spread to many groups whose ancestors never performed the ceremony. (Howard 1976:243)

Originally derived from the Kiowa culture, it consists of dancers, in elaborate attire, carrying gourds or rattles and dancing in a circle in the center of the Pow Wow arena.

According to Calloway, aspects of the Sun Dance, which was seen as a "heathenish practice" by Christians and was banned in 1904, were transferred to the gourd dance, which was not outlawed, in order to "evade government regulations and [as an] opportunity to hold dances" (2008:376). During the Pine Ridge Pow Wows I attended, only male veterans danced the gourd dance. However, women did march in the veterans' parade.

The veterans dance is a time specifically for veterans and their family members to enter the Pow Wow circle and dance. Many veterans wear their fatigues and military regalia, but this is not required (Axtmann 2001:19). In addition to being invited to participate in the veterans dance, veterans are highly recognized and honored throughout the Pow Wow; Watching a veteran's parade and dance is always very interesting. For example, there are those who dance in traditional regalia, while others simply march in their uniform. Many incorporate their military symbols into their regalia (see Fig. 8), while others have costumes made to look like the American flag (see Fig. 9), which is always carried, along with the tribal flags (see Fig. 10). It is obvious in the way the veterans carry themselves, as well as what was told to me,

that there is an intense feeling of pride and honor, particularly among the combat veterans.



Figure 8: American Flag



Figure 9: Military Symbols



Figure 10: American and Tribal Flags

I believe the Pow Wow is an important part of the healing process for veterans. According to Gross, the Pow Wow heals PTSD by creating a:

powerful sense of community identity. [The Pow Wow] is a way for the community to demonstrate the value they place on combat veterans, it expresses appreciation for the veterans combat experience and brings those experiences to the surface" (Gross 2007).

Gross also describes how the Pow Wow helps reaffirm the "warrior's" new place in society, provides an opportunity for group support, and "underlines the bond existing between the community and those who might be warriors in the future by demonstrating the nature of support", particularly for combat veterans (Gross 2007:382). All these factors point towards the healing nature of Pow Wows and confirms why the veterans I spoke with placed such value on the Pow Wow experience.

One question I asked during most of my interviews was how Lakota veterans felt about non-Indians being invited in and honored at Pow Wows. I asked this because my preliminary research found that non-Indian veterans are sometimes invited to Pow Wows throughout the country. For example, in the *Wichita Eagle* article "Dance of Honor", Fernandez (2007) describes how non-Indian veterans, police officers, and fire fighters are revered as modern day warriors at the Wichita-Kansas Pow Wows. The Wichita-Kansas Intertribal Warrior Society honors both male and female veterans from WWII through the Iraq and Afghanistan war. According to Fernandez, attendants claim that these Pow Wows also help non-native veterans readjust to civilian life by helping the veteran feel honored, appreciated, and respected by their community.

Most of my informants stated that they did not have a problem with non-native veterans being honored at Pow Wows because they felt that all veterans should be honored, regardless of their ethnic or cultural affiliation. For example, Wanda said that she is "Ok with it because we were all in the military and war together". Incidentally, she also felt that female veterans should be able to participate in the gourd dance because they "earned the right" through their service in the military. Daryl also stated that it was ok for non-native veterans to participate because he felt all veterans should be able to "participate in anything that will help an individual" heal.

When I asked Alex how he felt about non-native veterans participating in Pow Wows, he had an interesting perspective. He not only saw the value of the Pow Wows for the veterans, but also for the tourists who visit the reservation and attend these events (from 8/7/08 interview):

Dawn: I have realized how much more honoring ceremonies Indians have than non-Indians. What do you think of this?

Alex's Answer: I see that (honoring veterans) happening at all the Pow Wows. When they (the Lakota) have the veteran honoring ceremony, they ask the tourists (non-Indians) to join and they have tears and say "This is wonderful". They feel magnificent, grown men are crying.

Dawn: Do you think that is ok?

Alex: Yes because they (non-Indians) are using our ceremonies to honor them. Veterans are considered honorable so they deserve to be honored. It's good to be Lakota because these honorings happen all the time. People who have suffered need attention by the community in order to get better, but American veterans don't have that opportunity. We (Lakota) still believe in extended family.

I found this answer to be particularly insightful about American society. This was also supported by Frank M, from the Homeless Veterans Center on Pine Ridge. When asked about the value of attending Pow Wows, he stated that "Yes, they have even had some white guys go through sweats and powwow honoring. Afterwards they (the non-Indian veterans) say, 'It's the first time anyone has recognized that I went to Vietnam'."

SUN DANCES

In addition to Pow Wows and sweat lodges, many Lakota veterans also participate in Sun Dances. Sun Dances are intense ceremonies, often lasting up to five days, where dancers fast, sweat, pray, and dance for hours in the summer heat and sun. One of the main aspects of the ceremony is to pierce your flesh with wooden hooks attached to a pole called the center tree. According to Bryan, the significance of the piercing is to show that you are

willing to make a sacrifice for your family and community. The center tree is cut down in a nearby area, which is a ceremony in itself, and then erected in the center of the Sun Dance circle. A covered outer circle is also erected for elders, children, and the dancer's supporters (usually females and relatives, but outside visitors are sometimes invited to attend).

This ceremony has been practiced among Plains Indians since the 1800's and according to Lincoln (1994), the Sioux Sun Dance was originally held in conjunction with the buffalo hunting season. Throughout most of the year, pre-reservation Lakota lived in small clans or extended families called *tiospayes*, and "Only when the buffalo formed large herds during their mating season, at the height of the summer, did the nation assemble as a whole, at which time they also celebrated their foremost rituals" (Lincoln 1994:4). Thus, historically, this was a time for the Lakota to celebrate family, community, the buffalo, as well as the summer solstice.

Though the Sun Dance was banned in the late 1800's, along with many other religious ceremonies, it continued to be practiced "underground" on the reservation, according to Bryan. Lincoln suggests that while the original focus on the buffalo may have changed, the:

symbolic considerations continue to make themselves felt, for not only do the Lakota assert a connection to their past by celebrating their rituals on the same schedule as did their ancestors, but also it is one of the participants' chief goals to reconnect themselves to the energy and power that are manifest in the sun at that time of the year when it stands at its highest. (1994:5)

Six, of the sixteen veterans, I interviewed actively participate in the Sun Dance. Of the sixteen, one female veteran, Melanie, stated that she doesn't participate because she feels it is not something that females should participate in. Since my original focus was primarily on Pow Wows and sweat lodges, I did not start asking my interviewees about Sun Dances until after I attended one in June of 2008. Therefore, the five people I interviewed before I attended one myself may or may not have participated.

On a personal note, I was not familiar with the Sun Dance ceremony at all until I was invited to one on the reservation. Like many other ceremonies on the reservation, these are not all open to the public. I was able to attend one by invitation, and was one of only a couple non-Indians in attendance. This was an incredibly overwhelming experience to witness. The one I attended lasted five days, and I was lucky enough to witness it from the beginning (the collection of the tree) all the way through to the

end. The one I attended only allowed males to pierce themselves, but females danced with the men. Most of the dancers stayed in teepees or tents on the Sun Dance ground, attended sweat lodges, and fasted. For people not dancing, food was offered every morning and evening. This is significant because, like nearly every other event I attended, food was almost always shared with everyone. Despite the poverty on the reservation, the people I spent time with were incredibly generous and gregarious.

When asked why they participate in Sun Dances, my interviewees stated that it helped them fulfill a sense of community, spirituality, and culture. According to Alex, attending one is really "kind of like paying homage to life". In other words, the aspect of sacrifice, that is so central to the Sun Dance ceremony (hence, the flesh piercing), is relevant to modern day veterans. Historically, piercing one's flesh was an important component of the ceremony for warriors. According to Lincoln:

In earlier times, piercing was understood to be part of a warrior's training, steeling him to hardship and enacting a drama of capture by enemies, bondage and torture at their hands, and, finally, escape. To this day, it remains a means by which people prove their courage and endurance, winning thereby the respect of those who watch them dance, as well as those who later see the impressive scars that mark them indelibly and unmistakably as Sun dancers. (1994:8)

Another important aspect of the Sun Dance, according to Bryan, is "unselfishness". After receiving a vision to Sun Dance, a dancer should then act humble until and during (and theoretically after) the Sun Dance. By fasting and piercing in extreme heat, the dancer is showing reverence and commitment to their family; "They must be very unselfish to suffer for the whole world" (Bryan).

According to Richard, who is not a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, but has been participating in Sun Dances and sweat lodges on the reservation for nearly 30 years, attending the Sun Dance is a way for veterans to pray for the good of the people and the tribe; "They (veterans) have nothing to offer but ourselves and that's what they do". Richard also discussed the numerous visions he has had at Sun Dances, including spirits of friends and family who have passed on.

The Sun Dance ceremony, like the sweat lodge, is meant to be an intensely emotional ceremony. Like the sweat lodge, there is a chance to express emotions associated with military service and combat, such as grief, anger, guilt and stress. The ceremony is designed to show sacrifice (through the fasting and piercing), and for many

of the veterans, may be a way for them to reconcile the various emotions they feel.

ADDITIONAL CEREMONIES

There are four additional activities that my interviewees discussed, which they believed helped them reintegrate back to society. These include the Native American Church (NA Church), music, horse rides, and the "Wiping of the Tears" ceremony. Only Frank S (interviewed 7/15/2008) stated that he was a member of the NA Church, and that he found it useful as way to return to society after serving in combat. However, he also stated that music and prayer, along with the NA Church, sweat lodge ceremonies, and the veterans dance at Pow Wows, all helped him. While I don't doubt that music has helped many Lakota veterans, he was the only one to specifically list it as a healing mechanism.

On the reservation, there are horse rides the way there are charity motorcycle or bicycle rides in mainstream American society. For example, there are benefit rides for people who are in need (help with medical bills for disability perhaps) as well in memory or honor of loved ones who have passed. There are rides to raise awareness for social issues as well as to acknowledge historical

events. Perhaps the two best organized horse rides are the Crazy Horse Memorial Ride and the Big Foot Memorial Ride, also known as the Future Generations Youth Ride.

The Crazy Horse Ride from Fort Robinson to Pine Ridge has been held every summer for the past twelve years, and usually consists of about 200-250 riders (Axtell 2009). According to Axtell, "Brewer [the ride's organizer] says it's stirring to see the reaction of veterans when the riders go past carrying the American flag, a POW/MIA flag, and their Eagle staff to emphasize the togetherness of the communities and the shared sacrifices of all veterans". In addition to the Crazy Horse Ride, The Big Foot Ride "has been made the past 23 years to honor the more than 250 men, women and children shot here Dec. 29, 1890, by the U.S. 7th Cavalry in the Wounded Knee massacre" (<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-19628214.html>). Several of the White Plume family members, whom I spent a great deal of time with, participate in this ride every year.

In addition to these formal rides, Alex, Mike, Daryl, and Bryan, all participated in veteran rides. Like the Sun Dance, this was not an occurrence I initially focused on, but rather began asking about after I realized that it was a fairly common activity. According to Daryl, who is not a combat veteran, but spent 16 years in the military,

participating in horseback rides was "More of a healing process than anything else". He goes on to describe how "Only Lakota was spoken; it was a way to maintain tradition and heritage. Time didn't exist. Men, women, and children all came along." He also stated how the rides were the "best healing environment because you could come home and speak and re-learn the [Lakota] language. It was healing all the way around." Additionally, Alex and Mike both stated that horse rides are important for veterans because they are a way for the veteran to reconnect with their family (particularly by teaching their children how to ride and take care of horses) and other veterans. On the reservation, horses still have the right of way on the main roads, and many people take better care of their horses than their dogs (from interview with Mike and from personal observation).

From personal experience, and according to the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA), horse rides can be very therapeutic. The AHA states that therapeutic horse riding is utilized in a number of professions, such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language pathology. Proponents of Hippotherapy describe how the rhythmic gait of the horse replicates the human gait and

can "address impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities in patients with neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction", among other things (<http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org/ahahpotool.htm>). Used for both physical and mental disabilities, therapeutic horse riding has been endorsed by the American Occupational Therapy Association as well as the American Physical Therapy Association (<http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org/ahacliendorsement.htm>).

Horse rides are also a way for the older generations to pass along tradition and culture to the younger generations. Perhaps most important, as Mike, stated, horseback riding helps teach the younger generation responsibility and independence.

The second ceremony that was less discussed, but still one I believe to be important, is the "Wiping of the Tears" ceremony, which was discussed by Alex, Mike, and Bryan. Since I was not originally aware of this ceremony, I did not ask all my interviewees about it. Therefore, others may have participated without my knowledge. According to Alex, who also referred to this ceremony as the "Grieving Ritual": .

"The 'wiping of the tears' is for stress, and pain. You get pain when you Sundance or lose someone, etc. This causes trauma and makes you abnormal. So this ceremony makes you cry to release the stress, the negative energy and he can be a happy, well respected member of society again. We cried hard and it felt so good afterwards. It takes the whole community, so it only happens for some people."

It should be noted that I had a difficult time finding a consistent definition for the "Wiping of the Tears" ceremony. According to George Blue Bird, the ceremony is "is very important because it unites the spirits of our dead relatives and lets them pass on to the world up above. In this ceremony we gather the family and the relatives of those who are deceased, and we release the dead through prayer, memorial songs, food, tobacco, and crying." (2004:255). This is clearly a very different definition than the one given by Alex. Like other things in Lakota culture, or any culture for that matter, people have different ideas about certain practices.

However, the ceremony described by Alex does seem to resemble one practiced on the Navajo reservation called Enemy Way. According to Miller, Enemy Way is:

A form of Navajo therapy that cleanses physically and mentally ill individuals by forcing them to confront their pain" and is "increasingly being used across the American West to help Native American soldiers deal with the traumas of war." (2007)

Like the Enemy Way, the Wiping of the Tears ceremony (according to Alex) is meant to cleanse the body by purging the negative emotions associated with war. The central theory is that the more the veterans confront their traumatizing memories and discuss their emotions, the easier these memories become to deal with (Miller 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

There are many different ways that Lakota veterans on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation heal, are honored, and reintegrate to society. While some utilize the VA system, many feel that the lack of VA centers on or near the reservation make it difficult for them to properly use services. Some feel that the bureaucracy of the VA makes it difficult for them to get the help they need. While the physical, physiological, and psychological benefits of these ceremonies have been discussed, I believe it is the connection to culture that helps the most. Many of the veterans I spoke with, such as Jerry, Bryan, Alex, and Melanie, expressed conflicting emotions; being proud of their military service yet also feeling guilty because they are Native American.

However, I believe that veterans are drawn to these ceremonies and rituals mainly as a way to reconnect with their heritage and culture. As Pete stated, it may be the combination of traditional ceremonies in cooperation with western medicine and VA resources, which are the most help. These combined healing methods are not unique to Pine Ridge however. According to Miller (2007), who writes about the "Enemy Way" ceremony on the Navajo Indian Reservation, American Indian leaders and the US government are teaming up to bring these type of services to Native veterans; combining customary healing practices (such as sweat lodge and drumming ceremonies) with modern psychotherapy and medication. The goal for some reservations is to get rid of medication entirely; while for others it is simply a way to help veterans heal upon returning home. For example, she states that:

While healers on Indian reservations have always employed such methods, the government offers most returning Native American soldiers standard Western psychological counseling and medical help. Now, however, native American leaders and the Department of Veterans Affairs are teaming up to use both approaches in hopes of better serving the needs of Indian soldiers." (Miller 2007)

In general, veterans on Pine Ridge are highly honored and respected. They are always the first to be recognized

and thanked, whether at a Pow Wow or Sun Dance, and are revered members of their community and families. On the walls of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Building is a banner of names of active duty members along with expressions of thanks and gratitude for their service. At Oglala Lakota College (OLC), there is a memorial dedicated to the Lakota men and women who have served in the military and to those who have lost their lives in combat. The walls of the OLC library are lined with pictures of veterans from WWII to the present.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I review the purpose of this thesis, address several conflicts on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and discuss the practical and applied application of this work. To recap, the purpose of this thesis was to analyze the use of healing and honoring ceremonies practiced by Lakota veterans on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I interviewed veterans who were drafted into the service and also those who volunteered for the military. Those interviewed served in the Army, Marines, and Navy. Each participant had different reasons for joining, ranging from family history to the need for a stable job to the desire to be a modern day warrior. Some, such as Alex and Ed, viewed their service as worthwhile and positive, while others, such as Bryan and Jerry, had a more negative experience. However, regardless of their feelings about their military experiences, each veteran I interviewed practiced some sort of healing or honoring

ceremony, though to varying degrees. For example, some veterans attended weekly sweat lodge ceremonies while others participated in the Veterans Dance at pow wows a couple of times a year.

Although many of the veterans I interviewed volunteered for the military, some felt a sense of shame or guilt for serving a country which they believed had betrayed them and/or their ancestors. However, without many other economic opportunities, the military can be an alluring way to provide a stable income, as well as allow the soldier to leave the reservation, see other parts of the world, and meet new people. Additionally, for people who pride themselves on their warrior past, joining the military is an opportunity for those who want to become modern day warriors.

Today, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is a place full of contradictions. It is beautiful, yet toxic, traditional, yet modern. It is not unusual to see someone listening to rap music and watching MTV and then riding a horse to the nearest store. As Alex stated, there is "raw poverty and oppression", yet also a sense of hope for the future. This hope lies, in part, in the resurgence of the Lakota language, the horse culture, and the continued use

of Lakota cultural practices, particularly among the younger generation. Additionally, there are a variety of non-profit organizations dedicated to preserving the Lakota culture and improving the education and economy of the reservation. These organizations include The Lakota Funds and The Oglala Lakota College, to name a few.

There is often a stereotype that all Indians respect the earth and are custodians of their land. However, I found this to be untrue. For example, when I asked why there was so much litter, one veteran stated that "We as Indian people are the worst nationally in trashing our own land" (Mike), yet another told me "It's ok as long as it is paper" (Bryan). Although it is certainly not unusual for people in any society to have such differing viewpoints, I found this to be just one of many disagreements among the Lakota people regarding the way they view their culture. In some instances, these differing viewpoints have led to conflicts and criticisms surrounding many things on the reservation, including the use of traditional ceremonies and rituals. Two conflicts I discuss are the influence of Christianity on Lakota practices and controversies regarding the Sun Dance ceremony.

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES

Before beginning, it is important to note that this is not an attack on the Christian religion, nor the many well intentioned people who have brought Christianity to the reservation. Rather, it is a discussion of how the veterans I interviewed perceived Christianity and its influence on their healing and honoring ceremonies. I believe this is an important discussion because it represents the struggle between different people's understandings of modernity, history, and authenticity. Although it is normal for cultural activities to change over time, I believe the concerns expressed below represent historical struggles that have profoundly affected many of the veterans I interviewed. Additionally, I believe this influence may be significant to the future practice of these ceremonies and rituals, as well as a topic for future research.

During the first sweat lodge I attended with veterans, one participant (who I did not formally interview), described how his belief in Christianity paralleled his Lakota spirituality. He prayed to God and Jesus, as well as Tunkasila (Grandfather or Great Spirit). He described how Christian values, such as generosity and kindness, are synonymous with Lakota values, and claimed that there was a

way for them to be in harmony. Though this was not echoed by other veterans during the sweat ceremony, I found it to be insightful. I believe this was his way of finding a balance between his understanding of modern life and of tradition.

Richard described how he used the five values of Lakota spirituality (generosity, fortitude, wisdom, bravery, and respect) in combination with the Ten Commandments as coping skills when he worked as a social worker with Native American veterans at the VA Hospital in Hot Springs. He described how the relationship between Christianity and Lakota spirituality is helpful for some veterans because of their background. For example, many of the veterans he worked with, as well as many that I interviewed, were sent to boarding schools as children. There, their braids were cut off, they were encouraged to speak English, and were taught Christianity. Though this is a source of resentment and strife for many, he felt that the parallels between Christianity and Lakota beliefs made it easier for some veterans to cope with their PTSD; they didn't have to choose one belief or the other, rather they could use the good parts of each to their benefit. In one example, he describes how some Lakota veterans

(particularly WWII veterans) would ask for a pipe prayer after they had been visited by the priest on their death bed, "Perhaps to cover all bases".

Although pointing out parallels between Lakota belief and Christianity is not new, the perceived pollution of Lakota beliefs by Christianity is a source of concern for some of the people I interviewed. For example, Bryan felt very differently than Richard. He questioned the commandment "Thou shalt not steal", and asked why their (Indians) land was stolen from them by Christian missionaries. Pete also felt negatively towards Christianity, stating that "Christianity was the weapon of mass destruction for Indian people" and that it "brainwashed people". Yet another complaint about Christianity is that it is a religion (going to church one day a week), as opposed to a spiritual life style (living the belief every day). For example, Alex stated, "A lot of people today parallel Christianity with it (Lakota beliefs) because they are trying to gain spirituality. It's really hard today to maintain spirituality - it really is; you have to give up a lot." He further went on to say "But we Lakota don't have a religion; it's a spiritual base and way of living. It is not an organized religion." Though I would

argue that this is a limited view and understanding of Christianity, I believe it represents a historical view of missionization, and thus oppression, which is where the main concern may lie for my participants.

SUN DANCE CONTROVERSIES

Several of the self identified "traditional" veterans I spoke with also expressed concerns over what they perceived as changes in the Sun Dance Ceremony. I should mention, however, that as societies change, so do traditions, as well as the meanings and values associated with them. The "traditional" veterans I interviewed felt strongly that these changes represented a move away from "authenticity", but readers should understand that from an anthropological perspective, there is no good way to judge authenticity. The ceremonies are practiced differently today than they were in the childhoods of my informants. However, the ceremonies of their childhoods were also different from earlier ceremonies.

Bryan expressed concern for how members of his family were changing ceremonies to make money (by charging for Sun Dance grounds), using the English language during ceremonies, as well as how assimilated and acculturated (he

felt) people have become on the reservation. He was particularly upset that many people, including elders, don't speak the language anymore, because "The language won't make money". Richard was also worried about how some of his mentors had changed ceremonies, and were therefore passing along what he considered inaccurate information.

Both Bryan and Mike described the Sun Dance as a "show time", which was of great concern to them. According to Mike:

I took part as a singer at Sun Dances with my brothers, we all sang. I danced yeah. It's different from the time we started to now. It's more of a show. We sacrificed ourselves, and we danced for something, we didn't go all out and put on a show. But we danced for a purpose. Today it's like going out there and doing like a break dance. Rock music. But that's what it is today.

At first, I didn't understand what my informants meant by the Sun Dance becoming a "show time". I recognized the modern aspects of it, such as the use of English during some of the ceremony for those who didn't speak Lakota, as well as the dancers drinking Gatorade and changing into jeans in the evening. However, what I learned was that certain symbolic practices had also changed. For example, according to Bryan, when a dancer pierces themselves, it should be just a small amount of skin to symbolically represent their sacrifice for their family; "you spill just

a little blood". However, at the Sun Dance I attended, people were literally ripping chunks of their skin off. For those, such as Bryan and Mike, who are already concerned with the changes happening in ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, the change in symbolic gestures such as piercing was a topic of sadness and frustration.

In addition to criticism about how the Sun Dance has become a show, there was also criticism for why people danced. According to Alex, "Everybody has to have a dream and [if] you doubt someone who is Sun Dancing - just ask them what their vision is. That's the best way to detect fraud because you can't tell someone they can't do it. You aren't supposed to tell another person what to do." Though Alex's Sun Dance is for tiospaye, or family members, only (this means that non-Lakota who are married to kin members are not allowed), he also states that no-one "should criticize anyone who participates in Sun Dance". When asked if he felt that there were too many Sun Dances, he said:

Well, I think they should double how many they have. It took the white man 140 years to colonize us and it will probably take us about that long to decolonize us. So the more people that participate, the better - I just wish they would come up with one set of rituals. People just change and you shouldn't criticize anyone for participating but I do think there should be limitations.

Melanie also discussed her frustration with the change in Sun Dances held on the reservation. She describes how her grandmother, who passed away at 96, said "there was a purpose in it (in the past). You didn't just go one night and decide to participate or offer a flesh offering." Both she and her grandmother also felt that women shouldn't participate in the Sun Dance. She stated "There is a place for women; women have a 'monthly' and men don't - that's why they torture themselves as Sun Dances. You should prepare years (for a Sun Dance), now there are 90 going on each summer." Melanie further said that her grandmother "knew it (the changes) was going to happen. People would make fun of the native way and the churches would be empty, and it would become a fad".

While I could not find evidence that there are 90 Sun Dances occurring each summer, there has in fact been a significant increase in the number of Sun Dances in recent years. This is supported by Bernard Red Cherries, a Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance chief, who states there are about 300 Sun Dances each summer in the United States, and nearly one-third of U.S. Sun Dances take place in South Dakota. At his last count (in 2003), 56 occurred on the Pine Ridge Reservation and 40 on neighboring Rosebud (Lee 2003). To put this into perspective, from WWII until 1973,

only one Sun Dance was held each summer on Pine Ridge and neighboring Rosebud, sponsored by the OST (Roos et al 1980:96). According to Lincoln, this increase began in 1972 after the American Indian Movement (AIM) emphasized the ceremony "as a source and an expression of ethnic pride" (1994:9). I imagine this number has significantly increased since Red Cherries estimate in 2003, and will continue to grow.

Although it is not possible to address all the conflicts among Pine Ridge residents in this thesis, a few things should be taken into account. First, these conflicts may be related to access to resources. With very limited jobs (the main two include working for the Bureau of Indian or the OST), it is not unusual that people might vie for these limited positions. According to my interviews, the concern was that people who were more "progressive" had more opportunities for these jobs than those who considered themselves more "traditional". However, from my perspective, the availability of jobs was more related to connections in the community than the lifestyle one lived. I found that people of all blood quantum, educational background, and status in the community worked together, particular for the OST.

One potential question to ask is whether these conflicts would still exist if Pine Ridge was a less impoverished community. Although I don't argue that conflicts and infighting related to blood line, lifestyle choices, or religious affiliation are only related to the economy, I do feel that this is certainly a part of the problem. I also believe that historical factors play a large role in this in-fighting. For example, as mentioned previously, the transition to reservations and a capitalist economy had a drastic effect on the Lakota people. I believe contemporary Lakota are still sorting out the way this transition has affected their gender and social roles.

What's most important to note, regarding these conflicts, is that identifying as a Lakota person is more involved than simply blood quantum. Factors such as knowledge of language, cultural and spiritual practices, and involvement in the community are also very important.

It is clear that rituals and ceremonies play a vital role in helping veterans reintegrate to society. It is also clear (from the increase in Sun Dances) that there is a revitalization of Lakota practices on Pine Ridge Reservation, and perhaps the conflicts mentioned above represent the struggle for identity among all Lakota

people. When I discuss the extreme poverty on Pine Ridge, many people ask "Why don't people leave?". In fact, some do leave, whether by joining the military, going to college, or simply moving. However, like the veterans I interviewed, they often return to Pine Ridge because it is their home; their friends, family, and history are tied to the land where they grew up.

Perhaps the increase in popularity in Lakota ceremonies represents an increased interest in their past. Many people expressed concern that they were losing their culture, which may explain why changes and outside influences to their ceremonies and practices seem so threatening. While these changes are inevitable, I argue it is the combination of isolation and desperation which make these controversies even more relevant. Some people may be able to reconcile their contemporary life with their historical past, but it is clear that others cannot. In a community fraught with conflicts over minimal jobs, blood quantum, and authenticity, among other things, I believe that participation in these ceremonies helps people, particularly veterans, feel connected to both their heritage and community.

Lakota religious practices have been changing for hundreds of years and will continue to change in the future. As Leacock (2008) discussed, the culture of Plains Indians, such as the Lakota, rapidly changed in the 18th century and in a short time, social, ritual, and material traits were borrowed and adapted into a "relatively uniform culture", known as the "'typical' Plains culture" (445). In other words, though the Lakota who I interviewed may be concerned with outside influences on their ceremonies (such as Christianity), their cultural practices have been influenced by many things throughout their history, including other American Indian tribes' beliefs and spiritual practices. One example of this is the now "traditional" gourd dance, which was derived from the Kiowa culture and is practiced by many Plains Indian groups, including the Lakota.

Based on my thesis research, I believe that there are several reasons that Lakota veterans continue to practice healing and honoring ceremonies. First, there are the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits for the veterans, which were discussed by many of my participants and are supported by Gross (2007) and Bucko (1998).

However, what I believe is more significant, is the way that the practice of these ceremonies helps veterans maintain ties to their culture and heritage. For example, participation in these ceremonies and rituals provides an opportunity to speak the Lakota language (in most cases), pass traditions on to younger generations, and bond with other veterans and members of their community. Also, in the midst of extreme poverty, discrimination, problems with alcoholism and PTSD, as well as other difficulties, I believe the evidence I have presented has shown that the continued use of these practices allows veterans to find balance and meaning in their often complicated lives.

Being in the military has provided an outlet for some Lakota veterans to continue practicing their warrior ceremonies. If these practices were ended, due to loss of interest or arguments over authenticity, an important tie to their cultural heritage would be lost. Serving in the military allows some Lakota to become modern day warriors, and therefore provides the opportunity to continue participating in ceremonies which they feel are important to their physical, mental, and spiritual well being.

PRACTICAL USE OF RESEARCH

Based on my conclusions above, the potential for future research, and my experience with homeless veterans (both Native and Non-Native), I believe that this thesis has practical implications for all veterans. It is obvious, from this research as well as the literature, that healing and honoring ceremonies are vital coping mechanisms for veterans. It is encouraging that places such as the Veterans Administration Black Hills Health Care System in Hot Springs, SD recently (in 2008) celebrated their 10th anniversary of utilizing the sweat lodge on their campus. Gwen Schroeder, Associate Director for Patient Services, speaking at the 10th anniversary celebration said:

This is a very important day for you and for us and for VA Black Hills. When we at Veterans Health Administration look at caring for veterans many times we focus only on the physical and mental health care of our veterans. And we are all pledged to look at holistic health care for all of our veterans. That means we need to be including spiritual and social health issues as well. And this tenth anniversary just demonstrates the commitment of many people in this room over the last ten years to put forth an effort to make sure and include the spiritual and sacred ceremonies of our Native American veterans. (Thunder Hawk 2008)

It is this holistic and progressive perspective to veteran healthcare that I admire and hope continues in the future. Considering there are veterans throughout the

country who could benefit from these alternative coping mechanisms, I follow Gross in believing that "Now is the time to continue the process of healing to make sure America is ready for the veterans to come home" (2007:401). I believe this can be achieved through education to health care providers, advocacy for all veterans, and outreach to urban Indians who may not be familiar with or aware of these vital and important ceremonies.

In order for these ceremonies and rituals to benefit more veterans, there needs to be cooperation between social services, the VA system, Indian tribes, and the veterans themselves. However, it is also crucial that only the experts coordinate and facilitate these practices. Respect for both the physical aspects of the ceremonies, as well as the mental, is necessary to ensure that these coping mechanisms benefit present and future veterans of all ethnic, economic, and social background. As Wanda stated, "We (Americans and veterans) are all in this together".

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