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## MENDING THE SACRED HOOP: IDENTITY ENACTMENT AND THE OCCUPATION OF WOUNDED KNEE

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# MENDING THE SACRED HOOP

## IDENTITY ENACTMENT

### AND THE OCCUPATION OF WOUNDED KNEE

SHERYL L. LINDSLEY,

CHARLES A. BRAITHWAITE, and KRISTIN L. AHLBERG

I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream. And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth—you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.

— John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (1961)<sup>1</sup>

KEY WORDS: American Indian Movement (AIM), Ghost Dance, Oglala, protests, rhetoric, Wounded Knee

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This account by Oglala holy man Black Elk of the 1890 US cavalry massacre of three hundred Sioux Indians, mainly women and children, helps us understand the rhetorical importance of the American Indian Movement's return to Wounded Knee eighty-three years later. The occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973 by the leaders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) represented a culmination of frustration felt by Native Americans.<sup>2</sup> Magazines as diverse as *Time* and *National Review* reported the incident as a staged "pseudo-event" designed to amplify the oppressor/oppressed relationship.<sup>3</sup> News coverage of Wounded Knee included headlines of mockery: "Of Fallen Trees and Wounded Knees," "Pain in the Knee," "Ambush at Credibility Gap," "Not With a Bang," and "Bamboozle Me Not at Wounded Knee."<sup>4</sup>

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Therefore, many national media responses may be characterized as minimizing the seriousness of the event and discrediting the rhetors themselves. However, the historical significance of the Native American occupation of Wounded Knee, as well as the ensuing trial, which was viewed as a major civil rights case for Native Americans, justifies their rhetorical analysis and augments understanding of the American Indian protest movement.<sup>5</sup>

From a rhetorical perspective, these aforementioned news headlines may be viewed as a failure by AIM leaders to achieve a rhetorical identification with their audience in establishing broad-based support for their goals of Native American sovereignty and return of Native lands. When viewed through a traditional rhetorical perspective wherein a rhetorical transaction takes place in order to affect the perception, beliefs, and goals of listeners, it is clear that the AIM rhetors failed to achieve the desired changes in US government policies.<sup>6</sup> Previous studies have identified a number of issues that negatively impacted the success of AIM members, including timing, "excessive demands,"<sup>7</sup> and intercultural barriers to understanding.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, multilayered structural inequalities between Euro-Americans and Native Americans also constrained the enactment and interpretation of the rhetorical message.

The first major problem faced by members of AIM, timing, was illuminated by John F. Cragan in his dramatic analysis of the failed rhetoric surrounding occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building in Washington, D.C., orchestrated by AIM in late 1972.<sup>9</sup> Although this method of confrontation through occupation had experienced some successes in other social movements throughout the 1960s, Cragan argued that "by 1972, the novelty of such dramas may have worn thin." In addition, he characterized the demands by AIM members who occupied the BIA building as "excessive,"<sup>10</sup> and pointed out that making excessive demands follows a rhetorical pattern established by other protest

groups of the 1960s. As rhetoricians within movements such as black power and women's liberation became increasingly frustrated that their concerns were not being addressed, their demands would often escalate "far beyond the ability of the authorities to act."

Intercultural barriers to understanding were another major hurdle faced by AIM rhetors. As Cragan argued, "The Indians lacked experience in creating rhetorical dramas which could be understood by white Americans . . . because of cultural differences."<sup>11</sup> This generation of urban Native Americans, the first to be educated in Euro-American higher learning institutions, were forced to try to make convincing use of their newly acquired intellectual and rhetorical skills in communicating with a predominantly Euro-American audience.

The final barrier consisted of multifaceted forms of institutionalized racism which marginalized Native Americans' political and economic positions within society and limited opportunities for communicating their own perspectives (e.g., Native American's lives were often interpreted through Euro-American ethnocentric perspectives). In addition, dominant society's stereotypes of Native Americans as either "noble" or "ruthless" savages symbolically negated Native American identity through popularized mass media. Jamake Highwater explained the Native American dilemma in this way:

We had to release a tide of communication between two worlds, and to do this we had to be a kind of people who had never before existed. We had to abandon both Andrew Jackson's "Wild Indians" and Jean Jacques Rousseau's "Noble Savage" and emerge as a cultural mutant—the "Intellectual Savage" who was capable of surviving equally in two worlds by tenaciously retaining the ritual apparatus of primal people at the same time that we were attaining the intellectual and communications paraphernalia of the dominant societies.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, each of these issues—timing, “excessive” demands, cultural communication styles, and institutionalized racism—negatively impacted Native Americans’ success in this rhetorical event. In reviewing the negative news coverage of the occupation, and the Native Americans’ failure to achieve their pragmatic goals, Wounded Knee can be seen as a rhetorical failure. However, rhetoric may be viewed as multifunctional; it exists to inform, to influence, and also to express identity. The responsibility of the critic, therefore, lies in determining if any rhetorical goals were met by the Native American rhetors. Richard B. Gregg’s “ego-function of rhetoric” lends valuable insights into the psychological needs fulfilled by protest rhetoric, that is, its role in expressing identity.<sup>13</sup> In applying the ego-function model to the discourse of AIM members and their supporters, we will explain how, from one very important perspective, the event can be viewed as a success.

This success will be illuminated in the following ways: first, we will provide the historical background for the 1973 takeover. Second, we will examine the forum the Native Americans established to protest their grievances. Third, we will apply Gregg’s ego-function analysis to show the rhetorical success achieved by the Wounded Knee occupation; and finally, we will describe the uniqueness of Native American cultural perspectives and, by using their own accounts, explain how the Native Americans perceived rhetorical success in identity affirmation.

#### SETTING THE STAGE

Debates surrounding tribal termination and Indian self-determination comprised the backdrop for the occupation of Wounded Knee. Throughout the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration pushed for the termination of reservations and the urban relocation of Indians. According to historian Francis Paul Prucha, relocation “was a corollary of termination. It was directly related to the move-

ment for better general education, more vocational training, adult education, and economic development plans, and it was another avenue for federal withdrawal from the Indian business.”<sup>14</sup>

Dwight D. Eisenhower’s successors—John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson—rejected the premise of federal abandonment of Indian tribes and instead advocated collaboration between tribes and the federal government. Kennedy, shortly after his inauguration, charged his Interior Secretary Stewart Udall with appointing a committee to study issues relevant to native populations. Members of the resultant Task Force on Indian Affairs—including former Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor and future Bureau of Indian Affairs head Philleo Nash—concluded that the administration should promulgate economic and social development programs for Indian populations. Prucha noted that this stance was consistent with the Kennedy administration’s overall focus on development. The Task Force report made the connection explicit by stating “[W]hat we are attempting to do for those in the underdeveloped areas of the world, we can and must also do for the Indians here at home.”<sup>15</sup>

Like Kennedy, Johnson also convened meetings of tribal leaders, university professors, government officials, and business leaders in order to generate ideas for subsequent reforms. One manifestation included the 1966 Presidential Task Force on the American Indian. The task force recommendations for implementing additional social programs on reservations reinforced Johnson’s belief that termination was undesirable and that the federal government and tribal leaders should seek a collaborative relationship. In March 1968, Johnson became the first president in American history to send an address to Congress deliniating the conditions faced by Native Americans. Johnson’s “Special Message to Congress on the Problem of the American Indian: ‘The Forgotten American’” promised the creation of a National Council on Indian

Opportunity comprised of tribal members and cabinet secretaries and the implementation of additional educational and health reforms.<sup>16</sup>

Legislative reforms aside, various Native groups bypassed collaboration in favor of political protest. An important development was the 1968 creation of the American Indian Movement in St. Paul, Minnesota. AIM's success in attracting adherents and gaining support on reservations would play a large role in the siege at Wounded Knee. In February 1972, the body of Raymond Yellow Thunder was found in Gordon, Nebraska—located approximately twenty miles from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. After local officials released the two men held responsible for the beating death of Yellow Thunder, family member and Tribal District Chair Severt Young Bear appealed to AIM leaders at a meeting in Omaha. AIM members, in a show of support, traveled to Pine Ridge and mounted a series of protests against the death of Yellow Thunder. During this time period, Richard Wilson unseated Gerald One Feather as chair of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council. In the words of historian Akim Reinhardt, the election would prove decisive: "What remains indisputable is that as the political tensions he inherited quickly worsened . . . Wilson gravitated towards the reservation's mixed blood constituency and the OSTC's federal sponsors, while simultaneously ruthlessly seeking to quash his full blood political opponents by any means necessary."<sup>17</sup>

Wilson, after facing a series of impeachment proceedings, succeeded in banning AIM from the reservation in late 1972. Transferring energy to the public arena, AIM members staged a "Trail of Broken Treaties" caravan with Washington, D.C., and the Bureau of Indian Affairs office as destination. AIM returned to South Dakota in 1973 after learning of another Native murder in Buffalo Gap, South Dakota. In addition to orchestrating boycotts and demonstrations, AIM aided Pine Ridge residents in forming the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization and lodging additional complaints against Wilson. The BIA,

unnerved by the display at Pine Ridge, requested federal support.

#### THE FORUM

In the winter of 1973, several hundred Oglala Sioux, along with supporters from other tribes, returned to Wounded Knee, the scene of the 1890 massacre.<sup>18</sup> Vine Deloria Jr. argued that for 105 years, the Sioux had peacefully petitioned the United States government for redemption of these territories.<sup>19</sup> Finally, after the tribal government and federal agencies (particularly the Bureau of Indian Affairs) took oppressive measures against Sioux people, two hundred AIM members headed to the town of Wounded Knee to establish a forum for their grievances. AIM leaders had scheduled a peaceful protest in the form of a news conference to express carefully deliberated concerns. However, as they were preparing for the meeting (e.g., notifying press and government officials of the conference for the next morning), the BIA, US Marshal Special Operations Group personnel, and FBI observers were setting up roadblocks, preventing all access to the hamlet.<sup>20</sup> These police officers and military personnel were supported by nineteen armored personnel carriers, 130,000 rounds of M-16 ammunition, 41,000 rounds of M-40 high-explosive (for M-79 grenade launchers), helicopters, and Phantom jets.<sup>21</sup> These officials were under orders not to let any newspaper or television personnel into the area. As the AIM leaders became aware of the possible threat to their security posed by the surrounding armed forces, they obtained guns and ammunition from the local trading post.<sup>22</sup> They also compiled a list of demands and notified the government of the options: "1. They wipe out the old people, women and children, and men, by shooting and attacking us. 2. They negotiate our demands." Thus, what outsiders labeled as an AIM "takeover" of Wounded Knee, AIM participants labeled as a "siege."<sup>23</sup> The semantic associations with these two different labels are important. "Takeover" implies AIM acted aggressively and intentionally

in the occupation, whereas “siege” denotes a situation in which the AIM rhetors reacted defensively in safeguarding themselves from a perceived threat. From the AIM actors’ perspective, their intentions had been peaceful, and they found themselves in a situation in which they perceived limited choices, constrained by government forces. Although they had initially planned an event that would be a “symbolic confrontation” in the form of a news conference, AIM members found themselves in a situation in which rhetorical expression was curtailed and a linguistic confrontation had turned into a military one. In refusing to leave the village, AIM members took a stand, and Indian leaders Russell C. Means and Dennis J. Banks repeatedly vowed that authorities must either meet their “basic human needs” or “massacre them.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the stage was set rhetorically for a reenactment of “the cavalry versus the Indians,” escalating the occupation of a small village in South Dakota to a scene of national importance. The seventy-one-day occupation that followed was described by the media as a “symbolic war.”<sup>25</sup> After countless negotiating sessions and battles, in which a number of people were killed or wounded, the Native Americans were finally forced to surrender and AIM leaders were arrested, changing the rhetorical scene from a small village to a US government courtroom.

#### WOUNDED KNEE AND THE EGO-FUNCTION OF PROTEST

Gregg illustrated many instances in the 1960s and early 1970s where frustrated protest groups made “illogical” demands that eliminated all possibility of establishing necessary identification between the protesters and the authorities.<sup>26</sup> He argued that although meeting these “excessive” demands was often unachievable, there were other important functions served by these rhetorical events. The concept of Gregg’s ego-function of rhetoric rests on the premise that protest rhetoric is at least partially aimed at the protesters themselves, who feel the need for psychological

refurbishing and affirmation. Based on this perspective, protest spokespersons may also become surrogates for others who share their feelings of inadequacy. This self-directed rhetoric, as a form of intrapersonal and/or intragroup communication, fulfills an ego-function as it establishes, defines, and affirms selfhood through expression. In the context of the Wounded Knee village, this particular form of rhetoric—one that is self-directed—is especially relevant, given that the AIM rhetors were often blocked from communicating with news journalists.

Three essential components of the ego-function analysis can be applied to the AIM rhetoric to show how it satisfied an ego-function in the expression of Native American identity: (1) an expression of a strong psychological need, recognizing that one’s ego has been somehow ignored, damaged, or disenfranchised; (2) a description through an exaggerated fashion of the superior strengths and virtues of the ego sought after; and (3) an attack on the ignorance or malicious qualities of an enemy, that is, a foreign ego that stands in juxtaposition to the desired ego.<sup>27</sup>

#### “NO INDIANS ALLOWED”

Application of the first component of the ego-function analysis reveals how the Native Americans rhetorically expressed their damaged ego. The theme of the AIM rhetoric held that the Native Americans had been stripped of their heritage and culture and therefore suffered from a lack of self-identification. An understanding of this perception is gained from a historical perspective dating back to the European settlers’ redefinition of the Native Americans and their subsequent dehumanization. Haig A. Bosmajian has analyzed how the Euro-Americans’ labeling of Native Americans as savages, heathens, barbarians, and other derogatory epithets, thus enabled the colonizers to enslave, torture, and murder them.<sup>28</sup> Zealous Christian missionaries perceived the Native Americans as uncivilized victims of Satan who either needed to be saved

or destroyed. This extended process of physical and ethnic genocide gave rise to government policies that can be summarized in the aphorism "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Bosmajian argued that once a group has been categorized by this type of language of suppression, the group loses most of its power. Edgar S. Cahn elaborated this view with his argument that "Ultimately, self realization requires the power to shape one's future, and to control one's destiny, to chose from a variety of alternatives. The Indian has no such power, no control and no choice."<sup>29</sup>

AIM members' feelings about Euro-Americans' oppression of their cultural identities appears in the AIM rhetors' trial accounts. For instance, Alvin Josephy's testimony stated: "The Indians were literally consigned to starvation, disease, poverty, and death by a country of white conquerors who wanted to know nothing about them, and by a government that was waiting for them to think, act, and live like whites, or die off."<sup>30</sup> Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, expert witness at the Wounded Knee trial, also argued that the government's forced assimilation policy comprised cultural genocide—an extension of the physical genocide policy of Euro-American settlers. She explained that Native Americans saw that their cultural identity and heritage in such sacred traditions as their oral history and their view of a holistic reality was disappearing as new generations were forced to attend Euro-American-dominated schools and learn Euro-American ways of thinking. In this process, Native American youth in school were being taught to pay homage to the very people who suppressed and killed their ancestors. This practice of demanding that the oppressed honor and pay homage to the oppressor was, in itself, part of the dehumanizing process. She described the Native American struggle for survival in terms of limited choices: "The People see two roads available: nationhood or genocide. The People are choosing nationhood."<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the Native American rhetors described a mass destruction of identity in

multiple ways, through both physical and symbolic annihilation of Native American identity and the loss of control over their future. This condition was exacerbated by the Native American perception of forced assimilation as the equivalent of a living death. The resultant struggle for the recreation and revitalization of a positive identity may be seen in their rhetorical response to this condition.

#### "RED POWER"

An examination of the second component of the ego-function analysis, the sought-after ego, requires a multidimensional view of the Native American scene at Wounded Knee and the trial that includes their ceremonies, style, and rhetoric. The importance of analyzing these elements in their entirety comes from Native Americans' cultural perspective of a holistic view of reality. In his description of the Wounded Knee occupation, Bill Zimmerman argues that the Sioux made no functional or philosophical distinctions between their day-to-day material life or culture and their spiritual existence.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, in critiquing the "rhetoric" of the occupation of Wounded Knee, one needs to consider contextual elements that include not only what was said, but also the symbolism of the religious ceremonies and other events that occurred in this setting.

One of AIM's goals was the return of Native American sovereignty: the establishment of a separate Native American nation. Although they failed to accomplish this goal pragmatically, they experienced nationhood symbolically through their declaration of an independent Oglala nation and a cultural renaissance of tradition.

The Oglala constitution, ratified by 1,400 Oglala during the Wounded Knee occupation, declared the Indians a free people.<sup>33</sup> One could argue that in patterning their declaration of freedom after the Constitution of the United States, and rhetorically identifying themselves as patriots, the Native Americans appeared to be working to achieve identification with their audience, to sanctify the validity of their move-

### "WHITE DEVILS"

An analysis of these elements of "style" reveals the inseparability of Native American spirituality from identity and reinforces the centrality of spirituality in Native Americans' rhetorical struggle for survival. In this struggle, the Native Americans clearly expressed their sought-after ego, thus rhetorically purging the Native images of the damaged ego. In order to rhetorically elevate the superiority of their identity over whites even further, and establish selfhood, required a rhetorical juxtapositioning of the foreign ego or the enemy.

The Native Americans' oral testimony, as well as the confrontation rhetoric, illuminates this component of the ego-function, the identification of the enemy. The AIM rhetors castigated the US government and their policies, including, "genocide, colonialism, exploitation, and other forms of Indian mistreatment."<sup>42</sup> Additionally, defense witness Wilbur Jacobs described the white settlers as corrupting the Native Americans with alcoholism "by introducing liquor as the chief item of trade. . . . It would almost seem that the official government policy at these factories (posts) was to drown the Indians in a Niagara of liquor."<sup>43</sup> In another account, Alvin Josephy attacked the "government supported violence and intimidation," or in his description, "US government-financed storm troop units of goon squads [that] continue to arrest, beat up, and murder many Sioux patriots."<sup>44</sup>

This rhetorical identification of the enemy helped the Native Americans symbolically establish selfhood in several ways. By identifying the enemy—the US government—they were able to delineate their own position—the independent Oglala nation—by contrast. Linguistically painting the enemy in the dark-hued imagery of vice, evil, and corruption enabled them to easily juxtapose their own superior virtues and thereby gain a symbolic victory of ego enhancement. The rhetoric of self-building, and the very act of assuming such a stance, is argued by Gregg to be simultaneously self-persuasive and confirmatory.

This application of Gregg's model shows how the Native Americans were able to satisfy a deeply rooted psychological need to reestablish their cultural identity. A fuller understanding of this element of success in the Native American rhetoric can be achieved through an analysis of Native Americans' cultural perspectives and rhetorical standards.

### MITAKU OYASIN (WE ARE ALL RELATED): NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

First, it is important to understand the schisms between Native American and Euro-American cultures and relate these to the ways Native American concerns were rhetorically expressed. Central to understanding their rhetoric are the Native American concepts of sense of place and inclusivity.

Previous studies of Apaches and Navajos have found that a sense of place is very important in their cosmology.<sup>45</sup> According to one, "Even the most minute occurrences are described by the Navajos in close conjunction with their physical settings, suggesting that unless narrated events are spatially anchored their significance is somehow reduced and cannot be properly accessed."<sup>46</sup> Likewise, we would argue that Sioux spirituality also teaches the importance of a sense of place and this concept is important in understanding the occupation of Wounded Knee.<sup>47</sup> The return to Wounded Knee expressed the Native Americans' ties to both their ancestors and their land. This place was symbolically imbued with multiple layers of meaning. The place was rich with historical symbolism; this was the site of a war crime committed by the US government against the Native Americans. Thus, the land was symbolically linked to Native Americans' struggle for survival against European colonialists. By Native American standards, the setting should have evoked moral considerations for justice in the minds of those US government officials who knew their history. This was the site of the "last great battle" between whites and Indians, so

to return to this place was another way to say that Indians were not dead or defeated. The context alone makes a poignant statement from a Native American perspective.

Second, the former Sioux territory surrounding this land, including the Black Hills which were confiscated by European settlers when gold was first discovered there, had deep spiritual significance for the people. As a place consecrated with the blood of ancestors, its ancestral spirits would protect the protestors. The rhetorical message conveyed by the place they chose for their press conference, therefore, was properly structured in the Native American rhetorical system wherein the importance of the land as a symbol conveyed certain implicit messages. These semantic understandings, fundamental to the Native American perspective, were lost on a Euro-American audience whose sole understanding of land was determined by the laws of property and property acquisition. However, despite this lack of understanding, the occupation of the land was important in reinforcing a positive Native American sense of identity. This significance was expressed by AIM leader Dennis Banks when he recalled his experience at Wounded Knee:

[It was] the ultimate in a man's life, to see your own people moved to that type of action. Looking back, I really believed that the broken hoop was mended at Wounded Knee, and that the water was being given to the tree of life. Wounded Knee was an attempt to help an entire race survive.<sup>48</sup>

Another important cultural consideration is the concept of inclusivity, which is fundamental to the Native American philosophy of a holistic reality. In her introduction of the trial accounts, Ortiz described this holistic reality as a value system based upon a relationship with all things—a responsibility for the whole universe—the antithesis of the dominant Euro-American value system which is exclusive and finds useful only those parts that gain precedence over others.<sup>49</sup>

Highwater has argued that the Native Americans' holistic view of reality maintains the capability of sustaining utter faith in the most contradictory realities, refusing to believe there is one fixed and eternal truth. They believe there are many different and valid truths. In elaborating on the Native American relationship to this reality, Rupert Ross argues that although life consists of competing and contradictory life elements, traditional Native American experience

lay in understanding the workings of the dynamic equilibrium of which they were a part, then acting so as to sustain a harmony within it, rather than mastery over it. One aspired to wisdom in accommodating oneself to that equilibrium, and that pursuit quite clearly promised unlimited scope for exploration and self-development.<sup>50</sup>

This holistic faith in all the elements of the universe and the belief that life efforts should be directed toward understanding and achieving harmony between conflicting elements helps to explain the ways the Native American rhetors expressed themselves in court: by telling their story. Vine Deloria, trial defense attorney, highlights their perspective by comparing the Euro-American and Native American approaches to rhetoric within the Wounded Knee trial context:

A federal court is not designed to decide either legal or moral issues. Rather it is an arena wherein parties contest, in an intellectual and rhetorical "trial by combat," for a victory. The Indians, coming to court to contest essentially legal and moral issues (expressed by oral tradition), did not conceive of their role as adversaries nor of the proceedings as an effort to make points against the other side. They were concerned that the whole story of their suffering emerge.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, the Native Americans' rhetorical strategies did not employ either argumen-

tation or persuasion techniques. Their strategy was to inform. This can be understood as rhetorically sound by their own standards; that in increasing the audience's knowledge about this situation, it was possible that a moral decision would be made to bring conflicting forces into harmony with one another.

The feeling of some success of the trial by Native American standards was conveyed by expert trial witness Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz:

The motion to dismiss remaining charges against Wounded Knee defendants on the basis of jurisdiction was denied. Despite the denial, which was expected, a sense of victory pervades, for it was the Great Sioux Nation sitting in judgment on America, not the reverse.<sup>52</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

In examining the forum and the ego concept in the rhetoric of Wounded Knee, one can see the importance of Gregg's theoretical model for highlighting successes in rhetorical events. Although the pressing needs of AIM members for return of Native lands and sovereignty were not met, this analysis facilitates understanding of another kind of success. In contrast to Cragan's analysis of the failures of AIM in achieving rhetorical identification with their audience, this analysis has used rhetors' own descriptions and evaluations of their experience in order to highlight the rhetors' self-perceived successes. In analyzing the rhetors' accounts of their experiences, one can comprehend how the occupation of Wounded Knee and the ceremonial expressions of spirituality and tradition served an essential function in the rhetorical enactment and reestablishment of a positive, unified, and intertribal cultural identity. In rhetorically expressing the three components of the ego-function—the damaged ego, the ego sought, and the enemy—they were able to recreate a positive sense of ethnic identity. In telling their story and explaining their most important moral values, the Native Americans not

only reaffirmed their ego identity but gained national attention in their struggle against becoming the "vanishing" peoples. This event drew together people of sixty-four different tribes in support of Native American issues. The rhetorical effectiveness of the occupation of Wounded Knee was seen in the massive turnout of Native Americans, mostly non-AIM members from all over the United States, for the trial of two AIM leaders, Dennis Banks and Russell Means.<sup>53</sup>

Although Gregg's model helps to illuminate the successes of AIM members and their supporters, it is also apparent that it is important to understand cultural communication norms when assessing the rhetorical effectiveness of communication processes and outcomes. Native Americans' perceived victory cannot be understood without interpreting their rhetoric in consideration of their spiritual beliefs relating to inclusivity and sense of place. Therefore, this paper extends our understanding of how these concepts can facilitate analysis and interpretation of Native American rhetoric.

This analysis reveals that in the Wounded Knee court case, judges made their decisions about the Native Americans' claims based on rhetorical and judicial standards of dominant Euro-American society. Both cultural and political considerations impinged on the Native American rhetoricians' abilities to achieve successes in the context chosen by the US government for evaluation of their claims. In this courtroom context, in which people of two vastly different cultural systems were brought into dynamic interplay with one another, the burden was placed on Native Americans for cultural accommodation. However, the Native Americans clearly did not capitulate and pay homage to their oppressors by adopting Euro-American ways. They neither adopted Euro-American dress, nor hairstyles, nor swore their oaths on the Christian Bible, nor used argumentative styles. They proudly maintained their own sense of cultural dignity and self-worth by expressing Native identity in multiple ways. In so doing,

they expressed their power in deciding for themselves how to act and symbolically carved out a space for cultural expression of Native American identity within a Euro-American courtroom.

## NOTES

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3. "Trap at Wounded Knee: Television Coverage of Sioux Protest," *Time*, 26 March 1973, 67; "Of Fallen Trees and Wounded Knees: New Coverage of Wounded Knee," *National Review*, 27 April 1973, 464-65.
4. Ibid.; "Pain in the Knee," *National Review*, 11 May 1973, 512; "Ambush at Credibility Gap: Wounded Knee Trial," *Newsweek*, 9 September 1974, 26; "Not With a Bang," *Newsweek*, 21 May 1973, 31-32; T. Schultz, "Bamboozle Me Not at Wounded Knee," *Harper's*, June 1973, 46-48.
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7. John F. Cragan, "Rhetorical Strategy: A Dramatic Interpretation and Application," *Central States Speech Journal* 26 (1975): 4-11.
8. Jamake Highwater, *The Primal Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 12.
9. Cragan, "Rhetorical Strategy" (note 7 above), pp. 4-11.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 8.
12. Highwater, *Primal Mind* (note 8 above), p. 12.
13. Gregg, "Ego-Function" (note 6 above), pp. 71-91.
14. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians: II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 1079-80.
15. Ibid., p. 1090.
16. Akim D. Reinhardt, "A Government Not of their Choosing: Pine Ridge Politics from the Indian Reorganization Act to the Siege of Wounded Knee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 2000), p. 132.
17. Ibid., p. 160.
18. Akwesasne Notes (note 2 above).
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