From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyrightlaw. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material inour collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff.For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information onthe Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.
https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us

---

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026 Anthropology

2015

American Healers: Psychology and the Sacred

Laufenberg, George

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

---

http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp012z10ws533

U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf

AMERICAN HEALERS: PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SACRED

George Ryan Laufenberg

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
ANTHROPOLOGY
Adviser: João Biehl

June 2015

© Copyright George Laufenberg, 2015. All rights reserved.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the spiritual lives and ritual practices of a group of U.S. mental health professionals, and examines how they translate their religious experiences into a vision for social change, personal transformation, and a role for the sacred in American mental health care. Drawing on nearly two years of ethnographic research—ranging from interviews in college mental health centers to participant-observation of healing ceremonies on a Lakota reservation—I show how the entangled spiritual and vocational lives of a loosely-connected network of U.S. psychotherapists help us to understand both forms of care and ways of worship in contemporary American life. I argue that these psychotherapists both resist and reproduce what they call the "dominant culture," as they navigate between appropriation and bricolage in clinics and ceremonies.

My ethnography challenges scholarly accounts of Western 'secular' selfhood and attends to the particularities of self-fashioning as an always-unfolding project. The body of the text is divided into three parts, in which I examine the interaction-level spaces in which relationships among experience, authority, and truth are negotiated, and follow the complex trajectories along which traditions migrate. Through close attention to talk and lived practice, I show how my informants inscribe, perform, and transgress boundaries between aspects of their lives as they labor to create what I call "sacred sociality" and pursue possibilities for faith and healing.

The dissertation contributes to the ethnography of culture in the contemporary United States. It also contributes to debate over the ethics and politics of social scientific inquiry into religion and health, as well as broader epistemological questions underlying those debates. In particular, it demonstrates how surveys and interviews—methods designed to make sense of unconventional American spiritual practices—reproduce conventional, reductionistic categories of analysis. More fundamentally, however, this work tells a story about middle-class Americans reaching out beyond the world in which they were encultured—and it's also very much about how they decide to stop: where they draw the lines, that is, between what they're willing to do and give up, and what they choose to protect.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Sacred and the Clinic
- American Acedia 1
- The Talking Cure 9
- American Sacred 20
- On Fieldwork and Its Inscription 35

Part I :: The Clinic and its Discontents
- 1. After Hours in the Clinic 47
- 2. Wounded Healers 50
- 3. The Odd Relationship 65
- 4. Something Worth Protecting 81
- 5. Differences that Make a Difference 99

Part II :: Authority as Uncertainty
- 1. Ambivalence at Play and in (between) Ceremonies 115
- 2. "This is not a metaphor" 123
- 3. Building a Family 138
- 4. "Well, You Could Take a Pill..." 170

Part III :: Commitments, Kinship, and Community
- 1. "Nobody's Alright" 198
- 2. Alone Together 206
- 3. Piercings and Ties 222
- 4. The Work of Believing 242
- 5. Family's Value 262

Conclusion
- "This isn't Psychotherapy—This is a Relationship" 284
- Homework 293
- Coda: In the Office 306

Works Cited 310

Acknowledgements

It would be impossible to express the full breadth and depth of my gratitude to the many people who've made this work possible. I will always be grateful to my interlocutors—members of the tiospaye and the APT study group, and their leaders, Mark and Steven (respectively)—whose gifts of trust, and time, and presence I can never repay, but which I hope, in small ways, to pay forward.

It has been my privilege to spend the past eight years as part of an extraordinary, and extraordinarily generous, community of scholars in the Princeton University Anthropology Department. I could not have asked for finer mentors than João Biehl and Carol Greenhouse. João's poetic ethnographic sensibility, rigorous compassion, and graceful engagement with theory set an almost-impossibly-high standard, and his unflagging support made it possible to imagine meeting that standard. Carol's unparalleled combination of wisdom, intellectual dexterity, and profound kindness has been the keel of this project as it moved through its myriad permutations, and her abiding ethical commitment to generous scholarship has been an inspiration. I have also been deeply fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Jim Boon over these years; his dizzying erudition is matched only by his commitment to his students, and I could not be more grateful for him, or to him (most recently, for serving as a reader of this dissertation). I owe a further debt to the faculty members in the department who shared their time and their insights with me: Abdellah Hammoudi, Rena Lederman, Carolyn Rouse, Elizabeth Davis, Larry Rosen, and John Borneman. Finally, my gratitude to Mo Lin Yee and Gabriela Drinovan—and my deepest thanks to Carol Zanca, without whom all graduate students would be lost.

The Princeton Center for the Study of Religion was an ongoing source of support, both financially and intellectually; I owe a special thanks to Bob Wuthnow—whose scholarship on American spirituality challenged my assumptions, and whose service as a reader of this dissertation I deeply appreciate. I have also benefitted immensely from the insights of John Gager, Jessica Delgado, LiErin Probasco, Thomas Carlson, Sarit Kattan Gribetz, Lev Weitz, Erin Johnston, Alison Schnable, Steve Snell, Jan an Haack, Beth Stroud, Hillary Kaell, April Hughes, and the rest of my extraordinarily generous colleagues in the Religion and Culture workshop and the Religion and Public Life workshop, as well as from the sustaining support of Jenny Legath and Anita Kline.

Preliminary research was supported by The Princeton Program in Latin American Studies (PLAS) and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS). I am especially grateful to Luis Millones at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima, Perú, for his guidance and generosity. The Princeton Program in American Studies helped support the writing of this text; my thanks to Bill Gleason, Dirk Hartog, Judith Ferzst, as well as to Josh Garrett-Davis and my colleagues in colloquia and workshops there.

My thanks, as well, to the faculty and staff of the Lakota Studies Department at Sinte Gleska University, who were tremendously generous with their time and patience: Ione Quigley, Tina Spotted-Calf Martinez, Albert White Hat, Duane Hollow Horn Bear, Bill Akard, and Victor Douville; my thanks, as well, to Jurgita Saltanaviciute for her insights and friendship.

I have had the honor of teaching in the Princeton Writing Program for several years, and I am indebted to my colleagues there—in particular, Judy Swan, Tim Haupt, Ben Weber, Pat Moran, Yaron Aronowicz, Andy Hakim, Amanda Irwin Wilkins, Keith Shaw, Margie Duncan, and Melinda DeNiro—and most especially to my students, who have consistently challenged me to refine my thinking, and whose curiosity and diligence continue to inspire me. I am also grateful to Michael Hecht and the staff and students of Forbes college—especially Kanwal Matharu and Salmaan Kamal—where I was privileged to serve as a Resident Graduate Student for two and a half years.

Drafts of material from this dissertation were presented at a number of conferences—including a meeting of the American Ethnological Society, the First International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism, graduate conferences on Science and Religion in America and Ways of Knowing (sponsored by the Princeton American Studies Program and the Harvard Divinity School, respectively), as well as at five meetings of the American Anthropological Association. I remain in debt to my interlocutors there for an array of important insights and rich conversations; I am especially grateful for the refinements suggested by several discussants: Michael Lambek, Bob Desjarlais, Bill Gleason, Henri Gooren, Stacey Langwick, and Pamela Klassen.

I am also grateful to my colleagues in the Princeton Anthropology Works-in-Progress Workshop (2012-2013), whose perspectives and always-constructive critiques were a great aid in developing this manuscript; my particular thanks to Amy Moran-Thomas, Betsey Brada, Brian Horne, and Konstantinos Kalantzis. My thanks, as well, to my colleagues from the Ethics and Politics of Ethnography workshop (2013-2014)—especially Jeff Stout and Leslie Ribovich—for thoughtful comments on a draft at a particularly challenging juncture.

Over the years, I have greatly benefited from the friendship and insight of colleagues, at Princeton and beyond. My deep gratitude to several interlocutors from afar, for both their warm support and their interpretive insights: Christopher Engelke, Anna Corwin, Jessica Hardin, Anna Trester, Christopher Niedt, and Susan Danielson. Here at ‘home’, Ryan Harper, Jenny Stundon, Saul Schwartz, Alex Wamboldt, Sam Williams, Leo Coleman, Talia Dan-Cohen, Megan Steffen, Pablo Landa, Celeste Alexander, Sebastian Ramirez, Nikolaos Michailidis, Mark Robinson, Bridget Purcell, and Heather Kugelmass have my enduring and heartfelt thanks.

I owe a particular debt to the tenacious moral support, indefatigable intellectual camaraderie, and analytical acumen of several dear friends, who gave me extensive feedback on drafts of this text, and without whom this project would simply not have reached fruition: Gwen Gordon, Peter Kurie, Claire Nicholas, Joel Rozen, and Sonya Pritzker.

And I am be equally indebted to several close friends and fellow-travellers, without whom I would have been lost at any number of points along the way: Rogan O'Donnell, William Ruscher, Charlie Hopper, Noelle Molé, Matt Weiner, and Peter Locke, Bob Gillespie, and Michelle Adams.

My deepest thanks, finally, for the unfailing love and support of my family; in most particular, I thank my mother, Janet Laufenberg—whose heart and spirit have inspired me for 37 years—and my partner, Kathryn Duran—whose strength is equaled only by her kindness; I am, quite simply, in awe of her.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Catherine…

…and to the dreams of my daughter, Charlotte.

Introduction: The Sacred and the Clinic

American Acedia

"Even a very mild mystic is aberrant in Western civilization."
- Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (2006:165)

In February of 2011—about halfway through my fieldwork—I received an email from one of my primary interlocutors, Mark.[1] He has been a doctoral-level mental health professional for more than three decades, and he works almost exclusively with college students.

Mark's email was prefaced by the subject line: "ACEDIA: new information on a changing student behavior." He wrote:

> I have been doing research on a student behavior that I believe to be Acedia. Acedia is a 4th century malady that seems to be rearing its head once again. … I have presented the topic of Acedia at [three universities] and [a professional] conference… Though my research isn't scientific counselors and psychiatrists (as well as deans and career counselors) strongly believe that Acedia is very real…. this is a problem that leads to suicide in many young people. I have consulted with a Japanese counselor on Hikikomori and am working with a Japanese student who was identified as Hikikomori and hid for four years. On campuses I have visited, counselors report students hiding in their rooms—but something is different. It isn't agoraphobia. It isn't depression. It isn't anxiety. …I have psychologists and psychiatrists writing stating this is something new and different and does not meet *DSM* diagnostic categories.

[1] A pseudonym, as are the names of nearly all people herein (exceptions to this are noted in the text).

I was one of twenty-one people on the receiving end of that email; everyone else on the list was a licensed clinician who worked with undergraduates. We all knew that Mark was a doctoral-level clinician, and that he'd been the director of counseling centers at multiple universities; despite the fact that many of the individuals on the list had first met Mark in a professional context, however, their licensure wasn't the only thing—or even the primary thing—they had in common. They were on Mark's list because they were a part of a community of spiritual practice, and Mark is their teacher.

In the wake of a consuming existential crisis in the early 1990s, Mark lived and studied with a well-known and highly-respected Lakota Native American holy man, who taught him to pray and to conduct healing ceremonies—which he has been doing ever since. I spent two years conducting ethnographic fieldwork with Mark, his students, and their colleagues, in gatherings and ceremonies from Massachusetts to Georgia to Wisconsin, as well as on the Lakota reservation in South Dakota to which group members return on pilgrimage every year. By his estimate, Mark has taught or shared ceremony with something like two thousand people over the years. The core group of his students—perhaps fifty people who communicate frequently and gather together on a regular basis to take part in healing ceremonies—use a Lakota word, *tiospaye*, meaning extended family, to refer formally to themselves in the collective. Informally, they refer to themselves, and address each other, as "family." Roughly half of the tiospaye's participants, and nearly all of its senior members—or "elders"—are licensed mental health professionals.

During those two years, I worked primarily with 18 clinicians—eight men, and ten women—for periods ranging from a single interview, to participant observation during several multi-day events, to, in two cases, hundreds of hours of mixed-method interaction. Between June of 2010

and August of 2011 I spent more than 1,600 hours with Mark, his students, and their colleagues. While a few (22%) of my clinical interlocutors were 'young' (i.e., under 40 years of age) or at an early stage of their careers (e.g., a post-doctoral fellow or a junior staff member in a clinic), the vast majority (78%) were over 40, and fully a third of them (33%) were over 50 years of age. Four people—all men—were directors of college counseling centers (or had held such a position in the past). The group was evenly divided by level of education—half held doctoral degrees,[2] and half had earned Masters-level degrees[3]—and all were licensed by the states in which they practiced.

I began by conducting ethnographic research with a sub-group of those clinicians (and their friends), led by one of Mark's students: Steven. Steven is a doctoral-level clinical psychologist and psychotherapist of 25 years; he is the director of a university counseling center that tends to 2,000 patients each year; and he has been a student of Mark's for nearly a decade. He and his wife lead a "study group" that gathers monthly to train its members as facilitators of a group therapeutic technique—called 'Archetypal Play Therapy' (or 'APT')—which entails improvisational role-playing, and which draws on Jungian depth psychology, mythology, and metaphysics. I followed practitioners through the connections they claimed and the relationships they tended, across different clinical and ceremonial milieux in the U.S., and to a Lakota Native American community with which they practice ritual and social healing work.

As they told me their stories, more than one of my clinician-interlocutors has invoked the image of a tribal shaman who lives on the edge of the village, and who is both blessed and cursed to bear the burden of a gift for 'healing'. More to the point, they share a sense of frustration at

[2] Of these, three held Ph.D.s in clinical psychology, and the remaining six doctorates were evenly divided among Ed.D.s, Psy.D.s, and M.D.s.

[3] Ranging from Masters in Social Services and Social Work to Masters in Education and Counseling Psychology.

their own seeming inability to effect meaningful change in the world—both within, and beyond, the confines of their clinics. In my interviews with them and in their conversations with each other, they regularly asserted versions of a claim they attributed to Mark: that the "problems" with "dominant culture" were best understood, and addressed, as symptoms of a general social trend toward a lack of "spiritual connection."

Over the years, Mark's concern with that lack of "spiritual connection" came to inform his work in the clinic. Eventually, he'd come to believe that the kind of banal-yet-paralyzing existential crises he and others were seeing, in ever-increasing numbers of patients, were "more" than "just" depression. He began to apply the word "acedia" to the constellation of symptoms he was seeing—and he devoted much of his professional activity, late in his career, to spreading the word.[4] Not all of Mark's students used the term Acedia—in fact, he didn't even use it that frequently himself—but whatever they called it, they were all intimately familiar with the paralyzing existential malaise to which Mark referred: they'd seen in their clients and among each other, and more than a few of them could point to their own personal experiences of despair that seemed to exceed the bounds of the diagnostic categories into which they'd been apprenticed as clinicians. They'd seen it, and they'd wrestled with it—and, whatever the precise nomenclature, they responded to Mark's steady refrain: healing would require commitment to support each other as a family; a willingness to embrace and sustain the possibility of faith; and a practice of reverence for themselves, as well as the world around them.

[4] Here, as elsewhere, I'm less interested in adjudicating the accuracy of Mark's usage of the term than I am intrigued by what his effort to introduce it has to tell us about him, his work, and the context of American life in which such an effort is legible.

The term 'acedia' has gone in and out of common usage since its general meaning began to cohere in the early Common Era.[5] Historian of Psychiatry Stanley Jackson traces a history that begins with "states of sorrow, dejection, and grief" unique to early Christian monks living, isolated, in the desert; it was only much later, in the middle ages, that the term was applied to Christians more broadly (1985:53-57).[6] This diffusion is important, in Jackson's account, because the trajectory of the 'spread' of Acedia from 'religious experts' to the general population tracks (roughly) along with both a moral imperative to self-cultivation and the application of a "medical frame of reference" which "implied a lesser degree of sinfulness and reduced

[5] As a matter of prevalence, the word 'acedia' itself seems to be experiencing a mild resurgence, from Sigfried Wenzel's (1967) classic*, The Sin of Sloth* to more contemporary deployments—two of which are of particular interest here. The first is best-selling spiritual author Kathleen Norris' (2008) *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*—a self-help book that both Mark and the *New York Times* reviewed without enthusiasm, but which, Mark told me, was about the only place one would even find more than a reference to the topic. As it turns out, however, Mark is neither the only person to find Acedia a useful name for the psychic ills putatively endemic to contemporary American life, nor the only person to apply the term to specific ills putatively endemic to American higher education: Christian scholars Paul Wadell and Darin Davis, in their contribution to a Baylor University Press volume entitled *The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education*, make the case for "acedia" as the "pervasive vice in contemporary culture… that "naturally accompanies… individualism" and to which the "young increasingly succumb" (2007:133-34). Their chapter—"Tracking the Toxins of Acedia: Reenvisioning Moral Education"—begins with a normative nod to Charles Taylor's "influential little book," *The Ethics of Authenticity*; Wadell and Davis applaud what they take to be Taylor's critique of "people who misunderstand authenticity, and thus pursue a debased form of the ideal" (133), and culminates with a prescription to (re)introduce a notion of "vocation" to the mission of post-secondary educational institutions.

[6] Jackson traces its emergence to Galen in the 2nd century (in tandem with "its kindred sin, tristitia") and contends that its meaning more or less cohered in the 4th century CE, when John Cassian identified it as a "'weariness or distress of heart', 'akin to dejection'," and when Evagrius Pontificus—to whom Mark also directed his audience—averred that "the condition was characterized by exhaustion, listlessness, sadness or dejection, restlessness, aversion to the cell and the ascetic life, and yearning for family and former life" (44-45).

responsibility, thus at times allowing the person suffering from acedia to be judged less harshly" (54).[7]

This "medical frame of reference" is of a piece with what scholars in the last half-century have come to refer to—following sociologist Irving Zola (1972)—as "medicalization." Medicalization is—most generally—the tendency to 'read' problems as rooted in an individual's physiology or psychology: to privilege, in other words, the autonomous, self-legislating actor as the seat of both agency and moral culpability. In their 2011 compendium, *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*, Margaret Lock and Vinh-Kim Nguyen note that the contemporary currency of the term owes a great deal to the critical psychiatry and genealogical historiography of the late-mid twentieth century (70).[8]

Of particular salience, here, is one of their prime examples of medicalization's highly contingent nature: precisely the Japanese diagnostic category of Hikikomori that Mark referenced in his email. They note that "Hikikomori is understood explicitly as a social and not a psychiatric problem, even by psychiatrists, who insist that most affected individuals are not depressed," and that "[e]fforts to deal with the problem are largely by means of support groups;" in their reading, "[t]he phenomenon of hikikomori shows once again how medicalization is not an inevitable response to social disorders" (76). Mark invokes the category of Hikikomori for the same basic reason that Lock and Nguyen do—because its very existence challenges biomedicine's claims to hegemony—but for Mark, the limited success of social support as a treatment protocol also serves as evidence of the inadequacy of healing modalities that fail to address the absence of the sacred.

---

[7] "While they often chastised different aspects of acedia," Jackson explains, medieval "handbooks frequently implied that confession was a form of healing and the sins of the penitent were afflictions for which he was to be treated and cured" (49).

[8] For an expanded, and complementary, discussion of this point, see Nye (2003).

In their analysis, Lock and Nguyen acknowledge a version of the point made by Jackson, but—in keeping with the overwhelming anthropological consensus on the subject[9]—they emphasize both the high stakes and the deleterious effects of this process: "While in theory this move from 'badness to sickness' relieved patients of culpability for their condition," they note, "it nevertheless permitted medical professionals to make judgments about the labeling and care of such patients that inevitably had profound moral repercussions with respect to how they should best be managed" (70).

For Mark, it's critically important that what he's naming doesn't fit into the existing categories in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*—because the foreclosure of diagnosis is part of what they want to resist… and yet, as clinicians, their experience suggests that 'naming' an object can enable new ways of relating to that object—opening up new possibilities for action in the world, even as it constrains others. And it's to that end, then, that they seek to 'spiritualize psychotherapy': in search of a safe passage between something like a naïve version of an Emersonian ethos of self-cultivation and a cynical disavowal of Foucauldian technologies of the self, 'spirituality', for them, becomes about finding a sustainable, communal relationship to existential precarity—and 'acedia' becomes a way to

[9] A consensus which Margaret Lock has been instrumental in shaping: in their 1987 treatise on "The Mindful Body," Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock gloss medicalization as the "funneling of diffuse but real complaints into the idiom of sickness" (27). Here, I'm more interested in their assertion that "the role of doctors, social workers, psychiatrists, and criminologists as agents of social consensus is pivotal" in this process, because "the medical gaze is… a controlling gaze, through which active (although furtive) forms of protest are transformed into passive acts of 'breakdown'" (27). That formulation is of particular relevance because it suggests that there's a monolithic character to what they and others continue to call "the medical gaze"—and, without downplaying the well-documented and highly problematic effects of institutionalized biomedical rationality, I want to look more closely at the people doing the 'gazing', and to suggest that what they find (when they look at themselves and at each other) offers an emergent critique of that very gaze, as well as the institutions that channel it with such power—even, and perhaps especially, when they're doing it from a precarious position on the peripheries of those institutions.

quarantine an unstable, chaotic welter of affect and experience, without reducing it to a diagnostic code.

This is a dissertation about how Americans reach out beyond the worlds in which they grew up in search of meaningful lives—and it's also about how and where they decide to stop, and plant a flag, and make a home. This is also, more particularly, a set of stories about the spiritual lives of American mental health professionals—university professionals deeply concerned for the well-being of the next generation—who express abiding dissatisfaction with what they describe as the "dominant culture" of the social world in which they find themselves. But this is also a social world they both resist and reproduce, as they perform the often palliative care of short-term psychotherapy, and as they sustain their own commitments to what they identify as a relatively comfortable lives: they are, after all, professionals with homes and cars and families. That is to say, while they would insist that they are not in the mainstream of what they identify as American middle-class culture—they are equally clearly nowhere near the fringe.

These clinicians are exquisitely aware of the limits of what's acceptable in mainstream U.S. mental health care, and they make carefully thought-out decisions to transgress those boundaries—or to carefully *avoid* transgressing them. Their very status as 'professionals' is secured, in part, by their licensure: their legal status as registered, credentialed practitioners of a state-regulated healing art. If we can think about them in this light—as front-line caregivers who are deeply disillusioned with the clinical register in which they nonetheless continue to labor—then the ways in which they deal with their own crises of faith in contemporary psychology have a great deal to tell us: about kinds of presence and ways of being present; about ideas and practices of transformation (personal and social; private and public); and, not least, about some

of the limits of and possibilities for this form of care as a way of making community in contemporary America.

The Talking Cure

> "When psychiatry is comprehended as a technology of the self, it no longer appears so different to the 'exotic' practices of spirit possession and shamanism that similarly function to restore alienated selves. Biomedical efficacy is revealed as a subjective performance, that is, a result of the mastery embodied in the practitioner, rather than an objective ability to carry out standardized skill."
> - Lock and Nguyen, *An Anthropology of Biomedicine* (2011:301)

Anthropological interest in human psychology is as old as anthropology—and older than the field of academic psychology itself; according to René Girard, the very notion of 'transference' that became foundational to psychoanalysis has ethnological ancestry: "Decades before Freud began to speak about transference," Girard observes, "Frazer used the term in connection with scapegoating" (Girard 1987:75). From early Americanist inquiries into 'primitive' psychology,[10] to the application of psychoanalysis to the study of cultures,[11] the sometimes-instrumental deployment of psychoanalytic and psychological concepts has run parallel to an impulse to critique the effects of those concepts on the people and cultures under study—and to turn the ethnographer's gaze back toward 'home': witness Benedict's use of what James Boon called the "contrastive integration" (2005:380) of disparate cultures to indict Anglo-American psychiatry as early as 1934.[12] The late 20th century saw an expansion of this emphasis among the burgeoning

[10] e.g., Boas (1938); Sapir (1927)

[11] From the 'Culture and Personality' school—e.g., Benedict (2006); Mead (1954); Kluckholn et al. (1948); Spiro (1951); and Wallace and Fogelson (1961)—and structuralist analyses of *Les Pensées Sauvage* (Lévi-Strauss 1966), to ethnopsychoanalysis (e.g., Devereux 1978) and other forms of psychoanalytic anthropology such as Obeyesekere (1981).

[12] Indeed, the breadth of Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* culminates (in part) thusly: "the issue in psychiatry has been too often confused by starting from a fixed list of symptoms instead of from the study of those whose characteristic reactions are denied validity in their society" (2006:258).

proliferation of approaches[13] that build on Michel Foucault's conception of "technologies of the self"[14] (1978:26); in short, the relationships between mind, self, and society has been a central object of disciplinary attention.

The vast majority of critical attention has been (understandably and productively) directed at the recipients-cum-consumers of mental health care; far less anthropological research concerns itself with practitioners of 'the talking cure'.[15] In fact, much late-twentieth-century scholarship found, in the figure of the therapist, a scapegoat for a variety of social ills: Philip Rieff (1966) famously lamented *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* over more 'traditional' registers of relationship and forms of faith. For Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), 'The Therapist' is an archetypal figure standing in for all manner of self-indulgent diversions in a world *After Virtue*—and "[t]he problem posed by therapy," according to Robert Bellah and his co-authors, "is that too much of the purely contractual structure of the economic and bureaucratic world is becoming an ideological model for personal life" (1996:127).

I take these critiques seriously—but, more importantly, my interlocutors do, as well: as women and men practicing an imperfect form of care, they challenge us to resist an impulse to facile caricature. In order to better understand their life-worlds, we need to understand the tableau of which contemporary psychotherapy is a part. Living in twenty-first century America, it's difficult to imagine a world without psychotherapists. Whether or not one has been under the care of a licensed mental health professional—and, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, that included nearly one in six adults in 2008, who were treated by one or more of the

[13] For a relatively recent survey, see Lindholm (2007).

[14] Foucault was particularly concerned with practices of bodily and mental self-discipline and self-cultivation, which, in his reading, catalyze the naturalization and internalization of relations of domination; see also Foucault (1986), and for a seminal application of Foucault's notion to modern psychology, see Rose (1996).

[15] Cf. Davies (2009), and especially Luhrmann (2001), discussed below.

roughly 450,000 licensed clinicians in the country[16]—it's surpassingly difficult to find someone whose life has not been directly impacted by mental health-related issues. More broadly, however: there is simply no way to tell a coherent story about the experience of twentieth-century American middle-class life without telling the story of psychology as a "healing technology."[17]

In 2005, Americans spent about $113 billion on mental health care—a figure which includes psychopharmaceuticals, and which represents less than six percent of U.S. health care spending in that year (Mark et al. 2011:284). Current estimates suggest that one in five American adults suffer from some form of acute mental illness in a given year, and that, at most, roughly 60% of those affected seek treatment (284).[18] It's also the case, however, that estimates of incidence and prevalence both a) are hotly contested and b) vary in unpredictable ways, particularly in relation to the radical reimagining of diagnostic categories and criteria that takes place every twenty years or so—as, for instance, occurred during the run-up to the 5th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) or '*DSM*'. Voluminous literature engages the problems (political, epistemological, and otherwise) that have been identified with both the text of the *DSM* and the processes of its construction (and revision); much of that critical conversation[19] is outside the scope of my analytical interests here—except, that is, where it

[16] This is, in fact, a remarkably difficult number to pin down—due, most likely, to the thoroughly incoherent character of the mental health care delivery "system" in the U.S. (discussed briefly below). This figure is drawn from an estimate by Sundararaman (2009), who was forced to aggregate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2008.

[17] See especially Cushman (1996).

[18] That figure reflects the least stigmatized illnesses, such as depression—and, of course, there are dramatic disparities in both morbidity and mortality that correlate with race and socioeconomic status. See, for example, (Good et al. 2002) and (Aneshensel et al. 1999).

[19] See especially: Good (1996) and Mezzich et al. (1999); for a comprehensive alternative to the DSM, see PDM Task Force (2006).

directly informs my interlocutors' senses of how and why they do what they do, in the particular ways in which they do.

Neither is this dissertation intended to contribute to the historiography of American psychotherapy—at least, not directly. It's worth observing, however, that the 'mainstreaming' of mental health care in the U.S. is an astonishingly recent phenomenon, and is, in many ways, still in its infancy (Druss and Satcher 2010). A much-lauded (and heavily neuroscience-centric) report was delivered to the U.S. Surgeon General in 1999, marking the federal government's first comprehensive survey of what the authors could barely bring themselves to call a "system" of mental health care, and in which some version of the descriptor "fragmented" appears no fewer than twenty-two times (U.S. Surgeon General 1999). In the past fifteen years, some halting progress has been made at the policy level: legislation was enacted in 2007 requiring parity in coverage for mental and physical health care (excluding, of course, the 47 million Americans without insurance, even in that year of plenty before the current economic crisis began in earnest); more recently (i.e., in 2013) the Obama administration launched an internet portal—mentalhealth.gov—so that Americans with internet access can more easily access mental health care services.

Few would dispute the Surgeon General's report's characterization of the "system" as "fragmented." There is, moreover, broad agreement that there are multiple, discrete, and remarkably incommensurable orientations abroad among practitioners—orientations that have dramatic consequences at levels ranging the from patients' experiences of care, to insurers' willingness to reimburse for services (which, of course, preempts some would-be patients from seeking care in the first place), to the epistemological status of the very object of intervention

(e.g., 'psyche', 'symptom', 'disorder', 'subject') constructed in the interaction between provider and supplicant.

I'm particularly interested in the past few decades of psychotherapeutic practice, because that is the timeframe in which most of my interlocutors came of age as practitioners—and, crucially, it is a period which has involved extraordinary, and extraordinarily compressed, changes in the practice of mental health care. Two editions of the American Psychological Association's *History of Psychotherapy*—published in 1992 and 2011—encapsulate this era that has followed on the rise-to-omnipotence of managed health care (with its fully overdetermining impact on categories and practices of diagnosis and, to a slightly lesser extent, treatment) in the U.S.[20]

It would be difficult to overstate the importance, for practitioners and recipients of mental health care in the U.S., of the crafting of the radical 1980 revisions made to the *DSM* (the *DSM-III*)—particularly with respect to the tectonic shift in the conceptualization of diagnostic criteria. In her ethnographic study of psychiatrists-in-training, anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann frames the primary, defining opposition at the epistemic core of contemporary American mental health care as the legacy of "the Cartesian dualism that is so marked a feature of our spiritual and moral landscape" (2001:6). She draws attention to an irreducible tension (from which she draws the title of her text, *Of Two Minds*): it's a matter of "biomedical" versus "psychodynamic:" the former, she avers, is "an approach to mental illness that treats it as an illness of the body that is more or less comparable to other physical illnesses" (6). At other times, however, "psychiatrists

[20] APA-sanctioned histories are particularly intriguing sources of 'authorized' narratives. The 2011 edition located clinical psychology at the spearhead of evolving modes of relational self-improvement: "Humans have struggled with problems in living since the beginning of time and have sought guidance from others to assist in overcoming or managing their problems. For most of history, that guidance came in the form of philosophy, medicine, or theology. For the past 120 years, the rapidly developing profession of psychology has also served that purpose" (Norcross et al. 2011:651).

talk about distress as something… that involves the kind of person you are: your intentions, your loves and hates, your messy, complicated past" (6). From this psychodynamic standpoint, "mental illness is in your mind and in your emotional reactions to other people. It is your 'you'" (7). This distinction has profound consequences: "if something is in the body, an individual cannot be blamed; the body is always morally innocent. If something is in the mind, however, it can be controlled and mastered, and a person who fails to do so is morally at fault" (6-7).[21]

The 2001 edition of the APA-sanctioned, decennial survey of 'Division 29'—the psychotherapists—found that out of 538 respondents, the majority were "employed primarily in private practices (66%) and university settings (14%) and that continues to embrace eclectic/integrative (36%), psychodynamic (21%), and cognitive (16%) orientations," and that "professional activities have remained quite similar across the past 20 years" (Norcross et al. 2002:97). This out of a membership of 4,000—which, of course, is not necessarily representative of the roughly half-million licensed mental health care providers in the U.S., most of whom are not professionally affiliated with the APA. Nevertheless, the fact that so many still claim psychodynamic orientation is striking, and, while some of it can surely be accounted for by the presence of older practitioners (particularly in teaching capacities in non-research-focused degree programs), the fact that this is a low-status affiliation within the APA suggests something about its enduring appeal for clinicians themselves.

[21] There is broad critical consensus on this point. As philosopher Ian Hacking puts it: "Responsibility is the crux. We have a profoundly moral attitude to disease. If something is a real disease, you're not responsible for it or are responsible only insofar as you engage in vice that brought on the disease. Sex, drink, and idleness are typical vices. If you need costly hip-replacement surgery because you continue playing boyhood games such as basketball into middle age, you are not blamed or held responsible; this is because in our world continued youthful activity is a virtue" (1998:11).

There are, finally, a host of nontrivial distinctions between the psychiatrists who make up the professionally 'elite' of mental health care, and the broad array of credentials under which the nearly half-million licensed mental health practitioners in the U.S. practice (less than 10% of whom are medical doctors). Nevertheless, it is precisely their 'elite' status that makes them relevant: insofar as the 'medical model' of diagnosis and care is, increasingly, the dominant, overarching paradigm for mental health care, their credentially-challenged colleagues are compelled to emulate the logic of diagnosis and practice that comes down from on high.

Lock and Nguyen observe that "psychoanalysis has always remained somewhat peripheral to biomedical practice" (2011:287). This holds true for the array of practices that constitute the contemporary progeny of psychoanalysis—grouped, broadly, under the aegis of 'psychodynamic' approaches to psychotherapy—and which include my interlocutors. The reason for this is neither surprising nor complicated: the 'version' of psychotherapy that has come to dominate the managed-care landscape is recognizably a part of the biomedical preoccupation with the amelioration of symptoms—an increasing reliance on exclusively psychopharmacological or, when 'talk therapy' is still covered (that is to say, when there is a willingness on the part of insurance companies to reimburse clients for such treatments), by means of imposed caps on the number of sessions allowed or the particular kinds of credentials recognized as 'valid'.

It's impossible to speak meaningfully about the state of contemporary American mental health care without, of course, speaking of drugs: "psychopharmacology," as Luhrmann put it, "is the great, silent dominatrix of contemporary psychiatry" (2001:47). According to Luhrmann, this situation is particularly salient to mental health care—a state of affairs that, she contends, is inherently dangerous, since: "psychiatric medications treat symptoms, not diseases. …[W]hen

psychiatrists focus on medications, they sometimes behave as if the symptoms are the things in the world and the diagnostic categories have been invented by committees and reified by insurance companies" (48). In context of my own work, this 'fact' that Luhrmann presents—and I'm inclined to accept it as such, given that it is supported by robust social scientific analysis, common sense, and my own empirical data—is primarily relevant insofar as it foregrounds the exceptionality of the milieux in which my informants practice.

In his comprehensive study of the role of pharmaceuticals (and their purveyors) in contemporary life, Joseph Dumit notes that in 2011 alone, Americans spent $203 million on prescription medications—a figure that represents fully 10% of U.S. health care spending (2012:2).[22] He draws particular attention to a recent, and dramatic increase in the proportion of psychotropic prescriptions written by non-psychiatrists—a situation that he attributes to highly effective marketing efforts on the part of pharmaceutical companies (78)[23]—and which further widens the gulf between biomedical amelioration of symptoms and the relational forms of care that, as Lock and Nguyen gloss them, "seek to treat patients by linking present suffering with past experiences" (2011:286).

In sum: the contemporary landscape of medicalized mental health care is dominated by psychopharmaceutical interventions and short-term therapy. The clinicians with whom I

[22] Dumit's primary analytical interest is in what he calls the process of "medical identification" (66)—that is, the ways in which individuals come relate their senses of themselves as subjects to logics of risk-management and diagnosis. Interestingly—in relation to the discussion of American Spirituality which follows below—Dumit leans heavily on the anthropology of religion: he invokes Victor Turner's (1969) theory of ritual to make the case that "The story in the Zoloft [antidepressant] commercial enacts the classic anthropological rite of passage" (72-3), and he invokes Susan Harding's (2001) work on Evangelical Christian conversion to elucidate interior dimensions of how consumers might develop "biomedical conviction" (Dumit 2012:67).

[23] "In 2007," Dumit notes, "nonpsychiatrists wrote 79 percent of all prescriptions for antidepressants and 51 percent of all prescriptions for antipsychotics (up from 16 percent in 2001 and 30 percent in 2004, respectively)" (78).

worked—who, as a rule, entered the field out of a desire to help people, and to contribute positively to their worlds—generally find themselves demoralized by the day-to-day experience of working in, and perpetuating, this state of affairs. As we'll see in Part I (below), they find that they have a limited range of vocational options available to them. Working in private practice entails submission to the cost-driven logic of the insurance industry, or else serving only the affluent clients who can afford to pay out-of-pocket. Many find that working in community mental health facilities (or other institutional milieux) is no better. A plurality of my informants chose to work in college mental health care because it seemed to offer the possibility of a meaningful, fulfilling alternative: a way, that is, to work on the periphery of the system, without having to abandon it wholesale.

Evidence suggests that those hopes are not wholly unfounded. At the time I conducted fieldwork (i.e., 2009-11), 98% percent of college counseling centers in the U.S. did not collect payment from insurers, and 93% did not charge a per-use fee for services—which represents a (theoretical) 300% decrease in the number of centers charging a fee since 1996[24] (Gallagher 2010:4-5). The significance of this is at least twofold: first, that they are exempt from many of the strictures of managed-care medicine and its reliance upon the biomedically-overdetermined diagnostic practices discussed above; and, second, that they are, in some cases, able to practice the kind of psychodynamic or depth psychology that has been increasingly ghettoized in clinical psychology and which is the reason why many of the practitioners I've worked with in the baby-boomer age set entered the field in the first place.

[24] 'Theoretical' because the AUCCCD's figure for 1996—17.2%, as against 2010's 6.7%—is unsourced, and publically available AUCCCD survey data only goes back as far as 2007. In any case, this distinction applies to fees charged directly to students for services provided; most of the centers' funding still came from mandatory fees charged to all students, rather that at the point of services rendered.

And yet—while college mental health care does seem to represent a distinct subset of the larger milieu—that boundary appears to be eroding under the twin pressures of medicalization and what João Beihl (2007) has called "pharmaceuticalization."[25] Emily Martin, in her work on Bipolar Disorder in the U.S., devotes considerable attention to the related problems of stigma and romance that attend popular representations of depression and mania (respectively). When she began her research, she tells her readers in the preface, she:

> was a professor at Princeton at the time and I knew that several of my students were struggling with bipolar disorder. I went to the psychiatrist who was head of the student counseling service and explained what I have been trained to do, offering to facilitate the formation of a group in some small way. She thanked me but explained that students at Princeton did not need such a group. She said that students with those kind of serious mental problems would simply not be able to function in the intellectually demanding environment at Princeton, so there was no need to form a group (2007:xvii)

A few pages later, in the proper introduction, she refers again to the issue (if not precisely to the incident): "At Princeton, where I taught for a number of years, students who were diagnosed with manic depression must often take a lengthy leave and then apply for readmission." (5). There is no data to suggest that Princeton is remarkable in this regard (at least, not among 'elite' schools).

The broader picture, however, is: not completely clear. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is nontrivial number of students with significant psychological diagnoses in the larger population of undergraduates in the U.S. (see below)—but the striking fact is that there's almost

[25] But see also Biehl (2010) and Biehl (2013b).

no data at all.[26] Among clinicians, the clear consensus seems to be that this shift is largely attributable to the striking increases in both the efficacy and use of psychopharmaceuticals; as my informants put it, young people who wouldn't have even attempted to attend college a few decades ago are increasingly achieving enough control over their symptoms to make the pressures and independence of higher education a reasonable undertaking.[27]

The Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD) has only recently—that is, within the last eight years or so—begun canvassing its members and circulating (quite informally, by means of the group's listserv) the aggregated results. The earliest published data is from 2007, and there is not, as yet, any data considered trustworthy or representative by the practitioners with whom I've worked; nonetheless, a few points bear consideration. The 2010 survey reflected 320 centers that provided counseling to 10.8% of students at their respective institutions (that is, 317,000 out of 2.75 million students in total). Among its most interesting findings, the report suggested that only "27% of centers tend to place limits on the number of client counseling sessions allowed;" that "24% of center clients are on psychiatric medication… up from… 9% in 1994;" that "the average number of counseling

[26] This despite mounting, highly visible crises—like the 2007 shootings at Virginia Tech and the 2011 shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona—for which supposed 'lapses' in the respective mental health care systems were widely blamed. And the 'data problem' is not unique to college mental health care; a 2009 report released by the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that "Across the country, states show an extremely limited capacity to provide data on their service delivery. In this survey, only 15 states reported reasonably comprehensive data on the number of evidence-based practices (EBPs) offered, and only 11 states were able to share any type of data on how long it takes to get an inpatient psychiatric bed through an emergency room" (Aron et al., 2009).

[27] Dumit's data seems to supports this—at least indirectly: he notes that fully six percent of U.S. adolescents are currently being medicated for attention deficit disorder (2012:2), and "six percent of children under the age of six are on long-term psychoactive drugs" (174). Further indirect support comes in the form of a 2014 national survey, which showed that nearly 10% of college freshmen reportedly "felt depressed"—a figure that represents nearly a 50% increase since 2009 (Eagan et al. 2014).

sessions for all students is 5.6 sessions per client;" and that "44% of their clients have severe psychological problems [and] 91% of directors report that the recent trend toward greater numbers of students with severe psychological problems continues to be true on their campuses" (Rando 2008). Of course, these numbers may or may not be precisely accurate—but, taken together, they offer valuable insight into how counseling center directors themselves understand their place in the broader context of clinical mental health care—and these data suggest that my informants are very much in the mainstream of their field, at least with respect to the circumstances in which they practice, and their sense of the longitudinal trends they encounter.

Given this confluence of vocational commitment to relational forms of care—a dedication, that is, to the practice of being in relationship with other people as a means of healing—and the structural impediments to the effective carrying-out of such commitments, it's unsurprising that some psychotherapists reach out beyond the clinic in search of answers. Such efforts take myriad forms, from professional development to hobbies; for many of my informants, however, these efforts take place on spiritual register, awash in a syncretic sea of traditions and techniques—which finds them squarely within a deep and broad tradition of American religiosity, to which I now turn.

American Sacred

> "To say that Americans have become narcissistic in their spiritual orientations and to argue that they need to overcome this obsession by participating in congregations and by doing volunteer work is a gross oversimplification of the situation, just as it is to suggest that modern therapy has somehow subverted our understanding of true spirituality"
>
> - Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (1998:165)

As we have seen, the key distinction in contemporary clinical psychology takes the form of an opposition between 'psychodynamic' and 'biomedical' orientations to care. These are not

simply alternative theoretical preferences; they represent, instead, two orientations to the world, separated by an epistemic break. Medicalization is another word for the colonization of everyday life by scientific rationality: biomedical diagnostic practices and interventions inscribe categorical distinctions between 'belief' and 'knowledge' under the auspices of 'care'. This observation does not, of course, amount to a wholesale indictment of biomedicine—there is nothing romantic about florid psychosis, and psychopharmaceuticals provide welcome relief from the very real, and acute, suffering of millions of people; rather, my interest here is in the totalizing quality of this process, and in its more social side-effects.

Such effects are never *quite* totalizing, however, and I'm particularly interested in the ways my interlocutors have found to resist an epistemological frame that imposes itself in the guise of increasingly naturalized facts about the seemingly obvious, self-evident nature of the categories into which they find themselves compelled to divide their experience—because, in lived practice, such distinctions turn out to feel more like arbitrary and artificial interruptions of the ways in which they experience their capacity to care for each other, and for their patients. Of course, psychodynamically-oriented psychotherapists are not the only people in contemporary America who find themselves straddling the epistemic gulf that separates their lived experience from the scientific rationality which is at the heart of biomedicine's social authority. The extent to which American biomedicine struggles to shore up the walls of these epistemological categories becomes clearest in places where the accepted categories fail to connect with social life.

According to the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, nearly forty percent of U.S. adults—the majority of whom are also consumers of biomedicine—stated that they had accessed at least one of the healing modalities loosely grouped under the label of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, or 'CAM' (Barnes et al. 2008). The U.S. National Center for

Complementary and Integrative Health[28] states that the bevy of disparate practices to which this label is applied—ranging from massage to prayer—share one thing in common: they are "a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered to be part of conventional medicine" (NCCAM 2009). That is to say, they are viewed from within the frame of biomedicine as external to that very particular frame. In analyses of the increasingly widespread consumption of CAM in the U.S., it is a commonplace for scholars to note the desire for a reinstantiation of a healer-patient relationship often found lacking in the eras of 'paternalistic' and, later, managed-care medicine.[29] Scholars emphasize the burgeoning 'alternative' medicine market in the U.S. which unfolds in opposition to extant regulatory regimes and Western medical evaluative frameworks.[30] Extensive research, in short, addresses the consumption of CAM modalities;[31] far less research considers the production of these modes of expertise.[32]

[28] Until 2015, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM 2009).

[29] For example, Harrington (2008) and Kaptchuk and Eisenberg (1998)—though this account is subject to increasing challenges—e.g., Astin (1998)—and the commensurability of the two frames is evident in ongoing deemphasis of notions of 'alternative medicine' in favor of 'integrative medicine' (see, for instance, note 28 above).

[30] See: Hahn and Kleinman (1983), Harrington (1999a), and Boozang (1999)

[31] E.g., Angell and Kassirer (1998), Eisenberg et al. (1993), and Eliason et al. (1999)

[32] As sociologist Courtney Bender—whose work will be taken up in greater detail momentarily—notes: "the dramatic change in the institutional position and legitimacy of alternative medicine (increasingly called "complementary" or "integrative" to denote its developing connections with biomedicine) is the consequence of numerous changes in American policy and culture, including the increased power of health management and insurance entities and the rise of patient-led activist groups. The repositioning of energetic healing within alternative medicine has taken place at the same time that alternative medicine has become increasingly enveloped within mainstream medical practice. Alternative medicine is at present far from countercultural, and its critiques of mainstream medicine have softened in the last decades as alternative practices become more integrated within it" (2010:26). See also Barnes (2009) and Pritzker (2014) for recent, and superlative, examples.

In the series of preliminary fieldwork trips through which this project took shape, I explored the teaching and study of a wide variety of modalities of CAM. I spent two months with practitioners and students of metaphysical healing practices in southern California—ranging from acupuncture to medical Qigong to psychic 'medical intuitive' diagnostics. I also travelled to Peru for a month, where I engaged with workers in the 'mystical tourism' industry (in the Urubamba Valley), who broker access to indigenous (Q'ero) shamans and serve as guides and translators for 'Western' students. And I spent five weeks on the Lakota reservation in South Dakota where Mark had first met his teacher, and to which many of his students return, annually, to take part in a Sun Dance ceremony.

Through this preliminary work, I developed an understanding of the production of CAM expertise as a multi-faceted phenomenon; I paid particular attention to the trajectories along which healing traditions migrated, and to the multiply valent connections made by my interlocutors—connections that cut across cultural and philosophical (to say nothing of political or economic) categorical distinctions. Above all, I was struck by persistent questions and hopes voiced by interlocutors across these tenuously-connected contexts: time and again, people seemed to be using their search for transformational healing as a way to revitalize their experience of social life, and to cultivate their capacity for experiences that *felt* "sacred" by nurturing their relationships with each other.

Ultimately, that is, CAM is of interest here not because my interlocutors assert identities as practitioners of alternative medicine—indeed, I never heard the moniker uttered by Mark or his students—but rather because it's 'good to think with'. CAM shares with psychodynamic psychotherapy what Gilles Deleuze (1986) called a "minor" status in relation to biomedicine: a position of necessarily relative alterity, from which biomedical authority is experienced as

externally imposed—and which, by virtue of that 'felt' peripheral quality, engenders possibilities for resistance to the dominant frame. [33] Questions about the legitimacy of CAM practices also have the virtue of foregrounding an abiding concern with the relationship between mind, body, and spirit—concerns which are common to my interlocutors, as well.[34]

Over the course of two years, I spent hundreds of hours with the members of the Archetypal Play Therapy (APT) Study Group—led by Mark's student Steven, and his wife, Alice—in a dozen of the monthly Study Group gatherings, as well as one full-day APT workshop, and 58 individual interviews. I first presented my proposal for this research to at the group's annual business meeting in June of 2010. We'd had a series of conversations, leading up to that evening, about the potential impact of my participant-observation on group dynamics and individual people's experiences—as one might expect from a group of psychotherapists. Finally, at the group's annual end-of-year gathering, Steven led an intensive, hour-long discussion in which it was decided that I would be allowed to record the period of storytelling that preceded the 'play', as well as the 'processing' discussion which followed it—during which it was not uncommon for people to broach intimate and confidential subjects (ranging from their experiences of childhood sexual abuse to suicide in their immediate families)—but that I could not record the performance of 'play' itself, which he identified as "liminal space."

[33] See also Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Deleuze (1993).

[34] Historian of science Anne Harrington (2008) has shown that the relationship between mind, body, and healing has been a central preoccupation in the West for several centuries; she identifies a series of narrative vectors by which the idea of a mind-body connection has persistently resurfaced in American society—to the consternation of successive generations of practitioners of evidence-based medicine. Harrington also contends that historical and anthropological records suggest that substantive changes—not only in individuals' understandings of healing practices, but in people's embodied experiences of the effects of those practices—appear to correlate to differently available sociocultural "scripts" for making sense of those experiences (22-24).

As Steven explained it, "We come in, and we're dragging our day with us, and our roles outside of that space with us,"[35] he said. "But then, the *liminality* is when the people get in the center—you know, the people who take a role, and they get *transformed* in that role." At the time, Steven suggested that the best way to "protect APT, in terms of the sacredness of what we do, would be to tape the meta-conversation." Later, as I sat with other members of the group in one-on-one interviews throughout the year that followed, people identified with Steven's invocation of "sacredness"—and they understood it, primarily, as the promise of having an opportunity for unselfconscious, unreflective, immersive experiences of themselves, in the course of which they might surprise themselves and be "transformed."

In a seemingly offhand turn of phrase, Victor Turner once described Martin Buber as a "gifted native informant" (1969:126). In the text (toward the end of a chapter on "Liminality and Communitas" in *The Ritual Process*), Turner has just insisted that "communitas emerges where social structure is not"—a curious construction that seems to playfully invert Freud's aphoristic dictum, "wo Es war, soll Ich verden"(Freud 1964:80)—and he's about to lean on Buber's emphasis on the "spontaneous, immediate, concrete nature of community" to underscore the intensity of the experience to which he's drawing the reader's attention, before turning to the example of *Gestalt* psychology's "mutually determinative" relation between "figure and ground" (Turner 1969:127). Between those two moments, however, Turner's tone shifts: "perhaps," he hedges, "the best way of putting this difficult concept into words is Martin Buber's—though I

[35] Quotes attributed to my interlocutors have been transcribed from recordings and, in some cases, have been edited for clarity.

feel that perhaps he should be regarded as a gifted native informant rather than as a social scientist!" (126).[36]

That phrase—"gifted native informant"—kept coming to mind at various points during my fieldwork… and the question that accompanied each recollection of Turner's digression was: native *to what*? My sense is that Turner, in thusly framing the scholar of dialogic existentialism who vehemently eschewed the labels of 'theologian' and 'philosopher' (let alone 'social scientist'), wanted to locate Buber at a kind of minimum safe epistemological distance from his own experience of modernity: Buber, in Turner's construction, became a "native" of a particular experience of faith, of *certainty*, to which Turner could not quite imagine himself gaining access. Like many mid-century social scientists (particularly those with Durkheimian[37] predilections), Turner was deeply concerned with what he saw as a fraught relationship between, on the one hand, the emancipatory possibilities associated with the cultivation of individual potential he saw going on around him in the middle-class America of the late 1960s and early 1970s and, on the other hand, the seemingly inevitable (and stultifying) consequences of the routinization of such

[36] In a chapter that roams from Benedictine monks to Hippies to the Nuer, Buber warrants two 'perhapses' and an exclamation point—hazardous material indeed!

[37] Durkheim was especially concerned with the relation between individual and society—though the latter is, crucially, ontologically prior: "religion is an eminently social thing" (1995:9), he observed, and "[a]nything can be sacred" (52); religion's "true function," however, "is to make us act and to help us live. The believer who has communed with his god is not simply a man who sees new truths that the unbeliever knows not; he is a man who is stronger" (419). For Durkheim, this is precisely communal knowledge—that is, communing at the social level makes such knowing possible: "if collective life awakens religious thought when it rises to a certain intensity, that is so because it brings about a state of effervescence that alters the conditions of psychic activity" (424).

processes of self-cultivation (whether among his Hippie contemporaries or among Franciscan monks half a millennium earlier).[38]

My interlocutors are, in the main, Euro-Americans; most are middle-aged and middle-class—and a surprising number of them are licensed mental health professionals. In general—and in keeping with a well-documented trend in the contemporary U.S.—they tend to identify as 'spiritual' rather than 'religious' (and, often quite pointedly, as 'spiritual but not religious', or 'SBNR').[39] According to a widely-publicized analysis of 2012 U.S. Census (CPS) data conducted by the Pew Center, just under 20% of U.S. adults state, when surveyed, that they have no affiliation with an organized religion—and, of those, "two-thirds of them say they believe in God (68%). More than half say they often feel a deep connection with nature and the earth (58%), while more than a third classify themselves as 'spiritual' but not 'religious' (37%), and one-in-five (21%) say they pray every day" (Lugo 2012). It represents a dramatic increase over a few short decades—and a 33% uptick in the last five years alone—but SBNR, like CAM, is also a kind of 'catch-all' category: it captures practices ranging from secular humanism to neo-shamanism, and, therefore, probably us tells more about the ways in which Americans struggle to narrate their orientation to the world than it does about anything else.

[38] The precision of his analysis of the history of the Franciscan order is open for debate; here, what's of interest to me are the kinds of questions that seemed urgent, and the ways in which it *seemed* productive to frame and pursue those questions.

[39] Broadly, my informants' assertions were in line with what sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow found: "many of the people we talked to had… come to find special meaning in the contrast between spirituality and religion. For them, spirituality was a broader term that signaled the value of drawing insights from many sources, were his religion was simply the particular institutional manifestation of different traditions" (1998:74). For my informants, what we might think of as the 'doctrine' problem is selectively relevant—i.e., rigorous adherence to a "tradition" is valued inasmuch as what they call "groundedness" indexes "authenticity"—but hybridity is the rule, and syncretism is expected; it's the knowledge of when to impose a boundary that marks a kind of expertise & conjures a form of authority (modeled on both the shaman and the clinic).

Above all, however, what my interlocutors have in common is their sense of themselves as engaged in common—and communal—projects of self-cultivation and transformation. As an orientation to the world, this marks them as part of a long, shared history of American religiosity. In an immediate sense, some of their practices are direct descendants of the 'Human Potential Movement' (HPM) of the 1960s and 1970s, which sociologist Donald Stone characterized as "a loosely-knit movement dedicated to actualizing the human potential… for greater insight, body awareness and communication with others" (1981:20). He used the term "Gestalt consciousness" to describe "the common experiential basis for all groups in the human potential movement"—an orientation which "involves a mode of awareness and a philosophy of life," the "aims [of which] are similar to Eastern meditation in using focusing techniques to attend to an immediate situation in order to stay in present time and in the present continuum of awareness" (38).[40]

Indeed, more than a few of the clinicians I worked with had direct experience with latter-day iterations of the Human Potential Movement (two of them, for instance, were active in a Gestalt training group), but the ritualized relational practices of my interlocutors—in clinic and ceremony—can perhaps be more usefully situated in the broader trajectory of what historian of religion Catherine Albanese (2006) calls "American Metaphysical Religion." In Albanese's analysis, "metaphysical practice is about what may be called magic," in which "the mental powers of imagination and will can affect and change the material order" (6-7); crucially, in her account, "all American magic comes down to salvation, and salvation means healing and

[40] In Stone's view—drawing on Bellah and, to a lesser extent, Clifford Geertz—HPM practices were the "functional equivalents of religion," inasmuch as they were centrally concerned with "relating people to their ultimate reality" (14). Even more to the point, for the purposes at hand, is Stone's assessment that "human potential groups may be seen as therapeutic milieux for solving common problems such as loneliness, work dissatisfaction, marriage conflicts, and chronic health ailments. In this vein they have been considered in the tradition of American self-help movements such as mind cure and positive thinking. The professionalization of self-help," Stone avers, "is psychotherapy." (27)

therapy" (15). As an alternative to the ultimately obfuscatory analytic notion of 'religious affiliation' (ascribed by scholars, as an artifact of people's willingness to assent to a particular proposition during a survey),[41] Albanese suggests that we look to evidence of people's orientation to their own experiences of self and wellbeing, and—of particular relevance in the present context—their abiding pursuit of direct engagement with the sacred. In the North American case, she identifies a contiguous arc from the neo-hermeticism of the high renaissance in Western Europe, through the colonial period and the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all the way to the emphasis on immediate, personal experience shared by present-day so-called 'new age'[42] and evangelical spiritual movements alike.[43]

[41] Religious affiliation, she argues, too often gets treated analytically as thought it simply entailed an entire, stable set of behaviors and preferences—as though the utterly opaque status of 'believer' or 'adherent' rendered people both aggregable and transparent.

[42] As Robert Wuthnow explains, "during the 1980s, the term New Age was used to describe alternative ways of encountering spirituality, such as channeling or using crystals… [yet] Americans' fascination with miracles and spiritual experiences extends well beyond the New Age movement. Indeed, one study found that only 15% of the public described themselves as holding some New Age beliefs, while another 12% expressed interest in learning more about New Age beliefs" (1998:123). Almost no one, it seems, voluntarily asserts an identity as 'New Ager'; hence the turn, in recent years, to revisit categories like 'Metaphysicals'. In his work on "Sacred Psychotherapy in the 'Age of Authenticity'," James Wilce (2011) makes a strong case for the use of Charles Taylor's appellation (i.e., 'Age of Authenticity') over the term 'New Age', not—or, at least, not primarily—because Taylor himself has succeeded in definitively characterizing contemporary life in *A Secular Age*, but rather on the on the basis of the etic ubiquity of 'authenticity' as a characterization of his interlocutors' goals and values. "Authentic self-expression," Wilce argues, "requires courage, even daring" (579). Anchoring his reading of the 'postmodern milieu' in a synthesis of Taylor (2007), Lindholm (2008), and Heelas (1996), Wilce examines his interlocutors' practices of Finnish lamentation and argues that there is a subtle, but key, distinction between the equation of "authenticity" with "directness" that occurs in "psy-discourses," on the one hand and, on the other, his interlocutors' use of "metaphoric indirectness as at the very least a strategic aid to deep, effective, and authentic self-expression" (2011:583).

[43] Albanese distinguishes 'metaphysical' from 'evangelical' orientations by dint of their respective emphases on 'mind' and 'heart' (6); here, I'm more interested in their common 'experientialist' orientation.

We are, in fact, at least two decades into an explosion of scholarship on American Spirituality. Responding to antecedent decades' sociological and historical concern about declining public participation in churches and civic institutions[44] as well as largely ahistorical journalistic accounts of home-grown exoticisms, scholars have recently devoted significant attention to the many forms in which worship takes place in the contemporary U.S. Of particular interest, here, is the fact that the dominant critique of American spirituality is very much of a piece with the critique of psychotherapy: that they are both fundamentally asocial—both therapy and spirituality foster an introspective orientation and, whatever good they do in terms of personal 'healing' or 'development' comes at the cost of a highly consequential withdrawal from the political community in which individuals once found, and made, themselves. Aspects of this critique are compelling and important—I've worked with a number of clinicians who are deeply concerned with the limitations immanent to a therapeutics that addresses individual symptoms without helping people to develop a capacity to directly challenge sources of oppression they experience—but I was particularly struck by the affinity between the critiques.

Robert Bellah and his co-authors, in their classic study of American *Habits of the Heart*, allow that "forms of 'new consciousness'… are not without their social contributions" (1996:246). In the main, however, they have little patience for "mysticism"—which, they assert, is "found most often among prosperous, well-educated people," and which "lacks any effective social discipline" (246). Their portraits of individuals are generous (notwithstanding the caricatures of "sheila-ism," and of dabbling 'seekers' as bricoleurs-cum-flâneurs in a religious marketplace wrought by some of Bellah's progeny)[45] but, at the level of sociological

[44] See especially Bellah et al. (1996), but also Putnam (2001).

[45] There are significant exceptions; for a thoroughly compelling counterexample, see Stone (1981).

generalization, they find the deleterious effects of mysticism to be second to—and, indeed, related to—the ill social effects of the rise of psychotherapy: inchoate spirituality's "particular form of compromise with the world—namely, its closeness to the therapeutic model in its pursuit of self-centered experiences and its difficulty with social loyalty and commitment" (246).

Bellah's scathing arguments about spirituality were taken up widely in the decade following the book's publication in 1985—and they have been widely challenged in the years since.[46] Historians of Religion have been especially busy.[47] Leigh Schmidt (2005) has amply demonstrated that what he (and others) gloss as "seeker spirituality" has deep historical roots in nineteenth century liberal tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman[48]—irrespective of practitioners' perennialist assertions—and his work on the category of "mysticism" (2003) itself suggests that the scholarly disdain for individual religious experience may have had less to do with its putative object than with institutional imperatives to shore up the levee between 'theology' and 'religious studies' departments. The habit of dividing 'worship' from other spheres of life is, it seems, a rather recent, and quite parochial, analytical phenomenon. The schism in the Western academy that instantiated a putatively unbridgeable gulf between 'scholars' and 'practitioners' is, in other words, little more than a century old—only slightly younger than the discipline of psychology itself—and it seems as though the boundary has always been more permeable than some scholars would like.

---

[46] One would be hard pressed to find a more comprehensive example than the "Epilogue" to Schmidt's *Restless Souls* (2005).

[47] See, for instance, Kripal (2007) and Brown (1999).

[48] As sociologist of religion Courtney Bender glosses the history: "American intellectual elites of the late 19th century interpreted the writings of German Romantics, Asian philosophical texts, neo-Platonic and hermetic texts, and their own religious encounters as evidence for this universal religious sensibility. … American (as well as European and Asian) academics established practices of comparative religion that were often rooted on phenomenological claims that the 'world's religions' shared an underlying core of experience" (2010:10).

The archetypal mystical psychologist is, without question, Carl Jung.[49] In an American context, that title almost certainly belongs to William James. His classic Gifford Lectures on *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (2002) is an often-lyrical work of painstakingly disciplined rigor: a treatment of religion that labors to stay within the bounds of science, without decisively reducing religious experience to an epiphenomenon. While his sympathies are clear—the text resonates, at times, with his almost-audible longing for a personal experience of the "faith-state" (495) he derives from "religious geniuses" (8) whose stories he recounts—he is exquisitely circumspect in his analytical claims: "So far, however, as this analysis goes," he insists, "the experiences are only psychological phenomena" (509).

James' more recent scholarly readers, however, have tended to focus less on this rigor, than on his emphasis on a transhistorical, transcultural 'faith-state' shared by mystics the world over; his single-minded interest in individual experience inspired a half-century of scholarship—Mircea Eliade's (1959) phenomenological orientation is probably as indebted to James as it is to Schleiermacher or Otto—before being roundly critiqued for its epistemic eurocentrism.[50] But while scholars are only beginning to reinterrogate and rehabilitate James' legacy,[51] American

[49] Historian Richard Noll, marveling at the idea that "passages from Jung's works are now often read as part of the sermons of some ministers… alongside the works of Emerson at some Unitarian services" (1997:297), has argued that "Jung and his ideas are the basis of a personal religion" that "holds out the promise of mystery and the direct experience of the transcendent that [adherents] do not experience in any church or synagogue" (291). This is not, according to Noll, an historical accident: "Jung believed and acted—consciously—like a religious prophet who sought to bring about a new spiritual age. His 'psychological' theories and his therapeutic techniques were… a pseudoscientific cover to hide the practices of what was essentially a new religious movement" (xi). Of course, it's worth observing that—as historian of science Michael Gordin has observed—'pseudoscience' is a philosophically vacuous epithet, the application of which is far more useful as a diagnostic tool for understanding what the user intends to protect than for understanding the object being thusly described (2012).

[50] See especially Proudfoot (1985).

[51] Historian Leigh Schmidt, for instance, is particularly adamant that there is no way to understand the transit of the category of 'mysticism' across the last century and a half without

religious practitioners themselves seem to have felt no such disciplinary constraints. As sociologist of religion Courtney Bender notes, "the practice and self-understanding of many spiritual practitioners is already engaged at some level with scholarship and scientific research projects" (2010:18); as a result, "scholars of 20th century religion engage in religious worlds that have been shaped by perennial and universal views of religious experience from the beginning" (194 n. 11).

And yet: history only gets us so far—because, as Bender puts it, "[t]he puzzle of spirituality in America cannot be solved by locating it in a history it refuses" (Bender 2010:184). Instead, her 2010 monograph on *The New Metaphysicals* of Cambridge, Massachusetts constitutes some of the most nuanced and sustained ethnographic attention paid to 'lived' metaphysical religion in the contemporary United States. Bender's etic category of 'metaphysical' comes closest, I think, to capturing the orientation and practice of my own interlocutors—though, when I used it in the field, it was generally met with an amiable shrug.[52] These people, having read some of the same

---

attending to the profoundly productive (if equally profoundly frustrating to scholars of religious studies) slippage between the valorization of 'mysticism' as a phenomenological category (in the wake of William James' *Varieties*) on the one hand and, on the other, the treatment of 'mysticism' as a moniker differently applied to differing sets of practices by historically-situated people (2003).

[52] Bender is at pains to point out something like naïveté in her respondents' understandings of social-scientific investigations of metaphysical spiritual practices, and, to a limited extent, my research supports this. Mark, for example, seemed intermittently confused—willfully so, I sometimes thought—about what it was that I was there to do, and what was meant by 'expertise' in my world. In one instance, he solicited my "anthropological" opinion on whether a missing student was more or less likely to harm himself on the basis of his cultural background; in another, he introduced me to his Dean as "an expert" in psychometric survey design. That having been said, one of the key distinctions between my work and Bender's is that while her informants are laypeople both with respect to institutional religion and institutional social science, it's precisely the 'ordained' status of my informants within the institution of licensed, clinical mental health care that marks the epistemological point of departure for my work with respect to hers. In short: while not all of my interlocutors will have read Foucault—and while we use our respective copies of René Girard to different ends—I find it difficult to sustain the

literature on the social scientific study of religion, were acutely aware of the perils of naming (or, more precisely, the danger of ceding to others the authority to name them); they referred to each other in the collective as 'family' or, on the rare occasions which called for formality, *tiospaye*.

In response to the "proliferation of definitions" of 'spirituality',[53] Bender dwells on the ways in which sets of practices are "entangled" (borrowing Dewey's notion) in various institutions and aspects of social life (5). In her view, "dominant social scientific understandings of contemporary spirituality" are victims of their own methodological and theoretical predilections toward fixation on the individual as the unit of analysis, which leads to the conclusion that such spirituality is "an individual rather than a collective phenomenon," and that people's practices thereby "come under scrutiny for being suspect, inauthentic, [or] purchased" (16). She makes the case for a move "beyond the facile critique of contemporary American Spiritual forms as mediated through the 'spiritual marketplace' and toward a stronger investigation of the cultural and spatial objects that render mystics' self-understandings immune from the battery of criticisms associated with cultural appropriation and religious consumerism" (154).

In sum: techniques like prayer, healing, magic, and medicine are widespread ways of addressing personal and community afflictions. Through embodied transformational practices, people effect changes in their selves and their worlds. In important ways, anthropological attention to the sacred—or, as least, to practices of spiritual or religious healing—has paralleled our inquiries into more (ostensibly) 'secular' register of healing. As Lock and Nguyen note,

---

comforting, if not quite compelling, sense of epistemological alterity with respect their practices and truth-claims.

[53] e.g., Robert Wuthnow: "at its core, spirituality consists of all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality. … But spirituality is not just the creation of individuals; it is shaped by larger social circumstances and by the beliefs and values present in the wider culture." (1998:viii)

"anthropologists have highlighted the role of the individual healer and demonstrated how therapeutic efficacy lies in the person of the healer as much as in collective belief" (2011:292).[54] Spiritual (but not religious) psychotherapists are especially interesting because they are both 'gifted native informants' (apropos of Turner's remark about Buber) and moral guardians of a particular kind of selfhood. 'Spirituality', as we have seen, is an important, if largely inchoate, presence in American social life—and it's very much that inchoate character that makes it compelling: if, as Robert Orsi (2005) suggests, religion is more usefully thought about as a question of relationships than 'meaning-making', then we would do well to attend to clinicians' particular, and particularly relational, attunement to the existential quality of 'meaningfulness'. How best to do that is, of course, another matter—and it's to that question, and the shape of the work ahead, that we now turn.

On Fieldwork and Its Inscription

> "So I had told the Babins I wanted to talk about spells, I had not laughed, and I had agreed to go and listen to them at their home: signs that I did not belong to the hospital staff who never dared to leave the walls of their asylum, or abandon their protective laugh."
> - Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage* (1980:105)

As it turns out, it's a lot easier to give a flower to a stranger in a rural college town than it is on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Before March of 2011, I lacked an empirical basis for comparing the relative merits of these milieux for the early-morning distribution of flora, but every morning for 28 days in the spring of that year, in locales across the Mid-Atlantic, I made my way to the nearest flower shop, bought a single flower—carnations were typically the cheapest—and, in silence, presented it to the first person I saw.

[54] See, of course, Lévi-Strauss' seminal meditation on "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (1949).

If they wouldn't accept it—which happened with the frequency one might expect, especially in places like New York—I continued approaching people until I found someone who would. Bearded and at 6'1", I quickly learned to avoid sneaking up on people; I'd approach them from head-on, when possible, or at an oblique angle, so that they'd see me coming and be less likely to bolt. I experimented with a variety of facial expressions and body postures, until I found a combination of a slight, round-shouldered stoop, partially-extended arms, and a soft smile-with-half-raised-eyebrows that seemed to elicit the least anxiety. The overwhelming majority of these interactions were (unsurprisingly) awkward, as people attempted to make sense of my silence, and to figure out whether I was trying to sell them something. Some people flatly ignored me, avoiding eye contact; a small number of them simply fled. Occasionally, a person would express delight, only to be further confused by my silence. I would acknowledge their acceptance of my gift with a half-nod, turn crisply, and do my best to disappear as quickly as possible.

At the beginning of March, I'd stood with three other supplicants, in the center of a cavernous, pitch-black room, and asked *Inyan Wasicu*—a Lakota spirit—for healing. As I'd explained in the months leading up to the *lowampi*,[55] and again during the "diagnostic" session that immediately preceded the ceremony, I'd struggled with depression, off and on, for years. I'd dealt with the acute episodes through a combination of psychotherapy, medication, and my own spiritual practice—but repeated episodes of extreme psychic distress had left me with what I understood as a debilitating inability to trust the reality of my own experience. That is to say: having felt absolutely certain, in moments of extremis, about things that were patently untrue—for instance, I'd been absolutely, viscerally sure that I had always, and would always, be lost in abject, solipsistic despair, utterly unable to call to mind that I hadn't felt that way only minutes

[55] Literally, "night sing"—a healing ritual consisting of sequential rounds of drumming and song, held in total darkness (in that case, in the cavernous nave of a deconsecrated church).

or hours before—and I had come to see myself as a kind of ultimately unreliable narrator: I yearned for a restoration of the capacity to trust my own experience, and it was for that that I sought healing.

I was familiar, to a debilitating degree, with the breadth of scholarly critique that has addressed itself to the 'problem' of 'belief', and to the pernicious fantasy of a transcendent state of something like 'certainty' attributed to (usually exotic) 'others': as philosopher Jean Pouillon observed, "it is the unbeliever who believes that the believer believes" (1982:2)—and anthropologist Bruno Latour has astutely pointed out that the very distinction between 'belief' and 'knowledge' most often arises in the context of an accusation (1987; 1997). I wasn't convinced that my interlocutors—American psychotherapists, and their friends, who came together to participate in spiritual healing ceremonies—had achieved a sustainable relationship to certainty that I might, somehow, absorb; it had become clear, however, over the course of my time with them, that they were deeply troubled by questions adjacent to my own, and, in any case, what I hoped for was a restoration, rather than a transcendence, of my own experience. At a minimum, it seemed a fruitful way to let the questions themselves 'breathe', and so I went to the altar for healing.

I was deeply apprehensive about what direction I might receive—both despite the fact that I'd been in similar healing ceremonies with these people before, and because of it: six months earlier, I'd witnessed one woman's request to be healed of her lifetime of internalized racism, when she'd been told by Inyan Wasicu to go, alone, to Japan, and walk for a year (more on this in Part II, below). I was concerned that, when my turn came, I would be told to undertake a comparably daunting sojourn: would I be challenged to abandon my research, and wander (quite pointedly) aimlessly? Would I be told to make a flesh offering and participate as a dancer in the

Sun Dance that group members attend each year—which I'd also seen, and which would entail a twelve-year commitment to pray with a ceremonial pipe, perform annual periods of fasting and a series of hanblecas, or vision quests, and make four pilgrimages to the Lakota reservation in South Dakota? Would it be Inyan Wasicu giving such an order, or would it just be Mark—the group's leader, and the *iyeska*, or 'spirit interpreter'—testing my resolve?

They'd started encouraging me to 'ask for a healing' or 'go to the altar' shortly after I first started attending ceremonies with Mark and his students the preceding August. It was a common refrain, that suggestion; I was on the receiving end of it with regularity, and I heard other people receive the same recommendation, too. There's a general sense among group members that everyone should "ask for ceremony" or "go for a healing"—certainly everyone I knew in the group said they'd been before the altar on at least one occasion. It seemed to be the unofficial 'ante' for full membership: one that had less to do with generating income for Mark (who, as a rule, barely took in enough in donations to cover the costs of hosting people for these weekends of ceremony) than it did with giving people both an opportunity and an excuse to come together, to share powerful spiritual experiences and warm sociality, and to renew their own faith in (and through) the practices they shared.

I was intrigued by the invitation, but deeply ambivalent; it seemed like a singularly rich opportunity to get "caught"—as Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980) described her own experience of witchcraft in 1970s Normandy—but it also seemed fraught: the anthropology of ritual and ceremonial communities in the 'West' is rife with a kind of tacit diagnostic impulse, and I was concerned about avoiding the withdrawal to a kind of epistemological 'minimum safe distance' that still pervades so much (otherwise rich) work in our field. In a way that felt more 'basic', I

was also worried about disrespecting the people I'd already come to care about, and failing to honor the generosity of their gifts—of time, of presence, and of themselves.

I'd come to know Mark and Steven through another clinician—Bruno—to whom I'd described my intent to conduct preliminary fieldwork on a particular Native American reservation that summer (in search of traditional healers who shared their practices with non-native medical or mental-health professionals). Bruno, it turned out, had some relevant experience of his own—he was a member of the tiospaye, and had taken part in numerous ceremonies—and he suggested that I talk to Steven, whom he described as the director of a university counseling center who took groups of students to this reservation each year on week-long 'service-learning' trips, and who was likely to be able to put me in touch with his contacts in the tribe, so that I might the better find my way while in South Dakota. My first meeting with Steven in May of 2009 was warmly amiable; he extended an introduction to a colleague at the tribal university on the reservation, and—almost offhandedly—he invited me, upon my return, to attend a monthly workshop he facilitated and which he thought I "might find interesting."

I left to spend that summer in Peru and South Dakota, researching potential field sites. In the fall of 2009, I began attending the workshops to which Steven had invited me—which turned out to be the APT Study Group—and, with encouragement from Steven and Bruno, I began corresponding with Mark. By the spring of 2010, it had become clear that fascinating questions were unfolding during the Study Group gatherings—that I was, in fact, already 'in the field'. At the APT Study Group's business meeting in June, my interlocutors debated whether or not to approve my proposal for research (which I would conduct between September of 2010 and June of 2011)—and when they finally agreed to participate, it was on one condition: my own

"vulnerability," as one of them put it, was an absolute requirement; they insisted, explicitly, that I be more 'participant' than 'observer'.

In the summer of 2010, I met Mark for the first time—and I began attending tiospaye gatherings. From August of 2010 until March of 2012, I was immersed in what seemed to be two almost distinct projects: I took part in APT Study Group sessions and interviewed group members, and I traveled to take part in rituals with tiospaye members at locations in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia, Wisconsin, and South Dakota.

Working with post-Freudian psychotherapists—state-sanctioned practitioners of the quintessentially modern, middle-class healing art, and professional purveyors of authenticity—has, for the ethnographer, advantages and disadvantages. They are, as a rule, inveterately reflexive, and there's almost nothing about which one cannot ask them: the disclosure of personal demons is the sine qua non of meaningful sociality, especially when they are 'off the clock'. The daunting degree of counter-disclosure demanded (as, let us say, the ante for access) brings about its own double-bind, however: they sometimes find themselves caught between, on the one hand, the roles they inhabit professionally (which require rigidly bounded, asymmetrical, transactional relations with their clients) and, on the other hand, the yearning they feel for precisely the 'authentic' sociality they hope they're helping their clients to experience 'outside' of the clinic (and for which the clinical encounter is, at best, a deeply imperfect model). What this meant for me, in the field, was that I consistently struggled to find a degree of self-disclosure that would demonstrate the sincerity of my own presence without provoking their withdrawal into a 'purely' professional register. Failing that (as I so often did), I found myself afforded, instead, myriad opportunities to observe and attend to the ways in which they policed that boundary for and among themselves—which turned out to be much richer fodder for

understanding the ways they move through their worlds, as they sought to become better people with, and for, each other.

The data here come primarily from interviews, as well as participant-observation, that I conducted at various points during my roughly two years of fieldwork. Interviews were, without exception, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews involve collecting responses to a set list of questions designed to elicit explicitly comparable responses, which has advantages—most particularly with respect to the ease with which answers can be tabulated—but which is predicated on an assumption that the context in which answers were elicited can be controlled with enough precision to render different respondents' answers fungible and aggregable.[56] This may or may not be an accurate assumption for very particular kinds of 'information'; I do not intend, here, to dismiss out of hand an entire research methodology. Rather, my purpose is to make clear that what I have done—that is, to engage in what I came to think of as 'genred' conversations with individuals with whom I was regularly interacting in other, differently-structured contexts (workshops, for instance, or ceremonies); people with whom, in other words, I was developing multi-faceted relationships over time—has another, different set of advantages and disadvantages.

While an anthropological overemphasis on language has been productively critiqued,[57] ethnography, in this case, led me to talk—or, more precisely, to listen. For psychotherapists, speech has a singular salience: it is the instrument of their vocational practice, and a primary vector of sociality; talk, in short, is also a kind of ritual. Working with Mark and his students required iterative processes of hearing, responding, and giving them the chance to give me

[56] For a nuanced treatment of the epistemological challenges that attend such assumptions, see Briggs (1986).

[57] E.g., Clifford and Marcus (1986).

feedback on my understanding of their talk. I listened, as they brought in questions of biography, social difference, and 'Americanness'; and while they deployed the language of the clinic, they tinkered with it—dislodging the naturalness, and destabilizing the categories even as they sought to sustain their proximate distance from them. Making connections to their life stories as they talked functioned as index of clinical presence and acumen; in my writing, I have tried to follow their own etic sense of playfulness, as they measured the relevance of personal history in relation to something like felt 'resonance'.

To explore some of the questions they raise, I employ the analytic notion of 'language ideology' as a way of thinking the interactional linkages between 'macro' and 'micro'—that is, as a means of attending to the ways in which identity categories, for instance, are invoked and reproduced at the level of everyday practice: as Michael Silverstein puts it: "language performances, like all the rest of social action, can thus be seen to have 'event' characteristics. That is, language-in-use constitutes sociohistorically-located happenings of the functioning social order" (1997:266). In her widely-cited textbook on language ideology in America, Rosina Lippi-Green (1997) defines (American) standard language ideology as "a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous spoken language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class" (1997:64).[58]

I did not set out to capture the interior 'truth' of their experience—whatever that might mean—and I am skeptical of social scientific efforts to collapse 'experience' and 'account', regardless of the rigor with which they're executed.[59] Rather, I attend to social and interactional

[58] See also Milroy (2002); for a historical perspective see Leith (1997).

[59] See, for instance, anthropologist Thomas Csordas' contention "that the words used by our informants are not to be treated merely as terms but as experiences. …they do not represent, they

efficacy of talk, and to the ways in which the particularities of my informants' narratives are precisely the means by which they resist the categories available to them.[60] In their talk, my informants construct the warrants they provide to authenticate the decisions they make—and it's those warrants that tell us how they go about making the connections between where they are, and where they hope to be: language, here again, is legible as social action.

The dissertation does not recapitulate the chronology of fieldwork. The text which follows is divided into three main parts: 'The Clinic and Its Discontents'; 'Authority as Uncertainty'; and 'Commitments, Kinship, and Community'. They correspond, broadly, to three of the primary areas of inquiry with which this dissertation is concerned: the limitations of psychology as a form of care; the relationship between authority and agency in a spirituality characterized by a tension between free choice and surrender; and the practice of family and community relations as (related) responses to experiences of alienation and anomie.

Part I focuses on Steven, and the APT Study Group, as a window on 'The Clinic and Its Discontents'. I show how—as clinicians—they are the moral guardians of a particular kind of 'sovereign' and 'empty' self and, in their spiritual lives, they hope to escape some of the limitations they experience in connection with that kind of selfhood. Notions of 'sacredness' and 'the sacred' figure centrally, as some clinicians turn to notions of 'deep' and 'authentic'

---

disclose. They are descriptions that give us access to the nondiscursive, nonrepresentational, preobjective element of cultural experience" (1997:244).

[60] Here, again, Bender's work is instructive. She located her respondents' proclivity for experiential narratives within a modern tradition dating at least to William James' work on *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (2002)—and in which "experiential meaning cannot ever be fully conveyed to others, appropriate feeling and emotions are important markers of authenticity, and that experience apprehended in solitude trumps social authority" (Bender 2010:68-69). Within the narratives, she is attentive to "subtle and not-so-subtle shifts… from knowing to feeling" which both "protect[s] the experience from certain kinds of reductive interpretation" and "works to place those who listen within an experiential-discursive milieu where they might come likewise to experience through listening to these accounts" (67). These stories, in short, are both accounts and invitations.

interpersonal communication in order deal with their own experiences of the tension between what they want, and what they're willing to give up—as well as the experiential inadequacy of the forms of sociality they're both resisting and reproducing. Part I provides an overview of Steven's background—and the provenance of APT—as well as a preliminary discussion of the work of boundary-making, with an eye toward how his story fits into the broader picture of contemporary American clinical psychology. It also maps the ideals and frustrations common to the clinicians with whom I worked; takes up the phenomenological texture of "sacredness" in this context; and examines the affective labor that attends the upkeep of group norms like 'authenticity' and 'presence'. Finally, Part I explores connections between the kinds of ambivalence participants tolerate—or perhaps seek out—on the one hand and, on the other, the different ways in which they police the boundaries that seem to matter, when they do.

In Part II—'Authority as Uncertainty'—the analytical focus transitions from from Steven and the APT group to Mark and the tiospaye. The emphasis is on how authority works 'in practice', from the discursive imposition of interpretive consensus in the APT Study Group, to the renegotiations of 'contracts' for spiritual healing in the tiospaye. I examine how Steven and Mark, as leaders of their respective groups, 'play' with the authority attached to that role; my argument, in short, is that authority functions, here, as a position from which to make non-totalizing, non-exclusive truth-claims. That is to say that, for my clinician-interlocutors, their very authority as practitioners depends on their ability to constitute open-ended (i.e., non-totalizing) claims—i.e., their social position is defined, in large part, by their authority to do this—and it is their selective use of this authority, and the productive disavowal of that authority, that creates the possibility of surprising moments of interaction as well as novel—and, crucially, "sacred"—forms of sociality.

Part II takes up several sets of tensions. For Steven, the relationship between what I'll call 'situational' and 'structural' authority is instructive: it is the authority that attaches to his (structural) position as leader, of the clinic and of the APT Study Group, that both licenses and makes meaningful his disavowal of authority in particular situations. In an examination of the paradigmatic relationship between 'experience' and 'truth' among group members, I argue that what's at stake is precisely the authority to retroactively inscribe the content of an experience. As the focus shifts from Steven as a 'teacher' in the context of APT to his position as 'student' vis-à-vis Mark, I look at the ways in which Mark's distance from middle-class financial and career security render him legible to tiospaye members as very particular kind of figure: a living, and epistemologically proximate, counterexample to the choices they watch themselves making, as they navigate the 'gap' between their own lifeworlds and what they imagine to be his experience. Part II then attends to Mark's performance of authority with members of the tiospaye (in which the key tension is between something like 'autonomy' and 'deference'), before turning to follow the contestation of authority through a particular ritual healing encounter and its aftermath.

Part III takes up relationships between 'Commitments, Kinship, and Community' among members of the tiospaye; I examine the ways in which ideas about and practices of 'commitment' encode sets of ambivalences. Building on the discussion of American spirituality (above), I suggest a key connection, for my interlocutors, between 'commitment' and 'experience': i.e., that spirituality, and quite pointedly not religion, seems to afford them a language in which to challenge and complicate the individualism at the heart of a particular experience of 'self', without having to sacrifice more than they're comfortable giving up. Part III then looks at how rituals—especially major events, like the Sun Dance—inscribe their commitments, and considers how what I call the 'work of believing' is involved in maintaining

such commitments (particularly in the absence of geographically proximate community). The final section examines how the notion of 'kin', and the group's smaller 'satellite' gatherings, make it possible for them to tend and revise those commitments—and, in the process, sustain their own ambivalences toward it. Ultimately, my contention here is that theirs is a community bound by commitment—one that only mimics kinship indirectly, and not so much by dint of rituals that, to paraphrase Michael Lambek, 'can't be undone'[61] (at least, not among isolated actors in voluntaristic association), but rather by dint of the sociality, sustained over time and regularly renewed, that occurs around ritual.

In the conclusion, I pick up the thread of the story above—about the ceremony in which I, and three others, received healings—and follow it through Mark's interpretation of my experience with the 'homework' I received from the altar's spirits. In the process, I make connections to epistemological questions immanent to ethnographic practice; I also suggest that Mark and his students are both healers and cultural critics, whose approaches to the 'problems of presence'—clinical and sacred—represent an analytics of 'becoming', in the service of a positive politics that productively complicates our notions of the forms that critique can take.

[61] "One of the things about rituals," Lambek suggested, "is that you cannot take them back in protest that you did not mean it" (2007:27).

Part I :: The Clinic and its Discontents

1. After Hours in the Clinic

> "What is it that makes us say at once that… alchemy… is not a science? Something, in my view, is decisive, namely, that the purity of the soul of the operator was, as such, and in a specific way, an essential element in the matter… where no one questions himself as to what there must be in the desire, for example, of the physicist"
> - Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1997:9).

Steven was on his back, on the floor, under a plush chair that bore the marks of years of heavy use. He peered intently up at the base of the seat. Avoiding eye contact with the other people in the room—like Karl, whose eyes sought his through the gap between the chair's cushions and the varnished wood armrest—the burly, fifty-two-year-old clinical psychologist's focus was locked on the tips of his own fingers, as they traced the edges of a loose bolt on the seat's bottom, and then the seam of the cushion. In a small, childish voice, he said, "Dad needs to fix this."

Steven had the rapt attention of the other eight people in the room, and he held it through much of the rest of the evening. He was playing the role of Ooruk, a young boy in an improvisational variation on a story called, 'Sealskin, Soulskin'.[62] In the tale, a lonely Inuit man coerces a woman who is both seal and human into marriage, and in which the child they share—Ooruk—is torn between the world of his father, and the world to which his mother must return. At least, that was the central conflict in the story as it was played out on that cool Friday evening in mid-November of 2010, in a small, windowless conference room on the fifth floor of the

[62] This is one of many stories published by popular psychologist Clarissa Pinkola-Éstes in her 1996 best-seller, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*. She presents 'Sealskin, Soulskin' as a "story… told in the cold countries to the north, in any country where there is an icy sea or ocean. Versions of this story," she declares breathlessly, "are told among the Celts, the Scots, the tribes of Northwest America, Siberian and Icelandic peoples" (2008:276).

building which, during business hours, housed the counseling center affiliated with a 40,000-student university in a mid-sized east-coast city. By night—once a month, at least—something rather less common happens here: a dozen or so people, most of them psychotherapists, gather to take part in a study group ostensibly geared toward training its members to become facilitators of 'Archetypal Play Therapy', or 'APT'.

Towards the end of the evening, as people discussed the story and the play that had unfolded from it, another group member remarked that they'd been struck by how Steven had "embodied that role." Steven mused for a moment, then replied: "Yeah, I was ambivalent about taking it. … I didn't think much about Ooruk's role in the story, but then I had this image of myself crawling under the chair and looking up at your face and I just went with that." Later, one of the participants talked candidly about his grandmother's suicide, and how the role he'd played in the story gave him space to think differently about his own childhood experiences. Discussion continued for another hour, and the APT Study Group participants parted ways.

Over the two years I attended the APT study group's gatherings, I came to appreciate the warmth and trust that seemed to pervade the space they shared—and to value it, myself. I was struck by their often enthusiastic characterizations of these shared experiences as "sacred"—and by their frequent ambivalences, as well. I also wondered—that night, and on the dozen other occasions I joined these clinicians (and their friends) for this very particular, "sacred" kind of play—what happened for them when they left this "liminal space," and how these stories followed them 'out' into their personal and professional lives.

With his curious invocation of the alchemist (above), Jacques Lacan insists that, for the analyst, the 'soul' of the practitioner is profoundly salient to the question of care: "the analyst's desire," he contends, "can in no way be left outside our question, for the simple reason that the

problem of the training of the analyst poses it" (1998:10). It is this relation—the training analysis; that fraught and (micro)politicized engagement in which the field is reproduced—that constitutes the psychoanalytic encounter in its most rarified form. In his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan explores the "moral goals of psychoanalysis" as a therapeutic intervention; that is, he engages with the question: "Should the theoretical and practical purpose of our action be limited to the ideal of psychological harmonization?" (1997:302). His answer is an emphatic 'no'—that psychoanalysis is in no way "entitled to forget that threat, that cleavage in the moral being of man" (302) that Freud identified in *Civilization and its Discontents* (2005) It is, rather, the situation of the training analysis that lays bare the fact that "the true termination of an analysis… [should be] to confront the one who undergoes it with the reality of the human condition" (Lacan 1997:302).

Here, I attend to how my interlocutors—many of whom are among the heirs of Freud, and who are directly involved in training the next generation of clinicians—confront the ethical goals of contemporary psychology, as they engage in different registers of resistance to, and complicity with, the logic of care that so often impedes their caregiving. As clinicians, they are the moral guardians of a particular kind of 'sovereign' and 'empty' self and, in their spiritual lives, they hope to escape some of the limitations they experience in connection with that kind of selfhood. I show how some clinicians turn to notions of 'deep' and 'authentic' interpersonal communication in order deal with their own experiences of the tension between what they want, and what they're willing to give up—as well as the ways in which their desires exceed the experiential limits of the forms of sociality they're both resisting and reproducing. Section two—'Wounded Healers'—gives an overview of Steven's background and the provenance of APT; it also attends to the work of boundary-making through narrative and embodied practice. Section

three (‘The Odd Relationship’) maps the ideals, frustrations, and ambivalences common to the clinicians with whom I worked. The fourth section, ‘Something Worth Protecting’, takes up the phenomenological texture of “sacredness,” and attends to the affective labor involved in the upkeep of group norms like ‘authenticity’ and ‘presence’. Finally, the section five—‘Differences that Make a Difference’—picks up the question of boundaries, making connections between the kinds of ambivalence participants tolerate (or perhaps seek out) on the one hand and, on the other, the different ways in which they police the boundaries that seem to matter, when they do.

2. Wounded Healers

> “Psychotherapy is permeated by the philosophy of self-contained individualism, exists within the framework of consumerism, speaks the language of self-liberation, and thereby unknowingly reproduces some of the ills it is responsible for healing. None of this is an accident.”
> - Philip Cushman, *Constructing the Self, Constructing America* (1996:6)

> “I realize that however this gets written about or discussed, I’m going to look like a nut.”
> - Steven

Steven has been meeting with people for evenings like that one for more than 25 years. Archetypal Play Therapy is a therapeutic and teaching tool developed by Stan and Ellen Knecht, respectively a Swiss-born, U.S.-trained professor of religion and an American clinical psychologist. Styled by its creators as a type of experiential extension of a hermeneutic approach to literary representations of reality, the APT workshop entails a syncretic application of aspects of Jungian depth psychology, the study of myth and folklore, psychodramatic play therapy, esoteric metaphysics, and—in its application by group leaders in the present context—elements of Lakota (Sioux) Native American spirituality. In thirty years of international practice, the process has been used in contexts ranging from the treatment of adjudicated youth to the training of ministers and mental health practitioners.

Stan and Ellen Knecht pointedly describe APT as singularly effective in fostering "the sacred time that Mircea Eliade spoke about, a sacred moment, in a sacred space," and "creating a sense of community, [as well as] a deep connection with others and with life." As they made connections across clinical and ceremonial milieux in the U.S. and Native North America, practitioners consistently came to consider APT less of an opportunity to develop professional skills, and, increasingly, a key part of their own 'personal' spiritual lives. Group members are part of a network of American clinicians for whom the boundaries between categories like 'personal' and 'professional' are the sites of complex, dynamic relationships that cohere around metaphysical and psychological healing practices—practices that resist containment in either clinic or ceremony, and challenge the demarcation of both.

Time and again, I heard Steven and his colleagues working through their own complex, sometimes conflicted experiences; my sense is that it is precisely through their ambivalent invocations of "spirituality"—of sacred others; of transcendent, metaphysical experiences—that they seem to mediate between those imposed categories. And as I worked with the APT study group, it became increasingly clear that Steven and the other clinicians valued their shared experience in ways that went far beyond the benefits of training in a new technical skill. In our one-on-one interviews, nearly all of the participants spoke of APT as an explicitly spiritual practice. They listed their attendance in the study group in the same utterances as yoga, synagogue, and church and, in the two years I worked with them, not one of them ever spoke of deploying the technique in a 'professional' capacity.

In the introduction, I suggested that we might productively think of these clinicians as working through their own crises of faith—faith, that is, in a state-sanctioned form of care that both treats and produces existential isolation, under the auspices of helping people to participate

'successfully' in a society that idealizes what historian and practicing clinician William Epstein, in his intermittently-polemical account of *Psychotherapy as Religion*, called "heroic individualism… a blind faith in personal reinvention and the salvation of social adaptation" (2006:222). Philip Cushman—also a psychotherapist and historian—argues for an explicit connection to political economy, inasmuch as American psychotherapy is complicit in the cultivation of what he calls "the empty self… committed to the values of self-liberation through consumption" and which is "the perfect complement to an economy that must stave off economic stagnation by arranging for the continual purchase and consumption of surplus goods" (1996:6). My clinician-interlocutors would be inclined to stipulate to both authors' assessments—at least, with respect to the mainstream of their profession—and much of their professional work is dedicated to the fraught labor of searching for ways to sustain their senses of themselves as engaged in a meaningful, efficacious form of care, and to resist that very complicity with what they call the "dominant culture," while still being able to maintain their own middle-class lifestyles.

Steven and his peers are people who are caught up in multiple kinds of tensions that they both resist and reproduce. Perhaps most acutely, they are caught between related, but not-wholly-commensurable, kinds of 'presence' that define the boundaries of the worlds in which they themselves perform (and teach) the work of boundary-making that is so central to the maintenance of the 'selves' that modern (American) psychology both posits and produces: on the one hand, there is the kind of presence they are trained to cultivate as clinicians tending to patients, and, on the other, there is the kind of presence they long for as something like healers who are, in many cases, quite lonely. They spoke of their own positions in (social) worlds in ways that tended to both recapitulate and reproduce that tension: like many of my other

interlocutors, Steven was a credentialed and licensed professional, charged with tending to the wellbeing of the rising cohort of aspirants to the middle class… and, at the same time, he frequently cast himself as an outsider, (metaphorically) likening himself and his colleagues to "tribal shamans" or "medicine people" who live on the edge of the village—on the periphery of the social—and who bear the blessing and burden of a gift for 'healing'.

The figure of the 'Wounded Healer' dates to antiquity[63]—the centaur Chiron is generally taken to be the archetype[64]—but the ubiquity of the trope in American mental health care is largely attributable to Carl Jung (2013) and Henri Nouwen (1979).[65] Victor Turner used the term "cults of affliction" to denote groups in which healers must themselves be healed in order to be qualified to heal—that is, in which healers are drawn from among the afflicted (1968).[66] For my informants, the idea that they themselves were wounded healers was taken as self-evidently and deeply true. The question for them seemed to be: what *kind* of wound defined them, and what was at stake in the journey to know it—and themselves—as fully as possible. These clinicians—and this is especially true of members of the tiospaye—found Mark's answer to that question deeply compelling: in their conversations and our interviews, they regularly asserted versions of his claim that the "problems" with "dominant culture" were best understood, and addressed, as symptoms of a lack of "spiritual connection."

Their status as 'professionals' is secured, in part, by their licensure. But—whatever else 'clinical licensure' means—in practice, it seems to entail *feeling* authorized to participate in an encounter with another human being in a very particular, and highly ritualized, way. They should

[63] See Jackson (2001).
[64] See, for instance, Frank (2010).
[65] For a thorough discussion of this point, see Kirmayer (2003)
[66] I owe this connection—and, in fact, this precise formulation of the idea—to Michael Lambek's response to an early draft of this material.

bring to bear their "authentic" selves, and be "present"—but should only "disclose" parts of their selves that are directly helpful to their client, without creating any sense of an obligation for the client to reciprocate the emotional support that they themselves are being paid to offer; in short, they're responsible for conjuring a kind of semi-permeable intersubjectivity—a one-directional sociality—which seems to take a significant toll on them as people.

Since at least philosopher Lionel Trilling's (1973) seminal work on *Sincerity and Authenticity*, scholars have paid close attention to the prominent, taken-for-granted quality of 'authenticity' as a paradigmatic value in American life. In his ethnographic work on "Sacred Psychotherapy in the 'Age of Authenticity'," anthropologist James Wilce (2011) makes a strong case for the use of Charles Taylor's appellation (i.e., 'Age of Authenticity') over the term 'New Age', not—or, at least, not primarily—because Taylor himself has necessarily succeeded in definitively characterizing contemporary life in *A Secular Age* (2007), but rather on the on the basis of the etic ubiquity of 'authenticity' as a characterization of his interlocutors' goals and values. "Authentic self-expression," Wilce argues, "requires courage, even daring" (579) and "authenticity potentiates a kind of I-Thou encounter that is sacred" (584). He also attends to what he identifies as "an ideological struggle" among his informants "over two definitions of authenticity—one oriented toward transmission of a tradition, the other oriented to the experiential and reflexively authentic self" (584). The clinicians with whom I worked grapple with an analogous tension—further complicated by the ways in which they navigate the boundaries between their 'personal' and 'professional' roles, and the spaces between the two.

Like a number of my interlocutors, Diane was within a few years of her own retirement—in her case, from full-time work with Steven at a large, public university's counseling center, at least; she was almost certain, she thought, to continue on with her booming private-practice. For

Diane, the monthly gatherings of the APT study group "evolved" dramatically over time. She'd been a part of the group since "its inception," and she said she recognized that Steven "sees it as a very sacred process"—but, for her, it wasn't until he "pushed a little" and she volunteered to lead an evening's session that her own experience shifted. "I think it deepened my respect for the process," she said, "because preparing for the story is sacred as well." As she spoke, she described an ambivalence between, on the one hand, her sense that it was precisely the study group's stable relationships that made possible the intimacy that she so valued and, on the other, how difficult she sometimes found what she called "the social piece of it." She remarked, more than once, that the difficulty was related to the fact that she worked in the same physical space in which APT was held, which made for jarring and complex transitions between roles: "I think because I work in this space, and there's just so much leftover—like residue from the week." She appreciated the geographical proximity, she said—because "if it were anywhere else… I wouldn't be able to get out of here in a timely way to make it"—but "the transition's hard." She sighed. "All through tomorrow," she said, "I will be aware that APT will be tomorrow night. People in the office talk, 'Are you going? Are you staying?'—that kind of thing. There are times when it feels really hard to enter this space after a whole day."

As she reflected, she emphasized the trust and intimacy of the relationships above all. When she was with clinical colleagues in an APT session, she said, "it's like I don't see them as clinicians in that group—I see us all as just people coming together, doing our own work." She took her cue from Steven in that regard, she said:

> I just so appreciate when… Steven embodies the work—like, he gets it on that 'other' level. He says he goes into that space where it's almost dissociative—where he's no longer in that room in the counseling center; he's just the character. And he allows what

> gets evoked from… step[ping] into that role, whatever that role becomes. It's not even a role that he had thought out. But it just evolved through the questions, through the wondering, through the reverie, through just sinking into that—and then, he's so authentic when he talks about his experience. I guess he has to—he doesn't have space for that in most places of his life. Because he certainly doesn't as the director of the counseling center. … He's just kind of beat up this year—it's just not been a good year overall, just so stressful—so for him to be able to let go is so lovely to see.

What I want to call attention to, here, is the rhetorical and imaginal work that Diane is doing: how she positions herself intersubjectively, and the gentle force of her movements. She begins, here, with a statement of respect for her friend and colleague (and boss). Later, she locates this praise in a context of concern for the "stressful" year she says he's had—which, I think, lets her identify with his experience and to imagine it for herself—but what is particularly interesting is the arc of her self-presentation: from someone who's exhausted at the end of a long week and who dreads the "niceties" of social interaction, to someone who has compassion for the difficulties her colleague is experiencing. She does this, however, by way of a patterned set of moves that will soon come to seem familiar: she imagines Steven's experience of the APT session as "authentic"—on "another level;" "almost dissociative"—in a way that her own experience… *isn't*, quite. She, then, takes a measure of responsibility for "holding space" that helped make Steven's experience possible—and which, in practice, makes possible all sorts of experiences that she can't quite catch hold of for herself.

A first question arising, here, is something like: what kinds of selves are being cultivated—and what kinds of relationships with others are enabled or foreclosed in the process? Practitioners consistently presented themselves to me (and to each other) in a way I came to

think of as *indirect*: in the course of their ongoing drawing and transgressing of boundaries, they sustained tension between, on the one hand, imagining someone else's experience and, on the other, creating space for other, different people to have their own experiences.

The question of boundaries is at the heart of the clinical psychotherapeutic encounter. There are, as we have seen, a wildly diverse array of theoretical orientations and treatment modalities in circulation among licensed clinicians working in the U.S. today—what nearly all of them share, and what sets them apart from other ways of approaching the care of someone in mental or emotional anguish, is a professional commitment to a very particular kind of relationship: transactional, asymmetrical; above all, cleanly and clearly bounded.

Steven talked a lot about boundaries. It wasn't surprising, exactly; by profession, he's a clinical psychologist—he runs an APA-accredited university counseling center that tends to roughly two thousand patients a year—and, unlike some of his peers, he maintains an active caseload.[67] The accreditation from the American Psychological Association is key: a sizable portion of his clinical staff is comprised of people in various stages of their clinical training, and accreditation is essential to successfully recruiting top-flight candidates for the center's internships, externships, and postdoctoral fellowships.[68]

Steven sees about ten patients each week; he serves on a university-wide crisis assessment and response team; and he manages every aspect of this remarkably, though not atypically, busy facility. He's integrally involved in training the next generation of clinicians—he worked for years to achieve the accreditation status the center now has—as well as fostering the development of those members of his staff who are already licensed clinicians.

---

[67] On average caseloads among counseling center directors, see Rando (2008).

[68] Taken together, these represent the contemporary analogue of psychoanalytic 'training analysis' in clinical psychology.

Steven's own introduction to APT had come decades earlier, in 1986. Ellen Knecht, the co-creator of the technique, had been his first clinical supervisor, when he was still a doctoral student and being apprenticed into clinical practice. Steven was the first member of his immediate family to go to college—and it was a winter-term course with a charismatic psychoanalyst that piqued Steven's interest in psychology as a possible career path: the analyst "just spoke," he said, "and it was so stimulating for me that I realized that that's what I wanted to do. That seemed very in line with *my* gifts… so for me this was like… becoming 'down to earth' and doing something practical—because before then," he chuckled, "it was football or art."

On more than one occasion, Steven has wryly invoked the words of one of his teachers, who said, "show me a therapist; I'll show you someone with a depressed mother." His own mother suffered from what Steven suggests was anxiety and depression; he was not allowed to learn to swim as a child, he says by way of an example, because she was afraid of water. Both of Steven's parents are second-generation Italian-Americans: all but one of his grandparents were born in Italy. His father worked in a textile mill; Steven recalls: "these huge callouses on the outsides of his hands, [from] constantly being in touch with the material, and [that] his hands were very big." He paused, looking at his own hands; "mine are also very big," he went on, "but his fingers were very thick, and he had very strong hands, and he always seemed like this mountain of muscle."

Steven was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, but at age twelve—after a priest berated him for his infrequent attendance at confession—he recalls deciding "I'm never going back—that I don't care if I'm going to hell. This is sick. And so, I just left it right there." He attended a Jesuit college on a partial football scholarship (where he and his wife, a writer and editor name Alice, met) and he went on to graduate school for clinical psychology. His first clinical

apprenticeship—an 'externship', or intensively supervised experiential learning program—was conducted at a community-based non-profit agency that primarily served children who'd been victims of physical abuse.

In that role, his first supervisor was Ellen Knecht—who introduced him to the APT technique by staging a training exercise involving him and another novice clinician. They'd acted out roles from the Biblical story in which Abraham made ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac, at God's behest. Steven had played Abraham, and—while he'd had a good (lapsed) Catholic's nodding familiarity with the story, he was "stunned" by his experience of the raw emotional intensity that inhered in the embodied performance. "I was very intrigued by it, even though it made me very anxious," he told me. Ellen explained that APT was something she and her husband—a tenured professor of religion who'd taken an intense interest in symbolism and mythology[69]—had been working on, and she invited Steven and Alice to come to a workshop.

A close friendship developed between the couples: "we'd come out and just for visits and they'd cook these great meals for us," he said, and "we felt really taken care of." Steven and Alice made a commitment to join the Knechts' formal study group, and their involvement steadily grew. Steven and Ellen worked together for almost ten years; when the Knechts moved back to Stan's birthplace in Switzerland in the early 90s, Steven and Alice relocated to the suburban town where the Knechts had been living, and Steven took over most of Ellen's private

[69] Stan was, in fact, the author of several respected academic monographs on early Christianity. When I met him in November of 2009, he told me how—well into his career—he'd had what he half-jokingly referred to as a "Joseph Campbell moment," switching his emphasis to the study of myths and symbols, and, eventually, developing an early version of APT as an experiential extension of hermeneutic approach to archetypal stories. He became as popular with students as he did unpopular with colleagues, and, when he left academia to tend to the APT Institute full-time, he recalled joyfully giving away twenty-seven boxes of academic books, and composting decades' worth of lecture notes.

practice. Steven half-jokingly suggests that he and Alice are in charge of the U.S. franchise of APT.

In 1996, Steven was hired as the director of a university counseling center (at which he still works), and he began the transition from community-based mental health care to work in a college clinic. A few years into the job, he attended a conference at which he offered a workshop he called "The Use of Mythology, Storytelling and Play in Psychotherapy." In the audience was a man named Mark—a fellow doctoral-level clinical and director of a college counseling center, who had just developed a program of immersive, retreat-based spiritual teachings based on his experiences on a Lakota reservation and with "elders" from several indigenous traditions. After corresponding back and forth for more than a year, Steven attended one of Mark's weekend trainings—an intensive retreat in rural New England, involving an initiation ceremony.

Steven was, by his own account, deeply involved in the tiospaye for roughly five years. He joined members of the group on trips to the Lakota reservation in South Dakota—where they went each summer to participate in one of the annual Sun Dance[70] ceremonies. As he developed relationships with members of the tribe, he started organizing 'service learning' trips for undergraduates from the university where he works. Each year, in May, a small cadre of about a dozen students and two university staff members fly out to South Dakota, to spend a week learning about "life on the reservation," and to perform manual labor (such as delivering donations they'd collected, repairing a community center, or planting gardens).

During this period, APT faded into the background of Steven's practice. Across his career, and during the time we worked together, Steven was endlessly attentive to his own positioning

[70] An eight-day ritual of healing for a community, the Sun Dance was banned in the U.S. from 1904 until the 1978 Freedom of Religion Act. My data indicate that, in 2011, there were thirteen such ceremonies on the Sicangu reservation, and 83 on the Oglala (Pine Ridge). The participation of non-natives in ceremony continues to be highly contentious.

relative to boundaries he labeled ‘personal’ and ‘professional’. Some activities (like seeing patients during fifty-minute sessions) were very clearly on one side of a line; others—like his relation to the Lakota-based spiritual healing ceremonies he learned from his teacher, Mark—he came to think of as on the far side of that line. He described struggling with a decision about how far “down the path” to go, studying and practicing the Lakota-based ritual. Eventually, he concluded that he was “probably not a person who would feel comfortable in full [Lakota ceremonial] regalia and being a Sun Dancer for various reasons, partly in terms of appropriating [Lakota practices], and partly in terms of my own issues around how ostentatious I want to be or I’m comfortable being.” He quickly clarified that for “the people who do that… It’s about a deep prayer for their community. …[But] as a method, APT seems to fit me more.”

In 2007, he and Alice began offering a monthly “APT Study Group.” Participants pay a fee of $200 for the academic year, which includes roughly eight Friday-night sessions, and a dinner in June, procured from a local South Asian restaurant; some of the money covers the group meal at the end of the year, but the majority of it is given to people Steven knows on the Lakota reservation, to help defray the expenses of daily life. The evening on which the group adapted the “Sealskin, Soulskin” story was one of the few occasions on which Steven got to take a role in a play. Most often, he and his wife Alice, the group’s co-leader, facilitate the study group’s meeting—they rarely have the opportunity to participate in the plays themselves. In fact, one of the first things about the group that struck me as interesting was precisely the fact that the participants—who were ostensibly training to be facilitators—never actually seemed to facilitate the workshops. Many of the participants expressed no interest in facilitating workshops—neither in the context of the study group, nor for outside groups; rather, they considered their participation to be a form of spiritual practice that serves their own needs: as Diane once put it,

"although I do really feel this space and this work is so connected to my work, this is my space for my own process."

Between the two-dozen interviews I conducted with Steven, and sixteen clinical workshops and spiritual healing ceremonies we were in together, I spent better than one hundred hours with him over the course of two years. During that time, we talked about how, after years as a lapsed Catholic, he learned to recognize the experience of being moved to speak in a Quaker meeting; we discussed about his experience with the monthly APT workshop he leads, as he draws, in one moment, upon his group-therapy skills as a clinician and, in the next, on his willingness to actively invoke the sacred; and he reflected his experiences as both clinician and director of a mental health care facility, in which both his licensure and his job description mandate that he is responsible for attending to—and tending to—the safety and well-being of everyone on that floor of the building.

One such interview took place on a brisk December morning exactly three weeks after Steven's portrayal of Ooruk in the APT workshop. We sat in his office: Steven in his usual chair, and I on the sofa, roughly four feet apart. This was our ninth interview, and—as was not uncommon—we were reflecting on the recent workshop. I asked him specifically about the sheer physicality of the moment in which he'd portrayed the child on the ground. He explained that:

> I think, when I've played child roles, that I just—I don't know what it is, and I don't know what happens, but it kind of feels like I'm in it, in a pretty 'deep' way. I don't know. I don't know how to talk about it—some people might say it's like 'channeling' something, or whatever—but it *felt* like a child. I almost feel like I had the cognition of a child. So—yeah. I'm not sure what to make of that either. Maybe it is also related to what some folks talk about in terms of 'accessing other energies'. I don't know.

The phrase “I don’t know” appears five times in this brief passage—it seems to serve a performative function of distancing his reflective self from the social judgment he anticipates will follow upon his claims. When I asked him what he he meant by “energies,” his affect shifted: he chuckled nervously, and said, “that’s the question, right?” Then he sat in silence for moment; when he continued, he’d ceased making eye contact with me, and kept looking around the room; he interrupted himself repeatedly with more nervous laughter; there was a marked shift in the tone of his voice; and he slouched down in his chair:

> That’s the question. I don’t know. It’s sort of like you’re embodying something, you know? That—I mean, obviously, we have that in us, you know—we’ve all been children. We’ve all felt what it’s like to be scared when a parent’s talking, or ‘in their head’, and talking about stuff that might be really big and difficult or scary—because you don’t know how it’s going to work out, as a child.

In his narrative, the ‘I’ seemed to slip below the surface: an index, perhaps, of the elision of self that marked his professional role—or, at a minimum, an echo of the ever-present possibility of retroactively narrating the *possibility* of having lost himself. He shifted to the first-person plural—“we’ve all been children”—and then the second person “you don’t know how it’s going to work out as a child;” his posture straightened up, and his tone evened out; he began referring to a popular spiritual author Deepak Chopra, and then to someone he described as an “Irish anthropologist,” and to his own teachers as he gave examples of other people’s experiences that legitimated his own. He became reflective about his own experience briefly, and then turned the question back upon me. Twenty minutes later, I re-approached the apparent discomfort he’d evinced earlier in our conversation. I asked about his use of words like ‘channeling’ and ‘energy’. He explained:

> I want to honor what I feel may be happening, and what I'm experiencing. I've chosen to devote a lot of my professional life to APT, and so I realize that—however this gets written about or discussed—I'm going to look like a nut to many people. And so I also have my experience of being with shamans, and being in ceremony, and feeling like something is happening that no one will ever be able to explain by 'dissecting' it. You know—there's a 'holistic' experience, and I think people who gravitate towards that are probably—I don't know, I think of the artistic and scientific tendencies: the one that allows for chaos, and this non-linear kind of thinking, or a different cognitive style; and one that's very rational-scientific-linear, and achieves a great deal through that method, but sometimes misses the holistic part—and so I think that's what my discomfort is about. It's hard to talk about, and I don't want to pretend that I know what's going on. I don't want to pretend that I'm hearing spirits talk to me, or anything like that—but I do think there are people who legitimately get something there.

Here—in one of his longer sustained first-person reflections of the subject—his sense of the sacred seems emergent; he also seems to be working with two related defensive strategies: a notion of 'holism', and a distinction between "artistic and scientific tendencies." He had, up to that point in our interviews, been painstaking about policing a distinction he repeatedly made between the APT material and his role as director of the clinic; here, my sense is that he was trying to reconcile the politics of legitimacy on the one hand and, on the other, the aspects of his life that he considered 'personal' or otherwise somehow outside the 'professional' sphere.

In contradistinction to both his 'on-the-clock' therapeutic work and his ceremonial experiences, Steven's study and teaching of APT seems to reside precisely *on* the line that he tends. What's of particular interest here is precisely the way in which he navigates the array of

distinctions he makes as he moves through these different versions of his relationally-constituted self. Because when he talks about his frustration with his clinical work—I once heard him describe it to Mark as "the neutrality you bump up against in psychotherapy"—it's important for him that encountering that boundary *feels* like coming up against something radically external: that it seems to him to have been imposed from without, and is therefore something that he can imagine himself resisting.

3. The Odd Relationship

> "when you start in this field, like, you have fantasies—like, most people, I think, have fantasies that they're going to have a private office in this nice neighborhood, and see the 'YAVIS' patient. You know what 'YAVIS' stands for? Young, Attractive, Verbal, Intelligent, Successful."
> - Steven

> "Sitting in this, chair talking about *myself* feels almost sinful."
> - Diane

In a quiet coffee shop, I sat across the table from Nan: a 46-year-old mental health counselor specializing in individual, family and couples therapy; she's part of a small private practice in a suburb of a mid-sized East Coast city. Nan was not a regular participant in the APT study group; rather, she had been a student of Stan and Ellen (alongside Steven), and I first met her when she took part in one of the annual full-day APT "public workshops" led by Steven and Alice.

Nan enjoyed much of her work as a clinician: "it's fun to help people think about what they really believe, and what's important to them," she told me. "We create our own little micro-community" during her sessions, she explained, "and, of course, the goal is that they take what we're doing in therapy out into other relationships." Part of her own development as a clinician, in her account, entailed coming to terms with her own presuppositions—particularly with regard to the types of clients she would see, and what the outcomes of their treatment would be. "I had

to work on my own belief systems about therapy," she said. "I thought people would come to you, you'd help them …and then they 'graduate', and they'd go off on their merry way."

She described a client she'd been treating for most of a decade, and whom she now believed might well be in therapy for the rest of her life: "I don't think she's going to graduate, but I still think of her as one of my success stories, because I think that *is* a big change—to go from being as suicidal as she was, to not being suicidal. … It's kind of like recovery, but not a cure." She sighed, then continued: "there's really a fairly huge difference. … But I had to accept that it wasn't going to be the difference that *I* wanted for her." Nan was, however, careful to underscore that—while she remained optimistic in a general way—she no longer took the client's progress so personally: "I don't know what the future will hold," she said, "but I'm not so fearful that it will be some kind of 'enabling' or some kind of failure on my part, if we don't shift much beyond this point." She paused, and added: "I still feel like this is good."

Throughout our talks, Nan put a good deal of emphasis on the healing power of what she called 'community'—and her critique of psychotherapy was directly related to that emphasis: "I don't know how much [it] leads them back to a sense of community. … But that's, I think, one of the down sides of therapy: it's just two people in the room." She was, she said, acutely aware of what she called the "odd" character endemic to clinical psychotherapeutic encounters:

> I think it is an odd relationship. I've always felt that way. I had one lady who wrote me a beautiful letter and she said that I saved her life. … she tried to reach out to me on Facebook once, and I said 'I have to have the boundary and, so I can't be Facebook friends. It's a double—you know, I can't have those two different relationships with you.' I'm not even a *Facebook* friend with an ex-client. I'm so thrilled to hear how you're doing, and would love to get a baby photo. …but there's no formal structure for anybody.

> A couple of other clients will send me a Christmas card once a year and give me some updates. But I'm really lousy. I've never, ever kept up with any former therapist of mine, ever. …it makes it feel like an odd relationship. It's an odd relationship. It's not the same as real life, you know? It's not. It's not ever a two-way street. It is an odd relationship. So I'm happy to provide people who are very alone in the world with a feeling of community through me, but I mean it's not the same, you know? I do think it's different."

Here, in fact, she used the phrase "an odd relationship" four separate times: she kept returning to it, worrying it like a stone. She spoke about how, on occasion, she would get to witness change in a client—usually in a couple's or family's session, when they would actively relate differently to another individual—but, she explained, most of what she had to work with was reported speech, and her work entailed attending closely to subtle shifts over long periods of time that occurred in the ways that people talked about themselves and their lives. "Most of the time," she said "I just *hear* about it. I hear about shifts."

She half-joked that, when it came to her own experience of therapy, she'd had "a big disappointment:" she'd never found "a therapist as good as [her]. It kind of sucks," she sighed—and then drew a correlation to her preference for "relational therapy," which affords "that feeling of that connection… which wasn't just 'boundaries'. … That's the thing about therapists," she lamented: "it has to go really deep into his or her own soul for real empathy, real validation." I was reminded of Lacan's remark about the salience of the practitioner's soul—and I asked her, then, whether that was more rare than she had anticipated it would be; she thought for a moment, and replied: "I don't know if I anticipated it. I know I've longed for it. It's something that feels most appealing to me. I think it's something that I try to give to others."

Nan, and the rest of the women and men with whom I worked during my field research, came from a fairly narrow range of socioeconomic, geographic, and ethnic backgrounds—at least, that's true of the clinicians I got to know (in each of the groups or communities with which I conducted research, there were sizable minorities of non-clinicians, who came from decidedly broader reaches of the American sociocultural landscape). In general, younger clinicians had followed a 'straight path'—Annie, for instance, was newly married, in her late twenties, and had "majored in psychology from day one." Several of the middle-aged clinicians had found their way to the work after trying other career paths: Sandra had worked as a dental hygienist, and then teacher of dental hygiene, for 17 years, and Martha had worked in film and television for the better part of a decade; each had experienced what they described as spiritual journeys (Martha by way of Yoga, and Sandra through recovery from addiction), and both women responded to what they described as the dawning realization that their interpersonally-oriented approaches to their respective disciplines suggested talents for working with "difficult people."

Nan had returned to her 'roots' in the study of psychology after a graduate degree in dance, and then a stint as the director of an urban community arts center, where she increasingly found herself tending to the emotional needs of children who were misbehaving. She'd been particularly concerned about whether or not it would be healthy for her to pursue a career in psychotherapy—in this regard, she seemed to verge on fatalistic: "I asked my own therapist, I said, 'Should I really go into this field? Am I just going to be doing the same caretaker role that I did in my childhood forever and a day'?" Nan recalled her therapist's wry response: "she said, 'You could be an airplane pilot, and you'd take on that role'."

Senior clinicians—baby boomers, in the main—had a marked tendency to lament what they saw as the increasing medicalization and, even more pointedly, the relentless

pharmaceuticalization of the work they undertook. The ways in which they frame both the difficulties they encounter and the solutions they deploy suggest that these clinicians, particularly those from the baby-boomer cohort, are struggling to reconcile their existential questions with the vocational imperative to treat clients in increasingly constrained ways—suggesting, for instance, that the well worn (and well-founded) critique of therapy's asociality warrants revisiting, and perhaps renewing, as clinicians like Nan understand part of their work as the labor to "provide community" to others.

Bruno, for instance, was a doctoral-level counselor in an elite private university's counseling center. At sixty-five years of age—and after forty-three-years in the counseling field—he was preparing to transition to a state of semi-retirement: a part-time private practice, as well as offering occasional workshops and talks on issues like "white privilege." An Ed.D., he presented himself as one of the last of a dying breed of counselors: all of the recent hires at the center where he worked were trained to focus on short-term, superficial interventions (generally of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT, variety) and, he said, it seemed that the primary goal of the center was to get students on medication.

In sum—and nearly across the board—my informants described a sense of 'vocation' or 'calling' that they recognized as having drawn them to the work they were doing. They were especially outspoken about how they understood the 'goals' of their work—which, as Nan put it, tended to involve ideas about the healing of deep psychic wounds, usually through the relationship between clinician and patient. This stands in stark contrast to the realities of their practice, as many of them readily acknowledge: in the counseling center directed by one of my primary informants, the average number of sessions for any given patient is six—and the modal number is one (in full accord with the AUCCCD numbers discussed in the Introduction).

Their responses to my direct questions about the goals of therapy unsurprisingly elicited combinations of 'ideal' and 'reality'—and, as often as not, the question itself required clarification: that is, it seemed, to many of them, that the 'point' or purpose of therapy should be self evident. As Steven put it, "the understanding leads to a richer life. The 'surface' isn't the whole story. You know, Freud famously said, that the conscious mind is like the tip of an iceberg, and that the unconscious is all the 90-some-odd percent of the iceberg that's below the surface. And so, I think that looking at those things opens the mind in a very interesting way, and gives you access to what's submerged." When pressed, in fact, most were willing to articulate condensed versions of their personal philosophies:

- Martha—a veteran clinical social worker in New York, who worked with first-generation immigrant students—insisted that "it really is about finding what makes people feel free and alive… free to be yourself and know that you are recognized and valued and appreciated and connected to by being your really true self."

- Sandra—a clinical social worker who'd changed careers when she "got sober from marijuana" at 40, and who now worked as a counselor at a small, private, suburban liberal arts college (in addition to maintaining a small private practice)—maintained that her work with her students was about helping "them discovering their truest nature."

- For Bruno, the emphasis is on "encouragement," "respectful… support," and creating a "safe place for people to explore feelings, fears, strategies for growing"—with the ultimate goal of fostering multiple levels of what he called "connection." He said that, "as a therapist, that's my main job, is to help people connect with their hearts and their spirits, integrate it all," but he was also acutely aware that, in his profession, "everyone doesn't feel that way."

Bruno's observation was particularly astute: in contradistinction to most of my interlocutors' explicitly existential framing, the American Psychological Association's 'approved' goals tend to be more circumspect—even in their handbook on *Integrating Spirituality into Treatment*, which avers that: "in clinical practice, therapists typically work with clients to increase personal control" (Miller 1999:179). Clinicians with whom I worked diverged important ways from what they understood to be the APA's 'ideal'—a notion they tended to identify with "dominant culture" writ large—and they expressed a variety of related frustrations, falling into two broad categories that I will preliminarily gloss as 'external' and 'internal'. 'Externally', they face numerous challenges related to the state of U.S. mental health care writ large—ranging from what they encountered as biomedically-overdetermined diagnostic categories, to the reimbursement policies of HMOs and other health insurers, to their own income. 'Internally', they struggle with a complex tension between, on the one hand, their idealized notions of what they think their work could (or should) be and, on the other, the realities of the daily practices; in short, it becomes both increasingly challenging and increasingly urgent for them to find ways to help their clients encounter the conditions of possibility for experiences of themselves that could feel 'sacred'.

Bruno's diagnosis of the problem was a pervasive over-emphasis on "intellect," to the neglect of "emotion" and "spirit"—an emphasis that was, in his view, endemic to the institution at which he worked: a focus on "head" rather than "heart," as he often put it. He voiced two distinct, but related, kinds of frustration: he deeply disliked the medical model which increasingly constrained the kinds of treatment that clinicians at his counseling center were instructed to deliver, and he was saddened by what he saw as the impact of this approach on his colleagues, as well. He described a recent staff retreat, at which "one of the questions around the

table was ‘what sustains us’, but we never really spent any time talking about that. That’s what I would like to spend a whole day talking about.” He seemed certain that a great deal had changed since the time he’d been hired at that institution—that his hiring, more to the point, had been emblematic of a brief, atypical “window” in which the university was explicitly “looking for somebody different,” he said.

> When I came here, I was hired to do a job, to do something about the drug and alcohol problem here…. [But] they don’t really want to *do* something about the drug and alcohol problem. They just wanted somebody to make it *look* like they were doing something about the drug and alcohol problem. So that was one issue. Then the other issue is that a psychiatrist was hired to run this place. He and I just locked horns, because he wanted us doing the ‘medical model’ of therapy, which I am very much opposed to. It’s not the way I was trained, it’s not—it’s against my belief about the way people heal and stuff. So I basically said, ‘I don’t believe in diagnosis’. He didn’t like that, because that’s his whole training. … He was trying to get me fired. I had to have a hearing with Human Resources, because I challenged him in front of the staff. I also spoke out in the press at a [Town] Council meeting about that if somebody was going to die, it wasn’t going to be because of the beer that they drink [at parties]. It was going to be because of the liquor they’re drinking in the dorms, and nobody was doing anything about that. Well, you don’t talk like that here. That’s kind of like airing your dirty laundry to the public, or to the press, but I didn’t give a shit because to me that’s what they hired me for, and I didn’t—I wanted to do whatever I could to prevent another death.

The university, in his account, is clearly aware that the lived experiences of those it serves exceed these rational models of control—and yet the institution is utterly beholden to the logic it

reinscribes. He insisted that "there's no way in hell I'd get hired here again"—not simply because of the discord between the clinical director and himself, but because of a sea-change in the approaches to psychotherapy that were deemed legitimate. "They all have Ph.D.s in psychology, or Psy.D.s—a few of them have Psy.D.s now. A couple of MSWs. Even them, I don't think they're going to hire anymore MSWs in the future. I'd be surprised. If they want to get APA accreditation, American Psychological Association, it's all about psychology. A psychologist runs the place now. That's the direction they're going. So I'm just kind of like an old antique around here. I'm just waiting to close out the career."

Younger clinicians seemed (unsurprisingly) to have less of a sense of 'how much better it used to be', and were, in the main, appreciative of the what they presented as the merits (both absolute and relative) of the particular work they'd found. In addition to the many virtues she extolled—prestige; a supportive community; excellent training opportunities—Annie, for instance, framed her choice to seek work in a college counseling center as the logical extension of negative experiences she'd had in other milieux: "I'd worked in a private hospital where I just felt like revolving door: in-out, in-out; the focus was on getting the dollar and pushing people out and not being bothered. Working at a state hospital, it felt even more so that way—and feeling kind of corrupt and abusive, at times."

Like Annie, Corrine was a young, highly-educated clinician—in her case, an M.D.—who has chosen to work in a university's counseling center. Previously, she'd found herself regularly working five 18-hour days a week in a hospital's emergency department, and she was quite vehement in her expression of disdain for the insurance system. As a rule, she said, the coverage of mental health care was "a parody of parity," in which profoundly asymmetrical standards were brought to bear, as a result of which she had been consistently forced to justify her

treatment recommendations to insurance-company bureaucrats—or, worse yet, medical doctors employed by insurance companies—in ways that, according to her, were unheard of when dealing with patients who presented with physical ailments.[71]

Now, Corrine is one of three part-time psychiatrists at the college counseling center. No one imposes limits on the number of sessions she can schedule with any given patient: she could, she said, meet with an individual everyday for a week, if that's what she decided were clinically indicated—whereas, in an outpatient, private-practice clinic, that would exhaust the patient's insurance benefits for an entire year. She also valued being able to practice psychotherapy, instead of simply, and endlessly, prescribing psychopharmaceutical medication; if she were working in a private, outpatient clinic, she said, it's unlikely that a patient could get reimbursed by his insurance company at all. At the college counseling center, she works a 4 1/2 day week; she said those hours were "enough"—and, evidently, she meant financially, as well: she had just closed on a new house in an affluent suburb. She said categorically that she would never go back to practicing in a hospital.

Most of my interlocutors weren't M.D.s, however—they're clinicians whose education and psychodynamic, relational orientations locate them on the very outskirts of biomedicine. But they are not only are they at the margins of their discipline—they're quite often marginal within their own institutions, as well. Several of my informants, that is, spoke to a sense of disappointment about finding themselves very much on the 'wrong' side of (yet another) relationship: the unbridgeable "staff/faculty divide" in their universities. Steven, for instance,

[71] She described, for example, a former patient who was suicidal—the patient had made concrete plans to kill himself the day before he arrived at the hospital—and Corinne was told (by a doctor at the insurance company) that she would not be allowed to admit the patient because he did not meet the criteria for inpatient care, since he hadn't made specific plans to kill himself on *that* day.

said that he was never quite able to make enough of an inroad into his university's psychology department to get permission to teach a for-credit class on APT, despite the facts that a) he held a doctoral degree from an accredited and well-respected institution; b) he had decades of clinical experience; and c) it would've cost the department nothing (financially). This gap is visible in organizational charts at the institutional level: in nearly all of the universities and colleges at which my interlocutors work, counseling centers are 'located' within their 'Student Services' divisions—whereas academic psychology departments in all institutions 'report' to their Dean or Provost.

They are, in short, 'doubly' peripheral—hence the popularity of the 'shaman on the edge of the village' metaphor. Such an identity position both enables and forecloses possibilities for them, however, as they navigate structural ambiguities and professional ambivalences. Diane, for instance, was generally considered a "senior" clinician, and junior staff members regularly sought out her guidance, advice, and support: "I've developed a professional identity that feels comfortable," she said. "I feel like I have a lot to offer younger clinicians. I feel comfortable in my supervisory role. I feel comfortable in my group role, in my coordinator role," she explained; "through the years," she said, "[I] developed a certain sense of 'I've arrived'." Diane made versions of that point—that she was, in a general way, quite comfortable with her work, her relationships with her colleagues and subordinates, and with the fluid relationship between her personal beliefs and her professional commitments—on multiple occasions.[72] Frequently, however, she registered very particular sources of frustration that, taken together and viewed

[72] Our contact spanned two years, including five hour-long interviews and about a dozen sessions of the Archetypal Play Therapy Study Group in which I conducted participant observation.

over time, suggest a sustained and careful regard for uncertainty, and something like a pervasive apprehension about her roles within groups—as well as how other people respond to her.

The clearest articulation of Diane's acute attention to ambiguity and the absence of clear boundaries came halfway through our time together, when we had a particularly frank conversation about the dynamics of our own interactions, as we sat in the office in which she conducted psychotherapy—she in her usual therapist's chair, and I on the loveseat opposite her. She smiled, and said, with a chuckle, "So, sitting in this chair talking about myself feels almost *sinful*." I told her that made sense to me, and she continued: "Totally, because I *never* talk about myself—other than my own experience of something going on in the room that has to do with another person—so this is complete role-reversal, and it's taking me outside of my comfort level." She picked up a set of silver magnets which had been sitting on the coffee table between us, and busied her hands with them: every few seconds, at odd intervals, they came back together with a metallic 'click'. "It's all just really interesting," she said:

> it's interesting—it's so fascinating, too—as a psychologist changing roles, going out into my life and having to be one of many people who mutually disclose, and I find in most of my relationships, there isn't a lot of space for me, and maybe it's that I create that. And I'm okay with it most of the time, but I'm very aware of it. I'm aware of, you know, the people who can take the other side and listen. It's fascinating to me. I'm just aware of that. It's just fascinating. There's million things go on in my head, but it's just very interesting, so we'll have to think about where we'll meet next time. … I try very hard not to think that that thing [i.e., the recorder] is on, or that you are going to be listening to this again!

As she narrated her sense of her own movement between different kinds of relationships, Diane seemed caught in the categories attached to the space and the role she was in: she spoke of interacting socially with peers (instead of patients, or colleagues) as "going out into my life and having to be one of a many people who mutually disclose." She was aware, she said, that, when working with or supervising junior colleagues, she "often take[s] on that mother role. … People have a lot of 'maternal transference' towards me," she said. "And I sometimes enjoy that," she paused, and smiled, and cocked her head. "And sometimes not."

Anthropologists have directed considerable attention to interactional dynamics within mental health care, and to the social consequences of those interactions—though they have tended, in general, to focus on the experience of patients, rather than providers. A rare[73] exception is E. Summerson Carr's *Scripting Addiction*. Working with clients and providers in a substance abuse treatment program, Carr's central analytical finding was that clinicians' primary task was to inculcate what she calls an "ideology of inner reference" (2010:4). This ideology, according to Carr, "demands a totally unmediated language," and attaches strong moral valences to a person's capacity (or incapacity) to "to transparently refer to and reveal the inner thoughts, feelings, and memories of its speakers" (4-5). The 'depth' from which those thoughts and feelings are drawn, then, becomes a metaphorical proxy for 'authenticity'—and, in Carr's study, an index of clients' compliance, as clinicians become (mostly unwittingly) complicit in the imposition of a fraught power structure.

Carr is explicit that her findings are specific to the context of institutionalized clinical social work, and that, in other settings, clinicians can (and do) respond to this kind of epistemic disjuncture in a variety of surprising ways. Nevertheless, on more than one occasion, I listened as

[73] Though certainly not singular; see also Davies (2009).

Steven (rhetorically) divided his patients into people who were either more or less "psychologically minded"[74]—an attribute he sometimes spoke of as though it were a 'nurtured' personality trait, and, at other times, as a 'natural' capacity. "Some people," he said, "seem to be more able to entertain the notion that things have happened in the distant past are related to the way that they're living out their lives now." Others, however, were either uninterested or unable to make such connections: "people who have never been encouraged to think about their inner life, and may have not even had the opportunity—maybe they were more concerned with survival," he offered, "or not being abused, or whatever it was."

Even in those cases, he explained, "there might be a lot of potential there for interest in their own inner world and psychodynamics"—but "you don't force your particular mode on them." A therapist might, he said, still use his or her psychodynamic training to develop "a working understanding of why they're having trouble… based on their history," but "you might do a more cognitive behavioral approach," he explained, proceeding in "a kind of more structured, and kind of almost didactic" way, coaching the client toward small "success experiences"—he offered, as an example, getting a patient who'd complained of indecisiveness to successfully identify an activity she might enjoy with her boyfriend—"and so you build on that."

"Some people," Steven observed in a meticulously even tone, are "behaviorists, or cognitive behaviorists" who "say it doesn't matter what happened in the past, and it doesn't make sense to necessarily even go there, as long as people are willing to try things and make changes in their behavior. But what I find," he countered, "is that people who come and sit on those couches are vastly different, *vastly* different, in so many ways—and part of your job," he went on, "is to figure out: 'how are you going to help *this* person—someone who is not interested in

[74] There's a rich history of conjecture about the ontological quality of clinical psychology's object; see especially the "Introduction" to Homans (1979).

psychoanalysis, or who is very practical and who doesn't think about their internal life very much'?" He mused that "when you start in this field, you have fantasies—like, most people, I think, have fantasies that they're going to have a private office in this nice neighborhood, and see the 'YAVIS' patient. You know what YAVIS stands for?"

"No," I said.

"Young, Attractive, Verbal, Intelligent, Successful."

We laughed, and he continued: "I don't know where that comes from," he said, "but that's been put out there in literature and popular magazines as the ideal patient." He was well aware, he said, of the critique of psychoanalysis "for only catering to that clientele," and failing to "translate to the broader layers of society." He found himself increasingly pragmatic in his methodological choices, even as he renewed and expanded his theoretical commitment to notions of 'depth': "if you work in a place like this," he said, "where you're going to have 2,000-plus people walking through the door, with all kinds of variety and diversity—then it behooves you to be more eclectic, and to struggle with the cultural differences, and with 'psychological-mindedness'."

In some ways, it seemed as though this notion of 'psychological-mindedness' was simply a subtler substitution for the fantasy of the YAVIS patient. Steven's account stages some of the genuine complexity of these moments in which different, if not quite co-equal, ways of being-in-the-world come into contact. Here, he doesn't seem to question the premise that his notion of 'depth' applies universally, trumping what he's just called "cultural differences." At the same time, he jokes about the 'YAVIS' patient—a characterization that could, indeed, as easily apply to the origins of talk therapy in fin-de-siècle Vienna as to the contemporary landscape—communicating to me that he's acutely aware of practitioners' parochial predilection toward a

very particular kind of client. He doesn't resolve this tension (versions of it came up often enough to suggest that it was regularly present for him); instead, he turns it to a justification for methodological pluralism: even as he evinces disdain for what he presents as the theoretical naiveté of "behaviorists, or cognitive behaviorists" who "say it doesn't matter what happened in the past," he's willing to make use of their techniques.

Clinicians, of course, confront their own ambivalences about these kinds of tensions in a number of ways. For Steven and his colleagues, the disclosure of "deep" feelings, thoughts, and "wounds" circulates as a kind of currency—it serves as a marker of 'health' and 'maturity', and senior clinicians cultivate it among junior clinicians from the beginning of their training experiences. It is also, for most of them, a goal in their treatment of patients—but, even when their patients 'evolve' to the point where such things are possible, the therapists are still 'alone', on the near side of a boundary that they've disciplined themselves to impose. And Diane's half-joke about the "sin" of talking about herself speaks to how pervasive the effects of that disciplining can be: they spend most of their working hours in carefully bounded, asymmetrical interactions with clients for whom they are ethically and legally responsible. Several of my interlocutors remarked, during our interviews, that they "felt like" they "should be paying" me—not, I think, because we were necessarily interacting with in a way that felt 'therapeutic' to them (though it's certainly possible that there were echoes of such a dynamic), but because, I think, that was a way to normalize their position, or perhaps to renegotiate their putative transgressions. For some of them, confronting their own complex relationships to that boundary-work—and seeking more "authentic" ways of being with other people—entailed monthly trips down the hall, after hours, to take part in meetings of the APT study group.

4. Something Worth Protecting

"The world should know more about the possibility of experience that is so precious. But I'll be fucked if I know how to put it into words."
- Nan

"People expect you to show certain things, demonstrate certain things and you just don't have it in you. Your self-management is overwhelming and yet you're still aware of what people are expecting of you—and that's part of what just adds to this burden you're struggling with."
- Karl

On a cold, rainy November evening in 2009—fully a year before the session in which Steven took on the role of Ooruk—I sat, parked in my car, a block and a half from the college counseling center where the APT group met. I listened to the sounds of the engine as it cooled: an almost-regular ticking, engrossingly out of sync with the drops of water striking the roof. I was two months into a consuming episode of depression: I really wasn't sure what, exactly, I was doing there; I wasn't even sure how I'd managed to get out of bed that day.

I'd met Steven in May of that year, and I'd taken him up on his invitation to attend the group's first gathering in September; I'd even taken a small role in the play—a series of scenes based loosely on a Yeats poem that Alice had chosen in honor of the anniversary of September 11th—and, while I'd found the group intriguing on a number of levels, I was, at that point, far from deciding that it would become a central feature of the research project that was slowly taking shape.

On that November evening, however, I wasn't looking for intellectual intrigue; sitting in the car, I doubted whether I could maintain a professional demeanor in the presence of a room full of near-strangers and potential informants. I'd nearly turned around at several points on the hour-long drive; having made it as far as the street outside the counseling center, however, I resolved to go inside. I signed in at the security desk, and physical anxiety mounted to near-panic as I

waited for the elevator: there was, I was certain, no possible way I could talk to anyone, just then, without falling apart.

My feet kept moving, and I found myself in the larger of the center's two conference rooms. Stan and Ellen Knecht—the creators of APT, and Steven's teachers—were there, in person; it was one of the rare occasions on which they visited the U.S., and they were, it turned out, going to be leading the APT session themselves that night. I seriously considered flight; I couldn't imagine even holding eye contact with anyone, let alone having a fruitful research-oriented engagement. And then Stan began to speak.

Eighty-five-years-old, tall, with perfect posture, a shock of silvery-white hair, arresting blue eyes, and a surprisingly soft, deep voice that filled the room: Stan told us that there would be no story, and no play. Instead, we would do a "walking meditation." We were told to form a circle, arms-width apart from the person next to us, and turn to our right, so that we faced the back of the person in front of us. We were to begin walking, slowly, neither closing the distance between ourselves and the person in front of us, nor falling behind. Our focus was to be on the space between us: we would be able to feel the boundary between our respective "energetic fields" as we moved, Ellen said, if we paid close attention.

We began moving—awkwardly and unevenly at first, many of us nearly running into the person in front of us, as 25 people struggled to find an even pace in that rectangular, windowless, low-ceilinged room, with the furniture pushed against the walls. Almost immediately, however, I noticed something else: there was something exquisitely soothing about the cadence of our movement. I'd walked into the room, wracked with fear about how I might manage to face another person while maintaining composure, and equally apprehensive about the prospect of sitting in silent meditation, alone with the discomfiting noise in my head. What I found, there, in

that room, was a strong, gentle embrace: safely diffused among the two-dozen people, shuffling into rhythm, eventually breathing more or less as one, I felt: *held*—in the most intimately impersonal way.

Later, I thought of something Gilles Deleuze wrote: in fantasy, the impersonal—occasioned by the indefinite article—"is not a generality but a singularity at the highest point" (1998:3). In an earlier encounter with the text, I'd read that as an expression of the potential for a coolly indifferent kind of freedom—here, however, it came to suggest something… else: a different kind of sociality, perhaps, in which the anonymous might not be atomized but, rather, immanent.

We walked in that circle for something like half an hour. Afterward, we broke for dinner: the presence of Stan and Ellen was, after all, an occasion for celebration. For me, things were different—not miraculously so, but in a way that was just small enough that I could trust it.

I do not claim to 'fully understand' (whatever that might mean) what my interlocutors intend by the word "sacred," as they used it, variously, to describe spaces, times, and experiences of themselves or each other. I do think that Stan and Ellen's fortuitously-timed visit, that evening, afforded me the opportunity to much better appreciate some of the textures of these very embodied practices of sociality. My interlocutors rarely talked about 'the sacred' as an abstraction—usually, 'sacred' was a modifier for 'spaces', 'relationships', and the like—and so, when they did speak of it directly, I generally attempted to elicit reflection on the objects and moments they characterized as "sacred."

Nan, for instance, mused that—despite her propensity to frequently invoke a notion of "sacred space"—her sense of what she meant by it was difficult to articulate. Sometimes, she spoke of it as a thing she created for (or, occasionally, with) her clients: "I don't know how many pure moments of grief she's allowed herself without that self protective mechanism," she said,

describing a particularly difficult long-term patient, "but it felt like this sacred space." She reflected on that particular encounter, in which she and the client had both shared a deep laugh following an exceptionally trying exchange: "that happens, too, in that sacred space," she said. "It feels almost like a criterion, where it feels like where you can share that grief with somebody, [and] almost always there's some laughter or some joy that gets expressed almost simultaneously. But," she furrowed her brow, "it doesn't feel like a criterion that would fit into any academic research."

When I asked her to reflect further on the precise texture of the exchange she had characterized as "sacred," Nan's reply traced an arc from apology to phenomenology to physiology, and back; ultimately, her sense of it seemed to turn on a kind of safety—an absence of vulnerability—that was grounded in a very particular way of relating to another person.

"You're going to have to forgive me," she smiled. "It's so much like a gut feeling. It's—something *shifts* in the air between people."

> Einstein spent twenty years trying to figure out that 'unified field theory', you know, that explains everything—but even scientists are aware that there's some kind of form of energy that can't be explained scientifically yet. But it feels like it's that—it feels like an energy field, a connection that maybe, if you could measure the amygdala, and the kind of parasympathetic nervous system dropping and just—'relaxing' is not the right word, but deepening, or something. You know, that there's like a richness, and a depth, and a clarity that there's something *true*. That all the bullshit, all of the games, all of everything is not just 'in the room' right now, and *this*—that's happening *between* us—is true. And it's kind of like a weird, weird—like, nobody in either person's seat could tell either of us that it wasn't worth the time, and the resources, that they were taking for them to enter

into that sacred space. It's hard for me to get clients to articulate it. They come back, and they say, 'you're fabulous'!

"What are the embodied sensations," I asked her. "What's the physical texture?"

"It's in my stomach," she replied. "it's a 'settling'. And I think it's in my breath too. Like, neither of us is fighting anything. It's just like pure, connected being. Radically different people—it doesn't really matter, when all of the external stuff is lifted away," she smiled, "something is laid bare." And then she qualified her characterization, in a way that struck me: "you know, like, when some things feel 'laid bare', there's a *raw* feeling that you want to kind of jump to protect? It doesn't feel like you have to jump to protect this. It just feels like the connection provides the protection." She paused, and chuckled, a little nervously. "I'm really sucking at words," she said.

"No, you're doing great," I insisted. "Okay, so: when *does* it feel like it needs protecting?"

Her response was immediate, and clear: "when I'm out on my own," she said, "*out* of the therapy office, feeling that degree of vulnerability—in the presence of another, who's *not* 'getting it' yet." By contrast, she said:

> in the therapy office, if I'm doing my job right, I can be in charge, to some degree, of creating that space with and for somebody else. But on my own, right—I've worked really, really hard. I've probably worked—it's like a 'you-become-a-really-good-listener-because-nobody-listened-to-you-enough' kind of thing? Like, you become really good at creating a sacred space for other people, and on some level, you long for that for yourself. Not on—you know, my favorite hymn, "there is a longing in my heart for you to reveal yourself to me, O Lord?" There's obviously a deep longing, I suppose, on some level, for somebody else to create that sacred space for *me*.

She began, and ended, by seeming to want to preempt judgment with apologies for what might be perceived as her lack of verbal clarity. Nan started to describe her sensation—"a gut feeling" about a "shift in the air"—but then withdrew. What followed was a very subtle sequence of rhetorical moves: she invoked the failure of an unimpeachable scientific authority (i.e., "Einstein"), establishing that she's well aware of the boundaries of 'accepted' knowledge; she then referenced generic "scientists"—without an article, ambiguously implying that she meant to refer to all scientists—who "are aware" of an "energy" that "can't be explained scientifically yet."[75] She then moored her account to precisely "that…energy field" which she tentatively started to correlate to activity in the "amygdala" and a "deepening" of the "parasympathetic nervous system" that is discernible by dint of phenomenological data: a "richness," "depth, and a clarity" that, taken together, index the presence of "something true."

She turned, then, to bracket "all the bullshit, all of the games, all of everything"—quarantining everything external to "the odd relationship"—as if to underscore the ontological distinction between, on the one hand, something that might not 'count' because it's 'only' happening "in the room right now," and, on the other, something warranting deictic emphasis: "this—that's happening between us, is true." From there, she emphasized the utter, unequivocal certainty that, she insisted, attends each person's experience of the value of their encounter, in which they were, apparently, symmetrically invested: "nobody… could tell either of us that it wasn't worth the time and the resources that they were taking for them to enter into that sacred

[75] Nan had spoken, on another occasion, of the rigorously scientific and quantitative orientation of her own clinical training: "In a way, I think it makes me a better therapist, because I feel like—as intuitively, relationally based as I am—I have kind of an analytical head on these shoulders, and an awareness of all of that science, so it kind of feels like it keeps me grounded in something. It doesn't ever feel too 'new-agey' . . . It's like when my dad came in here [to coffee shop she'd chosen for our interview] once and he looked at that and it said that 'prayer changes things'. And he says, 'Oh, this is rather a wooly place, isn't it?' Who knows how wooly I'd be if it wasn't for my father."

space," she said; the very possibility of doubt (with respect to truth) or waste (with respect to "resources and time") is precluded.

Nan remarked, then, on how difficult it is for her "to get clients to articulate it"—a sentiment with which she herself had expressed solidarity (in her preemptive apology) and from which she then distanced herself by precisely by articulating such a narrative for herself; only after having thusly established something like credibility did she respond to my follow-up question about sensation and texture. She answered in explicitly phenomenological terms, followed by interpretation of intersubjective experience on the basis of her own subjective state, and with an emphasis on something like the absence of vulnerability as positive evidence of 'sacredness': "It's in my stomach," she said, her voice gradually taking on greater authority. "It's a settling. And I think it's in my breath, too—like neither of us is fighting anything. It's just like pure, connected being." She smiled, and her voice softened, as she spoke about the "protection" provided by the "connection"—as opposed to the protection that she was professionally licensed to provide—and she made a key distinction between, on the one hard, being "in charge of… creating that space with and for someone" if she were "doing [her] job right," and, on the other hand, a "deep longing" for "somebody else to create that sacred space for" her that she likened to the longing for God that she felt was expressed in for favorite hymn.[76]

For Nan, taking part in APT workshops was a "rejuvenating" experience, and she averred that there was "something universally healing… about APT" which, she said, is "one of the few times where I felt like I really let people feed *me*." Her experiences with APT supported her

[76] Nan's spiritual background was, even by the standards of my interlocutors, remarkable: her father was an atheist in Northern Ireland who'd moved his family to England after the Bloody Sunday massacre in 1972, and to America shortly thereafter. Part of her teenage rebellion involved joining the Catholic church; her grandparents had followed a Gurdjieff group for years, her grandmother later joined a group of Sufi mystics, and her "mom was a Sufi priestess."

work in the clinic, she said, inasmuch as she found herself drawing on the stories to elucidate particular points with clients in the days immediately following an APT workshop. It was also a source of ambivalence, however, because it foregrounded the stark contrast between that experience of mutuality and reciprocity on the one hand and, on the other, the unidirectional, bounded relations she had with her clients: "I'm not quite sure how thrilled I was to go back to just being more of a feeder than 'feed-ee'," she said.[77]

In sum: when APT participants talked about "sacredness," they consistently emphasized such embodied aspects of experience—but in relation to, and in tension with, their persistent ambivalences about the 'one-sidedness' of their clinical relationships. When it came to the study group, they seemed to connect "sacredness" with their own desires for opportunities for unselfconscious, unreflective, immersive experiences of themselves, in the course of which they might surprise themselves and be "transformed."

Having participated in and observed a total of fifteen gatherings of the APT study group over two years, I would, in general, stipulate to my interlocutors' characterization of the dynamic: this was a collection of tenaciously compassionate, kind, generous people, demonstrably committed to various kinds of "healing" or "helping" professions that they tended to present as "vocations" or "callings." It's for this reason that the evening with which Part I began—when Steven portrayed the young Inuit boy, Ooruk, during an APT Study Group session—was so singularly

[77] Nan was not an exception in this regard. At the public APT workshop we'd attended a few days prior to that conversation, other clinicians voiced similar sentiments. As we took turns introducing ourselves at the beginning of the day, Diane, for instance, stressed that she was there for personal, rather than professional, reasons—and when it was Steven's turn to speak, he smiled, and his voice was thick with emotion, as he drew a connection from his APT work to his relationship to the tiospaye, and to the service-learning trips he led to the Lakota reservation: "to me, this is one of the most important things in my life…. This feeds me, too, and kind of grounds me. It feels like a spiritual calling that's connected to other spiritual traditions, now, through the work on the reservation."

striking to me: it was one of the only times I ever saw the clinicians in the group give themselves license to suspend some of that compassion (however subtly). In the process, I will argue, they made it clear that—whatever else they were protecting—they felt compelled to redress the transgression of a tacit commitment to both *share* personal details (to "mutually disclose," as Diane put it above) and, crucially, to *perform* that disclosure in very particular ways.

The APT Study Group session for November of 2010 took shape along the usual lines: participants arrived, greeted each other, and a more structured round of 'how-was-your-month' made its way around the room; the only marked exception to the norm was that Kimberley,[78] rather than Steven and Alice, was leading the evening's session—she'd taken them up on the invitation to practice facilitating the group. She read the story "Sealskin, Soulskin."[79] We sat in silent meditation for perhaps ten minutes, contemplating Kimberley's question (about what "home" meant to us), and then the play began.

Steven played Ooruk; Diane portrayed the fisherman who ensnares the seal-woman; and Karl—a professor of communications, a long-time member of the study group, and one of three non-clinicians in the room (along with Kimberley and me)—took the lead: he was the half-human, half-seal woman who gave birth to Ooruk, and who eventually had to choose between her own death and abandoning her child.[80] The evening was replete with emotionally intense—

[78] A registered nurse with a "holistic" orientation, Kimberley was a regular member of the APT study group—and she also participated in a Gestalt group with Sandra.

[79] For a synopsis of this story, see section one (above).

[80] Here, as elsewhere, I will not attempt to recreate a definitive account of the "play" portion of the APT session. Mapping the contours of my research with APT study group members entailed a negotiation over which parts of an APT session I would be permitted to record--and there was a consensus built around the "protection" of the play-time as a "liminal" space for "unselfconscious" and "spontaneous" performance. This respect for their request is half of the reason I will demur from detailed description of such events. The other half of the reason is that, as I will argue, much of what follows the play—i.e., the "processing" or "discussion"—constitutes a kind of negotiation-by-narration: that is, part of what is at stake, during the

even wrenching—moments; as the play progressed toward its dramatic climax, however, a curious, and perhaps singular, dynamic developed. At numerous points during the play, Karl responded to fraught moments with a muted affect that bordered, at times, on glibness. Clinicians exchanged sidelong glances when he failed to emote. When, for instance, he was faced with the prospect of comforting Ooruk, who appeared visibly shaken by the prospect of Karl's character's possible death or disappearance, he said, "you know, the thing about living is that you're always dying"—to which the room responded with a kind of raucous nervous laughter that I heard, in retrospect, as an index of interpersonal discomfort and something like existential precarity, both of which were surprisingly palpable in the small, windowless room that night.

The play ended on an unusually challenging note, and when the processing began, group members were anxious to work through some of the wracking tensions that had arisen during the play: fears of parental abandonment, as well as deep sadness, in concert with feelings of being trapped by the consequences of past choices. Through it all, there was a kind of quiet, jittery anger, directed at Karl. About twenty minutes into the processing, he explained that he'd been "triggered" during the play: he shared with the group that "there's some mental illness in the family," that his maternal grandmother had committed suicide long before his birth, and that he'd played the character of Ooruk's mother as a kind of working-through of what her position might've been like, if she'd lived it differently. "I'm a very kind of 'light' person," he said. "I don't explore the 'dark' as much as I probably should, but it was powerful for me to play that

---

sometimes hours-long conversation, is precisely the question of what actually happened during the play. This question is, moreover, almost never a matter of direct contestation; rather, it is worked out through a subtly iterative discursive interplay involving the tactical deployment of different modes of authority, building toward a consensus that is retroactively imposed upon events at the level of people's own understandings of their own experiences. More on this below.

really clear physical boundary in that role of this woman needed to go for her physical health or for her mental health. …it's got to be a scary, hard, horrible place to be," he said.

After his disclosure, everything about the group dynamic in the room shifted, and a complex dance began. The clinicians in the room, who'd apparently been unsure of how to relate to him, moved to acknowledge their own feelings: Annie described the anger she'd felt at how Karl's character had abandoned Ooruk, and Diane, who'd played Ooruk's father, was struck by the fact the "the mom got all the anger" even though both parents bore responsibility for the situation. Sasha—a clinician and APT veteran who was visiting town and sitting in on the study group for the evening—addressed Karl directly: "I was just really angry with you, and I did not release it until you just told me about your grandma and, all of sudden, it just released…. I mean, I don't know if anyone saw me, but I could *not* stay still."

Then they began offering interpretations: "That *felt* like a synchronicity, when you told that story," Steven said.[81] "It's a similar age, and it's something that's been held in your family for all this time, and doesn't get talked about and it's there, it's part of the history, it's very powerful."

Karl, however, wasn't quite 'there' yet; he stiffened a little, and parried with a formal-sounding response: "No, but it was tremendous, and I'm really deeply grateful for being—for having the story shared tonight, and for being able to play a central role, both in the play, but also in the debriefing, and I thank you all for that."

The other clinicians (and Kimberly) were having none of it. A floodgate had opened—he'd 'anted up' with his disclosure, and the others—who'd been careful not to attack him directly, despite their discomfort with his portrayal of the mother and his flat affect during the play—piled

[81] Evocations of Jung—as with Steven's use of "synchronicity"—were commonplace, and typically taken as matter-of-fact assessments.

on in a wave of 'sharing': now that they were sharing 'with' him, rather than 'at' him, they seemed to give themselves permission to speak in ways I hadn't heard from them before.

"Part of me wanted you to die for the son," Sasha said.

"Hm," Karl intoned with a half smile. "Interesting."

Kimberly jumped in, with a laugh: "like, 'die for him'! 'Will you die'!?"

"Yeah—me too," said Jason,[82] who'd portrayed the boy's grandfather. "*Part* of me wanted that, too. And I'm struggling with that, too."

"Right?" Kimberley nodded.

Jason continued: "—like, 'why did I want that? My own, like, 'martyrdom stuff', or my own judgment of you?" The conversation shifted into a gentle and generous probing into the 'deeper' motives that might have made it possible for Jason to have such a feeling. Twice, Karl tried to interject—but Diane, Kimberly, and Jason kept going.

"As a grandfather," Jason said, "I was this close to saying, 'Go be with your family'."

"But you stopped!" observed Diane. "You stopped yourself, because you were trying to get in touch with the compassion of missing your child, and being happy that she was here with you, but in a lot of ways feeling very conflicted."

"Yeah," Jason nodded.

"I *really* identified with your dilemma in that moment—" Kimberley began.

"It *was* a dilemma!" Diane interjected in agreement.

"—of deciding to not help your adult child make such a big decision," Kimberly continued. "You gave the decision back [to Karl], and I can really identify with that. It was beautiful actually."

---

[82] In his mid-30s, Jason had recently completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology; he worked as a counselor in the center with Steven, Diane, and Annie.

"I would agree," Diane nodded. "It's like, 'oh, baby'!" The group laughed with her, and Karl tried to interject, but Diane continued, addressing Jason: "No, but I mean really, it was so generous, because parents can be so judgmental—"

Karl, in a soft voice, said, "oh yeah."

"—and just cast you off," said Diane, with a single, sharp clap of her hands. "Like. 'What did you do!? Look what you've done'!" she concluded.

There was a chorus of praise for, and solidarity with, Jason's portrayal of the grandfather—and against Karl's—before the conversation turned to discussion of how, as Kimberley put it, Steven had "really embodied that role" of Ooruk. When the talk returned, a moment later, to how several participants had wanted the story to conclude with a happy ending—but that Karl had resisted it.

Karl took the opportunity to re-engage: "usually, I drive for harmony," he said—seeming, in that moment of the processing, to strive for precisely the harmony that he'd resisted in the play. "I really do. But… it didn't have *authenticity* for me if it didn't end in this 'heavy' place, and I—personally, tonight—wanted this to end in a 'heavy' place," he said, "and when you're one of the players, you can somehow 'steer' it." The 'it', in Karl's account, was the trajectory of the story itself—a complex challenge to what Steven sometimes described as the "democratic" quality of the play-space, it seemed, in which one character had conjured an encounter with darkness that was not experienced as a 'choice' by other players—in relation to which the drive for interpretive consensus becomes legible as a reassertion of 'majority' control.

Karl's apparent acceptance of responsibility seemed to license a renewed attempt, by the clinicians, to impose a diagnostic logic on his behavior. "You may not have gotten to that

memory about your grandmother—" Steven began, before pausing mid-sentence, inviting a response from Karl.

Karl seemed *almost* ready to agree: "Yeah. Yeah. It wouldn't have had that—yeah—it wouldn't—it wouldn't have resonated—it wouldn't—" he trailed off.

Kimberley suggested that he'd been "clear from the start" that he wasn't going to stay with the child.

When Karl responded, it sounded like an attempt at indirect apology: "And one of the things that—especially, just debriefing this—one of the things in the character I was playing, it didn't fully sink in, that child was a *commitment*, having a child was a new commitment for me—and, essentially, like, an eternal commitment." He paused, then concluded: "Yeah, I didn't focus on that as I played the role."

The processing—or "de-briefing," as some participants referred to it[83]—continued for nearly an hour. At one point, I took the opportunity to reflect on what had struck me as an extraordinarily complicated relationship between the 'play' and the 'processing'. I joked about how I'd identified with several people's impatience for the end of the play—people laughed, exclaiming "yeah!" and "exactly"—and then, I tried to explain my experience: "I was very aware of my own—the *dryness* of my experience of a lot of the play. There were moments," of marked exception I said, such as Steven's "physicality" or the "exquisitely wrenching farewell" between Diane and Steven. "But by and large, I was not feeling particularly 'present' during

[83] This was a point of mild, but recurrent, contention: part of what ostensibly distinguished APT from psychodrama was that the performances in APT were mediated by the stories themselves—i.e., that players were already at a degree of remove from what they were portraying—and so there would, in theory, be no need to ritually "de-role," as is common practice in psychodramatic therapy. In practice, however, the 'distance' between people and their characters seemed to vary significantly, and so, during the processing, it was often necessary to reinscribe that distinction.

whole stretches of the play," I said, "and what happened for me tonight is something that's happened more than once in this room—which is that during the course of the processing, it's like watching a photo slowly develop—"

"Yeah," nodded Sasha.

"—in a bath—"

"Yeah!," she exclaimed.

"—and that my experience of myself in the play, during the *play* part—I'm, like, retroactively 'rewriting' my experience of it."

"Exactly!" agreed Diane, nodding.

"I have a *different* understanding [that coheres during the 'processing']," I said, "which is not just a 'conceptual' thing, but it's actually—" I struggled for the right words, then continued: "and I find these kind of emotional states sort of 'blooming' into being, and, I'm getting 'triggered', and thinking about all of this stuff that I was *literally* not thinking of when the play was playing out—"

"Right," Diane encouraged.

"—but now that we're talking about it [during the processing], it becomes—in some really *visceral* way—'anchored' to the shared experience from an hour before—" I suggested, trailing off.

Diane, still nodding: "Yes!"

"It's almost," suggested Jason, "like the debriefing brings the unconscious to the conscious."

This was met with widespread approval: a chorus of "right!" and "yeah;" "mm-hmm" and "oh, very nice!" Jason's observation—about the salience of the "debriefing" to individual experience—seemed astute to me, as well; it was only later that I thought about it as it might

apply to the group: that is, that the diagnostic dynamic which surfaced, and built energy like a gathering storm, also revealed something about the unconscious of this particular collective. The talk dissolved into side conversations; when a single voice emerged, it was Diane's, as she reflected on her experience of her own jumbled affect during parts of the play: "I was anxious, and there was—at one point, Annie, I think you caught me laughing when it was so heavy," she said. "I wanted to cry—like, I couldn't take it anymore, then I start giggling—which I do: it's like, too much to handle, so I start to laugh—which is *so* bad." Then, with a sidelong glance at her boss, Steven, she added: "Trust me—I don't do that in session!"

The room broke up at that; when the laughter started to subside, she went on: "Sometimes, it's just gets to be too much. Anyway, I wanted to get to this place, because there was so much that was going on for me that I almost felt the *need* to debrief. In fact, that's why I think I wanted the story to end sooner," she said, seeming to surprise herself a little.

Kimberley concurred, and then Karl found a way to re-enter the conversation, repairing the intersubjective breach with a definitive 'mea culpa' that resulted in a kind of group forgiveness and re-integration: "there were points where it dragged for me," he allowed, "but I've got to say that it was really kind of therapeutic to go and play out the distance for me personally," he said—with a chuckle after the word "therapeutic."

The group—in perfect, almost uncanny unison—breathed an "mm-hmm," and he continued, connecting his insight to the play-processing theme: "and so yeah, it's interesting how that is, and I've had that too—sometimes the 'playing out' of it doesn't resonate for me, but it's that debrief afterwards where"—he snapped his fingers—"certain themes really kick in that are really personally resonant."

The group picked this up, and ran with it: Karl's taking ownership of a kind of excess of emotion fit squarely within the bounds of their frame of reference—a fully plausible way to account, by their standards, for his flat affect. "I just wanted you to *feel*!" said Kimberly "I just wanted you to feel. But it was okay that you… needed to leave—I was completely fine with that. I just wanted it," she paused, then added, before trailing off: "not to be so—"

"Routine?" Diane suggested. "Or 'la-di-da'?"

Karl, confirming this, added: "and I think what's important for me to say—in the role in a couple of key times—it was so overwhelming."

Kimberly nodded: "Yeah, yeah." Karl, however, was not quite done—and, in the exchange which followed, through the use of the passive voice and in the way in which he shifted his pronoun choices, he subtly but persistently defended himself by dancing around explicit 'ownership' of the transgressive states.

"There's such a rush of emotion—" he began.

"Yeah," Alice encouraged.

"—and it was almost debilitating—"

"Mm-hm," nodded Alice.

"—and there's a certain shutting down that happens."

Kimberly, nodding too: "yeah, yeah—yeah"

"Yeah," Karl continued, shifting to the second-person: "and part of it is even putting the emotion on your face," he paused. "That takes a certain energy that you just don't feel like you have sometimes—"

Alice murmured approval; Kimberly said, "God, that's really profound!"

"—so I really feel for people in that kind of situation," he said, "because people expect you to show certain things, demonstrate certain things and you just don't have it in you. Your self-management is overwhelming and yet you're still aware of what people are expecting of you—and that's part of what just adds to this burden you're struggling with."

The group seemed fully satisfied with that; Kimberley changed the subject, and the discussion went on for a little while longer before Sasha gestured toward her phone and made a joke about having to leave because *her* Ooruk was outside, waiting for her. Conversation dissolved into banter between individuals, and participants shared warm farewells—usually hugging—before taking their leave.

At the time, the evening had seemed like a fairly typical APT gathering to me; as I went home, I was thinking mainly about how to make sense of what seemed to me to be a radical, but not uncommon, shift in the texture of shared experience of the play while it was being discussed in the processing. It wasn't completely clear to me, until much later—after my informants started reflecting, in our interviews, on how Karl had been on the receiving end of intense and challenging attention—that something more interesting (and less abstract) had been afoot: as so often occurs, the most dearly-held tacit values became clearest when people were reacting to a perceived transgression, and policing a boundary. Karl's 'great sin', that evening, was—in the parlance of the group, and of American psychotherapy—a failure to be 'present': he'd not shown the kind of emotion expected of him during the play, and it had created a serious rift in the group. A skilled communicator, much of his participation in the evening's 'de-briefing' had consisted of him finding a way to repair that breach. The disclosure of a fragment of 'deep' personal history that could plausibly considered traumatic enough to account for his affect—that is, his grandmother's suicide—was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition: he spent the rest of

the evening finding a way to atone for his failure to perform the particular kind of affect that the group recognized as its most basic form of currency.

Of course, it's not the case that 'everyone' 'always' performs the kind of affect demanded of Karl; in fact, it is regularly the case that some members of the group—some of the younger non-clinicians, say, or members of the "public" who attend "open" APT workshops—are subject to a different, and vastly reduced, set of affective expectations. This only, however, serves to underscore the point: what these clinician-participants seem to value most dearly is precisely the *honoring* of a commitment, made by a fully-capable—and therefore wholly accountable—individual, to be "present;" in the process, they ratify and render sacred—that is, they recognize and reciprocate—the commitment that each of them are making with their "authentic" selves.

5. Differences that Make a Difference

> "Therapy seems to be more of a way of working through things on a mental level; helping create new patterns; helping to think about things in new ways; helping cope with situations. [But] 'healing' is like a fundamental regeneration of one's 'self', and it has a really deep connection to others, and to the world…. I mean, it's a *spiritual* thing."
> - APT Study Group member

> "it's a whole other level when it's your bread-and-butter, and it's your professional identity."
> - Steven

In Part I, we have seen some of the ways in which clinicians' express their desire for novel, "authentic" forms of sociality. Leaning on the premises of ethnomethodology,[84] I want to suggest that the particular ways in which my informants make the claims they make—their assumptions

[84] See, for instance, Heritage (1991)—and see Part II for more on this, apropos of the discursive performance of authority.

about shared frames of reference; the practiced facility they evince with respect to the boundaries of intersubjectivity and mutual intelligibility—reveal a great deal about the social world of which they are not only native experts, but moral guardians. More to the point: the sheer amount of discursive and affective labor they invest in policing those boundaries make clear the stakes, for them, of transgression.

It's particularly significant, I think, that these are, in the main, people who have had powerful spiritual experiences—*healing* experiences—in other, less clinical, milieux: their frames of reference, that is, are not fully circumscribed by their professional lives. As I suggested above, APT seems to fall precisely *on* a line for Steven: the ceremonial healings of the tiospaye are a little "too far down the path," and short-term psychotherapy is not quite enough—but APT seems to let him flirt with the power of spiritual healing, without sacrificing *too much* of the legitimacy and security that attends his position as director of a counseling center.

Later, we'll see what this looks like for tiospaye members who go further "down the path," many of whom grapple with adjacent, but distinct, challenges as they navigate between different aspects of their selves and worlds. There's a sense in which 'authenticity', as clinicians deploy the notion, is inextricably bound up in the spontaneous performance of affect. Sandra, for instance, said in an interview that authenticity "means having the presence of mind to connect with who I am in any given moment"—and she illustrated the point, in a later conversation, with a story about a "shamanic experience" that entailed reaching an "altered state" of "uncontrollable anger" during a Gestalt session.

Like Sandra, Diane reached for metaphors of depth—"moments of the deepest healing" included "silent meditation retreats, sweat lodges,[85] [and] APT, get to something very deep and core;" she'd also had "deep experiences in therapy," particularly during the ten years she'd been part of an 'encounter'-style group which met for three hours every Wednesday evening—and which, on occasion, would gather for a "marathon" session:

> what you do is you come around 6:00 on a Friday, and the group goes all through Friday night into the morning and into the next day, and then you end at 6:00 Saturday. No sleep. … We brought food, and everybody made things, and it was very much a 'community' feel. The idea behind it is that when you do that—when you don't sleep—your defenses are lowered dramatically, and you become very vulnerable, and so really pretty incredible things can take place.

Also like Sandra, Diane, too, illustrated the texture of authentic experience with a story of wrenching emotional intensity. Her experiences of sweat lodges, she recalled, had given her healing encounters with her grief over the death of her child:

> I'll never forget just bawling—like coming to a really deep place of the recognition of the loss of a child in my life; and how I grieved, I cried, during that sweat [lodge]. And then how renewing it was after the sweat. …I had never experienced anything like that before. … I'll never forget my experience in South Dakota[, either]. I swear, I could have almost died [from the heat]…. I was so on the edge and I wouldn't leave. And I came out of that sweat, …my fingers were like four times the size of what they are now. My heart was beating so fast. It was the weirdest thing. I just started—I couldn't stop crying. I was

[85] Also called *inipi* in the Lakota tradition with which my interlocutors have some experience, sweat lodges are small, dome-shaped structures in which steam, prayer, and song are used to ritually cleanse or purify participants; see Bucko (1998) and especially Clements (2001), as well as Part III (below).

> shaking. It was Mother's Day, actually, and it was just—I don't know; there's something about the sweat—a process of getting in touch with this deep sadness—that isn't really available to me in most areas of my life. You just kind of, like, 'do' your life. And it's in those moments of—I don't know what you would really call it. It forces you to another place really. I feel like I get in touch with parts of myself that are often not attended to in my everyday life. And so it's very cleansing for my soul. It helped.

Having these kinds of experiences within their frames of reference—a broader context, perhaps—led some of my informants to distinguish between distinct registers of healing. The "services offered" and "contractual arrangements" (as one informant put it) unique to clinical psychotherapy performed by licensed professionals formed a kind of baseline reference. Supportive, guided interpersonal interactions in a variety of different milieux—including much of what transpired during APT sessions—might yield insights and behavioral modifications, and could therefore be considered "therapeutic." And then there was another category—exceptionally difficult to pin down—but usually languaged in terms of "healing" or "transformation," which often entailed the kind of "altered states" that Sandra referenced above. As one informant put it: "I haven't had a healing experience from APT yet, even though it's therapeutic."

The point, here, is that, for many of my interlocutors in the APT group, the shared experience of play and processing occupied a kind of comfortable middle ground between the workaday world of clinical psychotherapy and "transformational" or "healing" experiences that, as I'll argue in Part III, seem to require something like qualitatively different kinds of commitment and sacrifice. In our interviews, most participants expressed consistent and deep appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of the sessions, and they often spoke with respect or awe (tinged, it

seemed at times, with a hint of wistfulness) about what they saw as the "depth" of other people's experiences—Steven's portrayal of Ooruk, for instance, was described to me by Diane as "on that other level" and "almost dissociative," and Sandra's performances were frequently cited as exemplars of immersive embodiment.

When it came to their own experiences, however, none of them described achieving the kind of "altered state" they readily ascribed to others. They were much more likely to describe their own experiences as "more like acting." One interlocutor spoke, a little ruefully, about the sense that it was important to not go "too far:" acutely aware of other members' discomfort, this person felt "inhibited," and said, "I'm not going to break a social norm, and potentially get cast aside by a group—booted out for being a 'whack job'." Another participant allowed that while there was "a certain amount of 'facing fear' in the room… I still think that APT process is kind of superficial."

> it's such an 'accepting' environment… [but] I've never gotten 'called out' in APT. … It's always been kind of, just, like, *easy*—like, 'Oh, I'll do this role, and be kind of funny, maybe, or see something that's kind of difficult'—but… actually *going there,* where I'm really… willing to reveal my fears? … I mean, we come together maybe once a month, …[and] there's not a lot at stake for me in this relationship with these people. There's *not* a lot of demand for me, authentically, within the *real* challenges of my life, and the challenges of my lived relationships, to have to 'go there' with people. I don't feel conflict in APT. I don't feel like really getting 'pushed to an edge' so much, … [or to be] really revealing myself in ways that I just don't want to.

I take this statement—a particularly, and perhaps singularly strong articulation of a sentiment expressed by others—as evidence of a kind of ambivalence endemic to a context that carries

some of the congenital asociality of clinical psychotherapy: people seem torn between, on the one hand, an appreciation for the genuine comfort afforded by the caring support of a group of peers and, on the other, an intractable and frustrating awareness that there are dimensions of sociality—and possibly even 'depths' of self-experience—that seem wholly inaccessible to them. That ambivalence becomes legible in a distinction that will resurface, in various forms, in the pages ahead: between, on the one hand, something 'worth' protecting—i.e., the sanctity of sacred space for play, even, and especially, when what's at stake is the very possibility of sociality—and, on the other hand, something that 'feels' dangerous to *not* protect (that is, what Steven called one's "bread-and-butter.")

I met one-on-one with many members of the APT study group, but I spent far more time with Steven than anyone else. I visited his home; the Quaker meeting house where he worships; and, on twenty-one separate occasions between May of 2010 and June of 2011, I met with him for an hour in his office, on the fifth floor of the university building that houses the counseling center. Without variation, he sat in his plush chair, and I sat across from him, about five feet apart, on a couch: the positions that we would have taken had I arrived as his patient, and in which he seemed most comfortable.[86]

Our conversations ranged from the recent or impending meeting of the APT study group to his family life (and history) to his work as director of that center and the progress of the clients he was treating. Gaining direct access to Steven's sessions with his patients had been off the table from the beginning, but as the research took shape—and as it became increasingly clear just

[86] Therapists with whom I worked varied widely with respect to their preferred orientations in space for our conversations: some, like Steven, reproduced the positioning they'd adopt with a patient; others were at pains to avoid precisely those emplacements. It almost always became an object for reflection, usually when they would remark with surprise on their own discomfort at being in a position of relative vulnerability. Diane, for instance, regularly found herself fidgeting during our interviews, and sometimes clutched a pillow in her lap.

how much of his time he devoted to various aspects of teaching, training, and otherwise reproducing the vocation of which he was a part—I began looking for opportunities to conduct other kinds of study in the clinic itself.

A month and a half into those interviews, Steven started describing an innovative approach to training predoctoral interns:[87] he and Diane were getting ready to write an academic article about their 'group supervision of supervision' model, in which interns—who function with a fairly high degree of independence, as they conduct therapy and perform diagnostic intake sessions on their own—receive feedback on the supervision they themselves are providing to their junior colleagues (typically M.A.-level students, or doctoral students in their externships or practicums—i.e., clinicians-in-training who work under even more intensive oversight).

I thought for sure that I'd found a way in: given how freely and openly he'd spoken—in the presence of a recorder—about matters ranging from his family history of mental illness to his own metaphysical explorations, I though he'd at least be open to the possibility of my attending some of the supervision-of-supervision group sessions; no client confidentiality issues would be raised, I reasoned, and I wouldn't even ask to record the sessions. I resolved to look for opportunities to broach the subject in our next interview.

---

[87] Predoctoral Interns are Ph.D.-level students in clinical psychology programs engaged in year-long programs that the APA describes as "typically the capstone clinical experience of a doctoral student's graduate program and [which] serves a gatekeeper function into the profession" (http://www.apa.org/apags/resources/internships.aspx; accessed 7 Apr 2013). Interns at Steven's program divide their time between direct service functions (like providing therapy to individuals and groups), supervision/training (in which their own work is closely critiqued), and administrative duties (such as paperwork and staff meetings). Descriptions of interns' duties are fairly standardized across programs, in keeping with APA's accreditation requirements. As Steven put it, interns "have two individual supervisors, the group supervision, they have the supervision of supervision group, and didactic training, and case conference… they have probably close to 10 hours of supervision of various kinds. Which is what an internship is—it's a very intense, full-time experience, before you're of given the go-ahead to earn your doctorate, and then you have to take your licensing exam." See APA-sanctioned histories on the subject, e.g. (Norcross et al. 2011).

In our interview a week later, he spoke about the arduous process of garnering APA accreditation for the center, which had been a work-in-progress for a year, and which would, he hoped, draw to a successful conclusion by June of 2011. I asked him if there was any way I might be able to help with the administrative end of the process—at the moment, I had the time on my hands, and I was already bound by IRB confidentiality strictures. His response was immediate and, for Steven, a little curt: "probably not," he said, shifting in his chair. He seemed to find the notion slightly jarring—I'd suggested a parallel between the kind of reflection in which he engaged when we met, and the extensive review process in which the accreditation process had him engaged—and he responded with mild incredulity: "I hadn't thought of that comparison," he said; "it's interesting, because they're such different experiences to me." What I found particularly interesting, just then, was not that he necessarily should have drawn that parallel himself, but rather that my suggestion had elicited the first significant shift in his affect that I'd observed up to that point… and it seemed to correlate to a surprising (to both of us) aspect of his ever-present work of boundary-making.

Later in the conversation, I decided to re-approach the question. I'd watched him shift from speaking guardedly and with frustration about the accreditation process, to waxing almost wistful about the APT experience. I asked him to reflect on the differences between the kind of group therapeutic process in which he engaged in clinical practice, and what happened during APT study group sessions. In APT, he said, "you kind of plunge right into the depths right away… and then you're right there with the core issues." The crux of the difference, he said, is that "you're *having* an experience, and not just *discussing* experiences." I was struck by the apparent parallel to his repeated de-emphasis of the 'processing' phase of APT in relation to the 'play', and for the same reason—that it was 'talk *about* experience', rather than the 'experience itself'; it

seemed, then and later, to be a highly porous boundary, which inhered primarily in the ritual of APT itself: the structure of the sessions, with breaks between phases, signaled the dissolution and reconstitution of the group in discrete registers, calling for different kinds of presence.

I asked if he ever felt frustrated, when he worked with clients, that he was limited to "discussing experiences;" when he responded, he smiled, and spoke about some of the groups for whom he'd facilitated APT sessions: "I've talked to Diane about this, like, we've offered it to the trainees pretty much every year…. And one year I did it several times with the trainees, and I find that fun and exciting. I have to be careful, because it's not 'standard practice', so to speak"—he laughed, with a tinge of what sounded like apprehension—"and there is conversation in the field about, 'how much do you challenge trainees'?" He spoke about training undergraduates as 'peer educators', too, as well as groups of Resident Advisors in training, and he talked about doing role-play work with student-clients—interactions in which he modeled, for example, approaches to resolving a conflict a student had with her roommates—and then he trailed off. When he picked up the thread of my question, he grew a little wistful; his speech slowed down, and his statements became more general.

"Yeah," he said, "I've thought about things like that sometimes, you know, that it *would* be nice to have an APT play sometimes."

I circled back to his prior response, then—he'd pointedly stated that APT was "not standard practice"—and I asked him about what had seemed, to me, to be a complicated shift in his affect as he talked.

He chuckled, and said:

> I mean—I—you know, it's—I mean, I wouldn't—I think, kind of going down this path, where APT has been a big part of my work, and what I've spent my extra time on. I

> mean, as a clinician and as a supervisor, a lot of my day is predetermined, so I put in a lot of hours doing the work of therapy and supervision and so forth… because APT is not a 'mainstream' thing… both times I introduced it, there was enough concern about, you know, not knowing what this was, or being fearful that students would unravel, because it was *too* experiential, that kind of put the kibosh on it, so to speak. … I think people who are very well defended, and who aren't oriented towards sharing their internal world with others and empathizing with others and being supportive, those folks I think in particular get very frightened of this stuff, and so they may try to stop it. And so, I think that's partly what you saw, in terms of my reaction, that it's a little bit—that's one of the comparisons to, you know, people who do ceremony or 'medicine people', they're kind of seen as a little bit scary, I think—like, 'what *is* this, this process?'.

In his second conversational turn, Steven began with an uncharacteristic series of false starts. He seemed to struggle to situate himself in relation to the claim he was making: he begins with an unstable distinction between his "work" and his "extra time"—both of which involve APT, but which he distinguishes, here, as a way of underscoring the sense of value that seems to come with the recognition of certain activities as worthy of financial remuneration. What was both foregrounded and rendered opaque, in the process, is the question of just how much of a stake he has in the practice, despite the fact that he capitulates in its sequestration. The crux, it seems, is his rueful tone vis-à-vis the seemingly permanent 'outsider' status of his work, and in a double sense: his APT work is treated as 'fringe', such that he's unable to get approval to teach a class for credit at the university (or even to offer APA-certified Continuing Education Credit for clinicians, which would be a source of both legitimacy and financial remuneration), and, more generally, he spoke on many occasions about how fraught the relationship was between the

counselors at the center and the rest of the university—a point which further articulates with how junior staff members are recruited, developed, and retained.

We met again in the beginning of November, and I resolved to return, one last time, to the question of whether I might be able to make the clinic a more active part of my field site. Halfway through our talk, I asked him how the supervision of supervision group had been going. He spoke with obvious pride about the progress that his interns were making, and with respect for their willingness to expose themselves to scrutiny: "as you can imagine," he said, "the level of exposure for a clinician in training, in internship years—it's about as exposing as it gets. You're doing video tapes of sessions. You're doing case presentations. You have a lot of supervision hours with different people looking at your work and giving you feedback on your work, so it's a very challenging year—but also an exciting year." He began to wax didactic: "a big part of what we try to do here," he explained, was to "create professionals who are able to be somewhat transparent, if not very transparent, about their biases; about their orientations, theoretical practice-wise; to talk about their work openly; to be open to feedback. Those are things that are really important for practicing clinicians is to develop that stuff."

I asked him, then: "Steven, do you think it would ever be possible for me to maybe sit in on a—"

He cut me off: "Actually, no," he said, "because those groups, because of the level of exposure and the fact that the group is kind of becomes this body of—I've never heard of that being done. It probably would really feel like an intrusion, I would think, to people. So I could certainly understand being curious about it, though." He paused, and added: "I mean, I hope that didn't feel too abrupt or whatever."

And that's when I understood that the moments of resistance I'd encountered over the preceding few weeks were thoroughly connected—that something closer to the 'soul of the practitioner' seemed to be at stake—and that the disjunctures between his openness on 'personal' topics like his mother's depression and his rigidity around such 'professional' questions as these were, in fact, rich opportunities for inquiry. One of the challenges of conducting research with therapists is that their affective shifts can, at times, be exceptionally subtle; one of the luxuries of working with therapists is that one can ask them quite directly about those affective shifts, and to good purpose. I recounted to Steven the different moments in which he'd seemed to me to have evinced something like discomfort recently, and invited his reflection. Had he been uncomfortable, I asked?

"A little bit," he said:

> because I see APT sort of in a different way than I see the regular kind of business of doing therapy and teaching therapy and supervising therapy. It's very important that my staff perceive me as someone who kind of protects the boundaries of that tradition and also there's a lot more at stake there. It's like no one could—as an APT leader, I don't have anything at stake to say to the group—to introduce you to them, and for people to kind of assent or not, or kind of work through with you what's comfortable for them in terms of what they're willing to expose, but professional training, I guess—for better and for worse—it's just like in any profession: there's a certain protectiveness about that. … I remember one time I said to a supervisor of mine that I felt like in some way I'm kind of being initiated into this special group of people who are, by and large, more emotionally tuned in, and intuitive, and so forth. He affirmed that—he said, "you are, you know; the people who do this kind of work are skewed in some ways." …most people who get into

this work, when you look back at the path, there are some real similarities. I think I mentioned to you that one of my professors said "show me a therapist and I'll show you someone with a depressed mother," so it's things like that—you've learned how to take care of people since you were very little.

I thanked him, and explained to him that it wasn't ultimately critically important that I get into the room in which his supervision-of-supervision group met; rather, it was precisely the shift in his affect—the texture and tone of the way in which he differently policed the boundaries of APT and his clinical work—that suggested to me that something interesting was happening. Throughout the time we worked together, he spoke clearly and explicitly of his commitment to "protecting" the people for whom he was responsible, and to ensuring the integrity of interpersonal boundaries in both clinical and ceremonial contexts… but it was precisely the subtle differences in the ways in which he policed those boundaries that were, I think, suggestive of something like the contours of his own differential investments or commitments.[88]

And, in this case, it seemed clear that there were important differences in the ways that Steven policed his different boundaries. Not that he was being literally accurate when he said that "as an APT leader, I don't have anything at stake"—I don't know of a single choice he made or action he took during the year leading up to granting me approval to conduct research with the APT group that would support that claim—but rather that the feeling of difference is, in that

[88] Not to suggest, of course, that I was necessarily gaining privileged access to aspects of Steven's experience that are, in important ways, opaque to him—but if there is perspectival privilege, it's purely positional: that is to say, there's an affinity (both genealogical and practical) between psychotherapeutic and social scientific ways of being with others, such that while I certainly don't presume to know what's inside someone's mind (on the order of, say, the motive for a particular action; people we've known for decades still surprise us at times), it's pretty reliably the case that a frequent interlocutor can (and often does) observe something about me that I cannot see for myself.

moment, at least, strong enough to warrant narration that underscored his sense of radical distinction: some boundaries could be played with; others, not.

A week later, Steven and I again sat in his office. An hour into our conversation—and shortly before November's APT workshop began—he remarked that he was looking forward to seeing what kind of structure I would eventually impose on the data I'd been gathering. I explained, "in the broadest of strokes," how I was thinking about exploring what seemed to me to be at least three different kinds of traditions that informed his thinking about what it meant to transmit what he called "wisdom traditions," as well as what it meant "to hold and share sacred space:" a) the protocols of APT, as he'd learned them directly from Stan and Ellen; and b) the spiritual practices and Lakota-derived ceremonial work he'd done with Mark over the course of a decade; and c) his training and practice as a clinician. Each of these, I mused, seemed to entail complementary ways of thinking about authority, presence, encounter, legitimacy, and safety. And then I explained that when I'd asked him the preceding week about conducting participant observation in his supervision of supervision group, I'd done so with an eye toward questions about what, in terms of his own professional practice, it would look like it for Steven "to protect space." I reminded him that his affect had seemed markedly different to me as we'd shifted from discussions about my presence in APT workshops to my possible presence in more clinical contexts, and that he'd talked about that difference in terms of having something different at stake.

He had, he said, been writing about the supervision of supervision group just that day—and he explained that, in his estimation, the interns who were being scrutinized were in a highly vulnerable position—that "the safety that's in their group… is really fragile"—and he compared

it to the idea of having an outside observer sit in on a psychotherapy group.[89] He said despite "a lot of resistance" to my study of the APT group (on the part of group members), he'd "felt that it made sense and it wasn't threatening. …like [it had been] the right decision to do that… [despite] all of the upheaval that it caused in the group. But," he said:

> it's a whole other level when it's your bread and butter and it's your professional identity. And it's the accreditation of your center and all those other things. So I feel like my staff would lose a tremendous amount of respect for me if I even suggested doing what you've asked—if that makes sense. We should talk more about that, because that's a powerful statement to make. But I've been thinking about [it,] and I think if I even suggested doing that, people would say "wow, what the hell is he thinking?" And I'm sure that's going to be interesting to you in terms of your processing this and figuring out what is this boundary that I'm up against here.

I was struck, then and as I wrote, by the putatively self-evident, unquestionable nature of the distinction he made: Steven's "bread and butter"—his livelihood, by means of which he paid his mortgage, and the tuition at his children's private high school—was simply, *obviously*, not something he would consider jeopardizing. By coupling it with his "professional identity," he made plain the ontological stakes—he was, in short, protecting something he was unprepared, at that point in his life and career, to question, let alone give up: the basis for his sense of self. There seemed a significant contrast between the kind of sacrifices Mark was willing to make—he'd quit or been fired from numerous positions, and, as his retirement loomed, he had no savings to speak of—and the ways in which most of the tiospaye members I'd met were quite careful about tending to their own professional identities. As I reflected on the sense of alterity

[89] A practice he believed to be unheard of, yet which is common in social scientific study of psychotherapy—see Carr (2010) for a recent example.

and (sometimes ambivalent) awe that occasionally inflected the ways in which Steven and other tiospaye members spoke about their teacher—the persistent notion, usually framed as a reference to his "gifts," that Mark was somehow deeply *different* from them—I started to wonder how much of that difference was about Mark's capacity to interpret spirits, and how much was about his seeming 'freedom' from the kinds of constraints that they themselves felt.

Still: there is a positive politics at work, here, as he labors to hold in abeyance the foreclosure of possibility—of, for instance, experiences that *feel* sacred for himself, and for the people under his care. In a series of recent articles in *The Lancet*, medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman (2008; 2009) tenders an elegy for the lost art of caregiving in medicine—and he issues a call to ethical action. As Steven and his colleagues resist their own complicity with the logic of care they reproduce, they are also working in a register of positive ethics: in refusing to disavow their own desire for a more sacred sociality—not by imposing that vision of sacredness, but by holding in abeyance its foreclosure—they affirm, for themselves and each other, the very possibility of other ways of being in the world: together.

Members of the APT study group began to arrive, and Steven and I brought our conversation to a close. We moved about thirty feet down the hall, and into the small conference room. Snacks were set out; greetings were exchanged; and the participants settled into their seats as Alice, Steven's wife, began telling a story about an Inuit man, a seal-woman, and a boy named Ooruk….

Part II :: Authority as Uncertainty

1. Ambivalence at Play and in (between) Ceremonies

"Faith emerges not so much as a Kierkegaardian leap of belief in something beyond comprehension but as a capacity to place one's agency in abeyance"
- Hirokazu Miyazaki, "Faith and its Fulfillment" (2000:32)

At 9:30pm on a Friday night in mid-March of 2011, the fifth-floor university counseling center was almost completely empty. The hallways were still; offices were locked and dark, and the small, windowless conference room in which the monthly APT study group had just met was half-lit and furnished with the disarrayed remnants of a circle of familiar, well-used plush chairs.

Attendance had been light that evening, and the play had wrapped up a little earlier than usual. In one corner of the room, two men stood close to one another, speaking softly. Steven was listening intently as Brent voiced some apprehension. Brent—twenty-three, a senior at the university—had met Steven a year earlier, when Brent participated in a service-learning trip Steven led to a Lakota reservation. At the invitation of a medicine man, Brent had returned to the Lakota reservation after the school trip to observe one of the annual Sun Dance ceremonies; he'd then taken Steven's suggestion to reach out to Mark—Steven's teacher—who'd then invited Brent to attend his first tiospaye gathering at the end of that summer.

In September of 2010, he'd taken part in a healing ceremony that he'd characterized as intense and powerful, and in which he had committed to spend a year carrying and tending to the spirit of his recently murdered grandfather (an activist for the Lumbee Tribe, of which Brent was an enrolled member); Mark had given him a ceremonial pipe, and told him to take time to reflect on whether he was prepared to make a "pipe pledge." The making of a such a pledge—a promise, made before the altar, to pray while holding the pipe, and to dedicate one's self to the

good of one's community—is, in the tiospaye, the first step in a progression through levels of commitment: later stages may involve extended fasting; taking part in a sequence of *hanblecas*, or vision quests, in which one spends multiple days alone in the outdoors, praying and meditating; and possibly participating in one of the annual Sun Dances in South Dakota.

Brent had quickly become an avid student of the Lakota-language songs and prayers used at these events; by March, he'd been attending ceremonial gatherings and ritual healings with Mark's circle of students for about eight months, and he'd been eager to take part in the weekend of ceremonies that both Steven and I had attended a week earlier. On this evening, however, Brent was speaking to Steven, in hushed tones, about what he described as his discomfort around the use of the pipe. He described how, after the ceremony, he'd gone out into the parking lot of behind the building in which the ceremony was being held, as instructed. He and the other two people who'd received pipes went off, each on their own, to smoke the tobacco in the bowl, and to pray. Brent confessed to Steven that he'd stood there, smoking the pipe, feeling intensely self-conscious, and wondering to himself what he was *supposed* to be feeling.

As he spoke, he seemed to be looking for signs of disapproval or disappointment on the older man's face. When Steven responded, it was with his characteristically breathy laugh. He told Brent that they were good questions—legitimate questions—and that he could relate to them. Steven said that he still had questions and doubts, too, and that—while he himself had received a pipe in ceremony—it had been years since he'd actually smoked it in prayer. Instead, he said, he sometimes simply held the pipe, or even just held in his mouth a small sprig of the sage used to keep the pipe ceremonially pure. Brent relaxed visibly as Steven spoke—his shoulders dropped, and his hands came out of his pockets—and, by the time I left, their voices had risen from

hushed to conversational tones; the younger man was smiling and appeared relaxed; and the discussion was transitioning to amiable chatter about family and work.

Whether because of the difference in their ages (23 and 52), their experience (eight months' worth of Lakota spirituality and more than a decade), or their social positions (former student and senior university staff member), the dynamic between Brent and Steven—that night, and at other times—was clear and consistent: Brent was respectfully deferential toward Steven, and Steven was nurturing (and occasionally didactic) toward Brent. The power relations between my informants were sometimes as clear as this; more often, however, things were murkier—more fluid, and more situationally contingent.

Most people didn't fit so neatly into a teacher/student relation; many were peers or colleagues (especially in the APT Study Group), and some were subordinates. For Brent, and Steven, and other tiospaye members or APT participants, the pursuit of 'healing' had led to a series of layered, interconnecting circuits of care, worship, and labor geared toward affecting social change that began with individual well-being—a process understood to be, necessarily, communal in nature.

That 'nature', however, is far from self-evident, and complex questions attend the dynamics between participants and leaders. Here, I attend to the kinds of crises that arise for group leaders themselves—and how they make use of such crises. In both APT and the tiospaye, leaders (that is, Steven and Mark, respectively) are, in their terms, "responsible" for the "safety" of the social space in which this work is undertaken. I want to look at how authority works among, and for, my informants. Steven's inviting uncertainty—a kind of engaged ambivalence[90], purposefully performed—constitutes an ethical, if not precisely political, intervention: his commitment to

[90] See the Introduction for a discussion of how this position both articulates with productively frustrates the boundaries of ethnographic participant-observation.

'authentic presence' at the level of individual interaction is, at times, enough to open up possibilities for other people to have new experiences of themselves—experiences which people regularly characterize as "therapeutic."

The use of authority—in the context of voluntary association and warm collegiality—seems to entail leadership by example and consensus building (as any number of management-training tracts from the 20th century American workplace would suggest). There's something more complex afoot, however, when part of what participants seek—that is, part of what make it possible for them to have experiences that *feel* sacred—depends on the possibility of deference: on having some form of authority that they can experience as 'external' to their own free choices, and which they can, as a consequence, experience themselves *resisting*.

In Part I, I began unpacking the question of why these people reach beyond psychology in their search for authentic connections to others, and I examined some of the limitations of the versions of those efforts practices by APT Study Group members. In other words: I suggested that what's at stake, when they're concerned about the safety of the space for 'play' is precisely desire for an opportunity to 'catch' their "sovereign selves" off-guard, and, thereby, to gain access to 'deeper', more 'authentic' experiences of themselves and each other. These are people, however, for whom discourse plays an especially central role in sociality: as clinicians, language is not only a medium of communication, but a vector of "therapeutic" intervention. It's particularly significant, then, that they distinguish between APT—which they relate to primarily as a form of talk—on the one hand and, on the other, "healing" experiences that are predicated on affective and embodied experiences which they uniformly characterize as difficult to "put into

words." This difficulty is, as we have seen, not coincidental—rather, the embodied quality is a critical part of what makes these experiences identifiable as "authentic" in the first place.[91]

It's this very particular context—with its singular emphasis on the interpretation of spoken language—that renders the subtle imposition of consensus in APT legible as as a form of authority; as we will see, it's also what makes Steven's explicit abdication of the right to adjudicate "what's really going on" in ceremony so significant: it provides a window on precisely how the novel kinds of sociality Steven seeks depend on the availability of a point of reference that is radically *external* to the interactional context. For Steven, the capacity to (authoritatively) engender "space" for a client or colleague to *have* a new experience—or, more precisely, to give herself permission to imaginatively inhabit novel, alternative interpretations *of* her experience—seems to depend on (or, at least, to correlate with) him having a sense of freedom from "responsibility" for the "safety" of the milieu. That is to say: Steven's uncertainty prerequires a complementary certainty, performed by or ascribed to a (proximate) 'other'.

Leadership here depends upon technical expertise in ritual and ceremony—but this is a necessary, if not quite sufficient, condition. And while Mark's willingness to take decisive action during ritual healings (in contradistinction to what Steven called "the neutrality you bump up in psychotherapy") seems to be another key element in attracting the admiration of these clinicians, in practice, leaders like Mark and Steven gain legitimacy among group members by treating their role as a position from which to suspend judgment. As we will see below, it is this suspension—precisely the disavowal of certainty—that, I contend, makes it possible for others to have 'new' experiences of and for themselves.

---

[91] As we'll see in Part III, my interlocutors work with a variety of concepts to relate their embodied experiences to evaluative statements about the veracity of propositions or the legitimacy of others' practices—and these concepts seem to cluster around notions of 'groundedness' and 'rigor'.

Max Weber famously defined authority[92] "as the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons" and asserted that "every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (1978:212). Authority, in the present context, is not precisely about "commands"—though Weber's strict definition of domination as a "probability" that commands, if given, will be obeyed certainly finds some resonance here—as does his emphasis on "voluntary compliance." In fact, it's the fully and necessarily voluntaristic character of such deference—when it occurs—that creates, I think, some of the key challenges for my interlocutors; whatever else is true, it illuminates, even if indirectly, some of their shared assumptions about human nature—assumptions that they seem to hold in an enduring way, and which they inculcate in patients as part of their professional obligations.

Anthropological studies of clinical interaction have been astutely observant of the subtlety with which the authority of practitioners is conjured and enacted. E. Summerson Carr's work on the "ideology of inner reference"[93] calls particular attention to an emphasis, in the clinic, on the capacity of language to 'name' inner states, rather than 'perform' actions like persuasion or protest—an emphasis which simultaneously legitimizes the authority of practitioners already expert in its usage and which "effectively, if not intentionally, enervate clients' institutional critiques and discourage social commentary" (2010:5).

This kind of attention to the macro- and micro-politics language is widespread in the literature; in his study of a homeless shelter in Massachusetts, for instance, Bob Desjarlais

[92] Weber's term "Herrschaft," which has also been translated as "domination" or "leadership," has no fully satisfactory English equivalent; the key distinction he makes between "Power (*Macht*)" and Herrschaft, as Guenther Rioth and Claus Wittich point out in their editing of *Economy and Society*, is between the absence and presence (respectively) of legitimation (Weber 1978:61-2 n. 31).

[93] See Part I.

attended to staff members' judicious use of the first-person plural: "When staff spoke," he notes, "they often carried this sense of 'we', the authority of which was thrown into relief when staff assumed other stances in talking to their guests. At times they spoke in more personal terms about the weather, the kinds of food they preferred, or similar topics. But this amiable talk underscored the political thrust to other, more assertive phrasings, in which the staff told, advised, or encouraged their guests to act in certain ways" (1996:884). For Desjarlais, then, linguistic maneuvers as subtle as the tactical use of a pronoun have significant and enduring consequences.

These ways of performing authority are artifacts of a local (i.e., clinical) expertise, but they're also very much of a piece with the larger socio-cultural milieu in which these clinicians live and work—and which they reproduce in their work with clients. Put even more generally: experience, as an epistemological category invoked in social interaction, is here revealed as the moral boundary of intersubjectivity. That is to say, when an individual grounds a particular contention by invoking some version of the claim, 'well, it's been *my* experience that…,' there is simply no polite way to proceed with challenging that claim in middle-class American speech. There is, in other words, a profound moral valence to such an exchange: an utterance like this puts an interlocutor tacitly on notice that a challenge to the veracity of the particular contention has just been linked to the validity of the speaker's epistemological—and, by extension in the case of American middle class speech, very ontological—status as a (speaking) subject. I 'am' my experience, in short—and it constitutes my sense of myself as 'me'.[94]

[94] There is extensive ethnomethodological and sociolinguisitic work on this point—see, for instance, Heritage (1991), Ochs and Capps (1996), Stivers et al. (2011), and especially Heritage (2011) in that volume, as well as Duranti and Goodwin (1992), and Kroskrity (2000)—the substance of which is largely outside the scope of the present inquiry. Here, I simply want to draw attention to the stakes, and to note a resonance between the interactional performance of

In the present circumstances, however, I'm particularly interested in how these (highly ideological) linguistic habits 'spill over' into clinicians' interactions with each other—and what this might suggest about the limits of leaders' efforts to use their authority in what Steven calls more "democratic" ways. Part of that work will entail unpacking the particular interactional mechanics by which this operation takes place. To begin grounding these questions, we'll need to look more closely at the multiple ways in which authority works in practice, from the discursive imposition of interpretive consensus in the APT Study Group, to the renegotiations of 'contracts' for spiritual healing in the tiospaye.

In what follows below, Part II traces an arc from Steven and APT to Mark and the tiospaye. Broadly, I want to think about three sets of tensions. For Steven, the relationship between what I'll call 'situational' and 'structural' authority is instructive: it is the authority that attaches to his (structural) position as leader, of the clinic and of the APT Study Group, that both licenses and makes meaningful his disavowal of authority in *particular* situations—and this is clearest in moments of exception, as section two will show. Section three picks up a thread from the end of Part I: looking at the ways in which Mark's distance from middle-class financial and career security render him legible to tiospaye members as very particular kind of figure—a living, and epistemologically proximate, counterexample to the choices they watch themselves making, as they navigate the 'gap' between their own lifeworlds and what they imagine to be his experience. To that end, section three takes up (in broad strokes) Mark's performance of authority with members of the tiospaye; the key, if largely tacit, tension here is between something like 'autonomy' and 'deference'. The final section follows the question of authority in the tiospaye through a particular healing encounter and its aftermath.

'self' with a biomedically-inflected diagnostic logic that privileges a particular kind of 'self' as the seat of agency and culpability.

In short: authority functions, here, as a position from which to make non-totalizing, non-exclusive truth-claims. That is to say that, for my clinician-interlocutors, their very authority as practitioners depends on their ability to constitute open-ended (i.e., non-totalizing) claims—i.e., their social position is defined, in large part, by their authority to do this—and it is their selective use of this authority, and the productive disavowal of that authority, that creates the possibility of surprising moments of interaction, and a form of sociality that *feels* sacred.

2. "This is not a metaphor"

> "Perhaps myth is a better term for what we have been studying. … The principle characteristic of myth is that it constitutes reality, and it is the constitution of reality in perception and practice, rather than of either belief or knowledge, that has been our underlying concern. Bypassing the notions of belief and knowledge, we have found the existential ground of the sacred in the alterity of the self, and the criterion of the sacred in the experience of spontaneity"
>
> - Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self* (1997:280)

> "with APT—although it's very therapeutic, and has a lot of healing potential, I think—it's also a community of people coming together, voluntarily, in a group… and it's very democratic…. there's no 'one' therapist."
>
> - Steven

In late March of 2011—a week after his conversation with Brent—I met with Steven again, and he described driving home from the gathering. In the car with him were Alice (his wife), their son, and two other clinicians. One of those clinicians—Bruno—had been participating in Native American healing ceremonies for many years; the other, Martha, was a long-time veteran of APT, but had never been in what Steven was calling a "shamanic ceremony" before. He recounted his conversation with Martha:

> She was talking about it as though what *really* happened was kind of a use of metaphor. And so, I said to her that—although that's there—what I've been told—and I remember

very clearly Melanie[95] saying to me, because I was talking... about it more in *my* language of 'use of metaphor'—and she said, "This is *not* a metaphor." And it was her belief that this is real: it's a communication with another realm of reality and, although there might be metaphoric things happening that are useful and interesting, that that's what the belief is. And so, I said that to Martha—and I think she was kind of 'trying that on', and saying, "Well, yeah, maybe. I don't know." Because, I think she—you know, when you go through an experience like that for the first time, it just raises all kinds of questions: "What does this *mean*? Is this the power of a group to invite spirits? Does Mark *have* spirit helpers? Is Joe Eagle Elk[96] *in* the room—or [is] Black Tail Deer helping us? Is the Hummingbird here to extract something from the person's body?" So, all those things come up.

In his response to Martha, Steven twice invokes the notion of 'belief'—in subtly distinct ways. In the first, he reports to Martha what Melanie had said to him: "she said, 'this is not a metaphor'. And it was her belief that this is real." In the second, he elaborates: "It's a communication with another realm of reality and although there might be metaphoric things happening that are useful and interesting, that that's what their bel—you know, the belief is." These utterances are adjacent; the object 'belief' has, in the space of a single sentence, shifted from a proprietary status (Melanie's belief) to an abstract condition begging the definite article—in the second instance, Steven has actually corrected himself in this direction mid-utterance.

[95] Mark's "spiritual daughter," Melanie is one of his primary assistants; she is also an i*yeska* in training, and heir to the altar. More on her in Part 3.

[96] His real name. Now deceased, Joseph Eagle Elk was Lakota holy man with whom Mark lived and practiced; Black Tail Deer and Hummingbird were two of Eagle Elk's spirit helpers, and make regular appearances at ceremonies led by Mark.

Or, rather, it's not that his notion of 'belief' has changed—what's moved, it seems, is the work he's asking Melanie to do in this pair of utterances. She begins as a kind of proximate 'other': a very particular woman he has known for something like eight years… but she gets conscripted into a synecdoche: she is a representative part of an entire 'world'—conjured discursively by Steven as radically distinct from, but adjacent to, the world he shares with Martha—in which someone else's relationship to an object of faith is imagined as seamless, unproblematic—and in comparison to which his own very tentative position is manifestly an invitation to his present interlocutor (Martha) to identify with *his* ambivalence. He is, it seems, trying to give Martha a space in which to make sense of *her* own very complex experience, as she imagined what it might be like for someone *else* to have an uncomplicated experience of faith in the 'reality' of their experience.

As we talked, that day in his office, Steven reflected further on the "experience of being with shamans and being in the ceremony." About a third of the way into the interview, he mentioned that Mark had actually visited the campus of Steven's university as an invited lecturer several times. I was surprised, given how careful Steven had been about policing the distinction between his 'personal' and 'professional' worlds (despite, or perhaps because of, his desire for "sacred" experiences in, and around, his work). When I asked about how Steven instantiated that version of the boundary between the ceremonial practice and the clinical milieu, his explanation staged a series of careful distinctions—and, in process, made clear just how nimbly he could make use of moments when his own interlocutors put him in a position of authority:

> what we did is, whenever I've had him come—it's probably been two or three times now—I have him do a more kind of 'mainstream' talk that is geared towards maybe the counseling staff, or student affairs professionals—where he relates some of his teachings

> to our work, our everyday work with students. And then, for a smaller group of people, we'll invite [people] who might be interested in—like, we had a guy who worked here years ago, Walter, who is now a faculty at [another institution]; He's got a lot of publications. In fact, he asked me to write him a letter because he's going for the department chair position now—but he had an interest in shamanism, and somehow that came up early, maybe a month before Mark was here. So, since *he* brought that up, I said, "there's an opportunity that's coming up here in a month or so, and if you're interested, you could not only come to the talk, but then there's going to be an actual ceremony." And so, he was very interested. He's very much a...very kind of left-brained, very verbally fluent, very smart guy. And so, there was a part of him, I think, that was thinking, "I'd love to kind of turn on the lights toward this thing to see what the hell's really going on." And, at the end of it, he really didn't know what to think. He says, "I have more questions now than I had before!" It was one of these ceremonies where not only [were] the rattles lighting up, but colorful things [were] flying out of the person, stones were laid up on the—at least, that's what I saw. And so, I think, like for most of us, it just raises all kinds of questions, like, "What the hell *is* going on? How 'real' *is* this?"

He starts, here, with a distinction between "his teachings" and "our work"—which he immediately qualifies as "our everyday work," suggesting, I think, the precarity of his position in between these milieux—which required constant tending. By identifying Walter as not just a "left-brained" person, but a published scholar vying for a department chair position, Steven locates him comfortably and unequivocally within a world of institutional of institutional legitimacy that Steven and I share.

Then, and in productive contradistinction to the tentativeness with which he was earlier[97] dealing with his apprehension about appearing "like a nut," he is, in this context, absolutely unequivocal about what *he* saw. He begins by characterizing the ceremony as an exceptionally visually compelling example of what he clearly considers a fairly typical occurrence: "It was one of these ceremonies where not only [were] the rattles lighting up, but colorful things [were] flying out of the person." When he became self-conscious about the narrative—sufficiently reflective, that is, to verbally re-orient himself in relation to it—he still offered a very partial hedge: "at least, that's what I saw." He appeared not to distance himself from his own experience; he merely retreated from making a unique claim about 'objective reality'—an insistence on commonality underscored by his deployment of the first-person-plural in his next utterance: "for most of us, it just raises all kinds of questions." At least, that is what is suggested by the syntax of his utterances—but I think it's at least as productive to look at what he's doing in the larger interactional context. That is: he's in the context of an interview, and he's responding to my prompt; what seems really important to him, however, is that he's doing it by way of a story that takes Walter's questions about the 'reality' of what's going on in ceremony, and locates Steven in a position from which his own uncertainty acts as an invitation.

That kind of uncertainty plays with an ambivalence at the core of a paradigmatic relationship between 'experience' and 'truth' among APT Study Group members. What's fundamentally at stake, as I will show, is precisely the authority to retroactively inscribe the content of an experience: during the 'processing' portion of APT Study Group meetings, participants expertly navigate between observation, confession/assertion, and generalization, laying claim to the

[97] E.g., as he pointedly stated that "I don't want to pretend that I'm hearing spirits talk to me, or anything like that" in I.2 (above).

authority to shape the narrative of 'what actually happened' during the play—a narrative which, critically, appears as a consensus having emerged from the group itself.

Steven, in one of our earliest conversations about APT, explained to me that "the difference between APT and traditional group therapy" or psychodramatic play therapy was that "APT gets so quickly to deep issues that people have." In his considered opinion, "the vehicle of the story—and then the invitation to play—gets you there really quickly" because "the story has universal elements."[98] APT, he suggested, entailed an "artistic kind of move:" making use the "ancient tools" of "story" and "meditation… to kind of 'bypass the defenses'." The "deep issues" he mentioned could arise in a matter of minutes, he said, "whereas you might not get to that for months in a psychotherapy group;" critically, this translated to an "added responsibility for the APT leaders to know that you have a 'tiger by the tail'—basically, you are unleashing all of these things[99] for people," he said. It was essential to do this in "a safe environment," he explained.

In other instances of reflection on what distinguished APT from therapy, however, Steven emphasized what he described as the "democratic" character of the dynamic between

[98] By "universal," here, he referred to the "archetypal" quality of the tales. Usually, APT Study Group members' usage of the notion of archetypes plays with both the literary sense of a theme or motif that appears in diverse contexts and in a more explicitly mystical, Jungian sense of a transcendent truth of human experience. The interview from which these quotes are drawn took place shortly before a Study Group session based on the Biblical story of "The Prodigal Son," and—in keeping with Steven's careful self-presentation discussed above—he was exclusively emphasizing the former: "so pretty much—probably everyone tonight will relate in some way one of the characters, either as the parent who's trying to keep the peace and deal with two very different kids and acknowledging both. Or, if you're the more intrepid one, or you're the more obedient one or whatever, however you have kind of figured out how to survive in your family, the resonance happens very quickly. So by the end of that story, whether it's conscious or unconscious, you will be resonating with that theme. Happens, maybe—tonight, it'll be within ten to 15 minutes."

[99] As I understood it, he was restating an oft-voiced concern that raising 'issues' related to 'past trauma' brought with it both the possibility for 'healing', and the danger of exacerbating the trauma. For an overview of this perspective, see van der Kolk (1987).

participants—and which applied, in his account, to the leader's role, as well. That democratic character inhered, in his reading, in APT's unique combination of polyvocality—as Steven put it "you may really value something *I* say in the discussion, but you also may value something that three or four *other people* say"—and self-disclosure on the part of its leaders: "Stan and Ellen talked about their lives," he explained, "and Alice and I also do that as well—when we talk about our kids or our marriage sometimes, or other things that were very important. Because it's a community kind of event."

Crucially, in Steven's reckoning, the texture of his experience leading APT sessions was also markedly distinct from the group dynamics he'd experienced with the tiospaye, and with Lakota medicine men on the reservation:

> I think with a shamanic practice and ceremonial practice… the information comes from Spirit World into this person, who's the interpreter, and, you know, that's how 'help' happens. And I don't doubt that there are people who, that is their mode, and that is their gift… having experienced it myself. But APT… it's a different kind of healing, and it's more democratic in a sense: there are *many* places where insight and experience may come from… and it's more related to group therapy, I guess, than some of those other 'traditional' [kinds of] healing.

For Steven, then, APT is characterized by an absence of authoritative leadership—in contradistinction to both clinician-directed group therapy (authorized by psychological credentials and clinical acumen) and spiritual healing mediated by an interpreter, or iyeska (authorized by Spirit and ritual expertise); the "democratic" character he lauds inheres precisely in the multiple sources of interpretive insight (i.e., what Steven referred to as the "things of value" that might be articulated by participants). I was doubly struck by this framing—first, by

his clear emphasis on the post-play discussion (in contrast to his and others' uniform de-emphasis on the significance of the talk *about* the play, relative to the import, for them, of the experience *of* the play itself) and second, by what seemed to me to be a persistent contradiction in the way that group dynamics played out during that talk: my own sense—confirmed by APT Study Group members above, and as we'll see below—was that there was a subtle but consistent pattern to the discursive labor by which an interpretive consensus was generated by group leaders *during* the 'processing', and retroactively framed as having emerged whole-cloth and of its own accord.

This contradiction is, I think, indicative of a tension at the heart of many of my interlocutors' relationships to authority, across milieux: in their relationships with patients, part of their role is to both model and encourage the kind of sovereign self—the autonomous, self-legislating form of subjectivity—that, as we have seen, is idealized in American culture. At the same time, however, having someone—an elder, teacher, or spiritual Other—to whom one can defer enables flexibility at the interactional level (as in the case of Steven's interaction with Martha, above).

In the processing phase of APT Study Group sessions I witnessed, it was typical for leaders and long-time participants to move expertly between at least three registers: making an observation about something that had transpired during the play; offering an interpretation; and then extrapolating with reference to that interpretation. The process by which these interpretations become authoritative hinges on a speaker's facility at tacking back-and-forth between these registers—but always, and relentlessly, with reference to that quintessentially American, and particularly middle-class, bulwark of truth-claims: knowledge of one's 'inner' self', predicated on direct, personal experience.

On a Friday night in October of 2010, for instance, the APT Study Group met—per usual—in the windowless, fifth-floor conference room. The play, that night, was a version of a Sumerian poem called *The Descent of Inanna*: part of the Ereshkigal cycle of myths, in which the Queen of Heaven (Inanna) visits her recently-widowed sister, Ereshkigal, in the underworld. It was an intense, dark story, bookended by fraught personal disclosures; Sandra's portrayal of Ereshkigal had been particularly arresting—appearing wracked with grief, she'd wailed, loudly, at one point,[100] while Steven and Alice held her, and the group looked on in stunned silence—and was the subject of a great deal of the post-play discussion.

Steven's exceptional verbal agility was on prominent display during a short stretch of talk that occurred in the middle of that discussion. The group was discussing—with great respect—Sandra's willingness to play the role with a sustained "darkness" that made people uncomfortable, but which also catalyzed a powerful experience for a number of people in the room. Reflecting on the experience, Sandra expressed fear that she'd frightened people; several participants spoke up to assuage that concern, and Alice suggested that—apropos of Sandra's work as a clinician—it was precisely "the ability to connect with the darkness in yourself that lets you enter into it and be with another person."

Steven, then, picked up the thread—and in a very colloquial-sounding stretch of talk that lasted less than a minute—he moved through no fewer than 13 subject positions, "and that sort of felt like what (1) was happening," he said. "Like, I think that because everyone can (2) empathize with the darkness, it was okay (3) to sit—sit with it," he paused, briefly, and then continued. "I mean, my mind (4), sometimes, when I—until I kind of like tried to just *be with* you—was kind of going all different places (5) too—"

[100] In an interview later, she'd described having been "*almost* lost in the character."

"Mm-hmm," Sandra nodded.

Steven continued: "—like, you know, 'what—what do people *think* of this', and you know, 'does this—' and I thought of what you thought of also (6), that, you know: it sets up sibling issues (7), and *you're* the one who's so *angry* (8), and rejecting of *Inanna*, and I was wondering how Inanna felt with this (9). You know one thing, though, that we—"

Sandra, nodding again, said: "Right, right!"

"—we've seen (10) in a lot of these plays," Steven said, "is how you kind of go to the place (11) where there's the most pain, you know, where there's so much pain, and you allowed yourself to go there (12), and that kind of allowed the group (13) to kind of be there with you," he concluded.

Steven, in this 54 seconds of talk, makes several moves that are interesting on their own (as he validates Sandra's clinical acumen in (6), for instance), but it's the arc of his movement through this array of subject positions—fairly typical of post-play 'processing' discussions—which warrants attention here; with reference to the numerals in the text above, he speaks on behalf of:

1) his own experience ("that sort of felt [to me] like what was happening");

2) human experience in general ("everyone can empathize with the darkness");

3) the shared experience of participants in particular ("it was okay to sit—sit with it");

4) his own experience ("my mind… was kind of going all different places");

5) his interpretation of Sandra's experience ("too");

6) Sandra's already-offered interpretation, addressed to her ("I thought of what you thought of also");

7) human experience in general ("it sets up sibling issues");

8) his interpretation of Sandra's experience, addressed to her ("and *you're* the one who's so *angry*");

9) his own experience ("I was wondering how Inanna felt with this");

10) a generalization based on past experience, shared with Alice (one thing, though, that… we've seen in a lot of these plays");

11) human experience in general, with an indefinite 'you' ("you kind of go to the place where there's the most pain");

12) his interpretation of Sandra's act, addressed to her ("you allowed yourself to go there"); and

13) the shared experience of participants in particular ("that kind of allowed the group to kind of be there with you").

Steven is performing a particular kind of authority here, as he moves back and forth across registers. His own immediate experiences (1, 4, and 9) are presumed to authorize themselves. His assertions about human experience in general (2, 7, and 11) and his specific interpretations (3, 5, 8, 12, and 13) are tacitly authorized by his expertise in APT and as a clinician. He conscripts Sandra into his account in (6) and (12); moreover, by addressing her directly, he places the onus on her to dispute his account (which, in fact, she corroborates with her interjections of "Mm-hmm" and "Right"). Taken together, however, it is his surpassingly deft movement among these kinds of claims that creates an effect on a different register. Juxtaposing these claims that are authorized in complementary ways (personal experience; clinical expertise; the moral valence of a tacit expectation of reciprocity) has a mutually-reinforcing effect: they are stronger together than any of them would be on their own. Perhaps most important is the net social effect: the

combination of them, in this way and in this putatively "democratic" social space, tacitly inscribes a consensus that binds, and is bound by, the composition of the group itself.

To put a finer point on it: Steven's assertion that "everyone can empathize" (2) reminded me of Hervé Varenne's classic ethnography of social structure in a Midwestern town, *Americans Together*, in which Varenne analyzes the ideological labor performed in the course of his interlocutors' usage of the remarkably fungible category of 'everybody': "In everyday usage, 'everybody' refers to all the people who actually participate in a community's life. The fact that the group to which this refers is either extremely small or totally abstract does not make the need to use the word less pressing. What makes it necessary is the risk of disintegration of the community… [and] the risk that other competing groups will challenge the legitimacy of their claim to representativeness" (Varenne 1977:94). Something analogous is afoot here, I think, inasmuch as Steven is simultaneously asserting the universality of a human capacity to empathize—locating his audience comfortably in a broader, shared context—and, at the same time, underscoring the coherence of this micro-community of expert-empathizers: everyone *can* empathize, in other words, but not everyone *does*.

In the course of my meetings with Steven, I became curious about how he'd come to think about his own process of discovery—what he'd learned, and from whom—as he developed his practices and habits of "protecting sacred space" and "transmitting wisdom traditions." He made frequent references to his time with the tiospaye, and, in his descriptions, he tended to emphasize the embodied dimensions of his experience. Steven particularly recalled being "totally fascinated by the songs… that are sung in ceremony. [T]hey were *healing,* in and of themselves, just hearing them." Recordings of the songs began to circulate among participants, along with phonetic transcriptions of the Lakota words. Steven remembers:

> [Mark] sending around this audio tape to different people. And once you got it, you were supposed to eventually send it to the next person. … [T]hose were the first four songs that I learned. I wrote them phonetically, re-stopping the tape and so forth. And that enabled me to participate more…. And then he started being more deliberate about writing the songs and he got help from some of the tiospaye. He put it on files and then shared them on CDs so that people could have access to them. Then it sort of started creating this group of people who were learning the songs and then could assist in ceremony.[101]

Steven was, by his own account, intensively involved in the tiospaye for roughly five years—during which time, APT faded into the background of Steven's practice. He described struggling with a decision about how far "down the path" to go, studying and practicing the Lakota-based ritual. Eventually, he concluded that APT was a better "fit" for him. Nevertheless, Mark had a profound influence on his approach to APT. His period of active involvement with the tiospaye had, he said, helped him to think about the way he approached the question of cultivating the space shared by APT participants. Steven had been impressed by the structure and rigor of Mark's process—that participation in the tiospaye wasn't "about doing 'cool Indian stuff'," but rather that:

> it's about, 'are you willing to do the sequence of things that need to be done if you want to get to a certain point'? So there's no getting around, you know, your four hanblecas, if

[101] As a medium and a transactional process, "sending around this [particular] audio tape" blends the intimacy of individual encounter with the sociality of exchange in a single circuit; for a discussion of the political and epistemological implications of the circulation of cassette-recorded Islamic sermons, see Hirschkind (2006). Part III will take up embodied dimensions of these practices—the transcription of song lyrics; the construction of ceremonial structures; the making of prayer bundles—and their relationship to ethnographically emergent notions of community-making and personal commitment; here, the point is that Steven's sense of the existence of a something like a community seems to hinge on this set of very concrete actions.

you want to Sun Dance. There's real—there's sequence, and he holds to it very carefully and transmits it to others very carefully. So by watching that it also brought up for me, 'well, how do I do that with APT'?

In another interview (in November of 2010), Steven reflected on his current relationship to the spiritual practices that had figured centrally in his life for several years: he'd just effusively described the power of learning ceremonial songs in Lakota, and then narrated a connection between his colleagues in the clinic and the reservation. My request for clarification seemed to make him self-conscious, and I expected him to shift to a detached, didactic mode, but—after another of his occasional twelve-second pauses—he continued, in soft tones:

> Yeah, it was very important for me to meet Mark and have that influence in my life. There have been times when I've been more or less immersed in it but it feels like my little table where I have all my sacred objects. It sits in my office. This morning I picked up the pipe for the first time in months, and just *held* it, because I was asking for some help with clarity on something. So it's there.

I asked him if it felt "foreign," and he nodded.

> A little bit, yeah. Yeah, because I hadn't picked it up in a long time. It was sort of like going 'back' to it, but it *did* feel a little bit foreign, I think, because of that. I mean, I think there are people who probably do pipe ceremonies on a daily or weekly basis[102]—it's much more a part of them, in some way—but [for me], it's comforting just that it's there.

[102] In fact, many members of the tiospaye have specific—and factually inaccurate—notions of the frequency and tenor of other member's practice; here, what seems important is that Steven's practice, mediated by these sacred objects, is the locus of a dynamic, negotiated relationship: Steven's own "pipe pledge"—a commitment to be of service—had, after all, been the genesis of the service learning trips to the Lakota reservation.

There is, in this account, a kind of breezy nostalgia to Steven's characterization of his relationship to "these ways"—and to the spiritual practices he learned from, and with, Mark. There are quite a few people whose ongoing relationship with the group consists primarily of being on the receiving end of intermittent email traffic. Like Steven, many of them are part of multiple spiritual groups—and their active participation in any one group seems to ebb and flow over time. The tiospaye 'proper', however, seemed to consist of a much smaller, though still fluid, subset of Mark's students gather for sociality and ceremony several times a year.[103]

What I want to suggest, here, that the social status attributed to Mark as 'transgressive'—but not *so* transgressive as to be unrecognizably or discomfitingly 'other'—situates him as a nearly-ideal mediation: through him, tiospaye members have access to the what they understand as the power of an "authentic" indigenous healing system. But by going through him, rather than going directly to indigenous healers themselves (as Mark himself did), they are spared much of the awkwardness that attends a direct encounter with radical alterity. There's also a sense in which, I think, much of the 'problem' of cultural appropriation is quarantined: their encounters, almost without exception, are with people—Arnold, whose Sun Dance they attend; indigenous elders to whom Mark sends them; and, most centrally, Mark himself—who *invite* the adoption and practice of 'these ways'.

I do not mean to suggest that these people are either uncritical of or unreflexive about the complex interrelationships and asymmetries that attend the practice of Lakota ceremony by members (and apologetic guardians) of the "dominant culture;" quite the opposite is true, as we will see in Part III. My point, here, is that there is a qualitative difference between 'critical reflection' and the embodied, affective experience of the encounter—a difference that, as it turns

[103] Group members' approaches to adjudicating membership—or to avoid taking a position on whether or not someone else was 'really' a member—will be discussed in Part III.

out, correlates in a striking way with how they themselves distinguish between the kinds of language-based, cognition-centric ways in which they inhabit their workaday worlds, on the one hand and, on the other, with the wracking viscerality that they cherish about ceremony, and which is the very basis on which they discern the "realness" of their encounters with spiritual others and sacred sociality.[104]

3. Building a Family

> "To get beyond the level of appropriation, we had to become part of an exchange process and become peers in sharing, to become learners and teachers."
> - Gerald Mohatt and Joseph Eagle Elk, *The Price of a Gift* (2000:186)

> "That's what we're fighting. We are fighting a system that's keeping kids drunk and raped and abused."
> - Mark

On a tiny island a few miles off the New England coast, Mark, Ed, and I sat on a porch, sipping tea on a cool and misty summer afternoon. Two days prior, Ed and I had helped Mark pack up the bulk of his worldly possessions, loaded them onto a moving truck, and brought them from the rooms he'd rented in a rural college town to the house that he and his wife were planning to share—eventually—with her aging father. That summer, just like a good number of summers before it, found Mark and his wife, Kayla, occupying the small apartment adjacent to the historical society's museum; her days were spent managing the little museum and working on her art (stained glass was her preferred medium; she was designing a window for the island's church), and Mark picked up the occasional shift hauling traps on a local lobsterman's boat.

"I'm trying to work all this shit out before I die," Mark said, hunching forward in his chair, his right index finger sticking out, near his face, punctuating the air. He'd just finished describing

[104] This emphasis on what has elsewhere been called "experientialism" is, as I suggested in the Introduction, of a piece with some broader trends in American religiosity and modes of pastoral, as well as post-pastoral, care; more on this follows in Part III, as well.

his plan for the immediate future: having semi-retired from his job as a counselor at a small, private university, he and his wife would spend the next year living in a fraternity house, trying to teach a group of privileged young white men how to stop contributing to a campus culture in which one in four women were sexually assaulted, and in which the 'hazing' of new pledges had, in the past year alone, resulted in a group of the men having been caught with substantial quantities of cocaine (and, in one instance, a state police manhunt for a missing student). After the fraternity had been sanctioned by the university (they'd lost their housing privileges, and their official approval from the school to affiliate as a recognized fraternity), Mark decided that these men were both perpetrators and victims of a broader American culture of violence and spiritual disconnection. He'd encountered such things before—acedia took many forms—and he'd come up with a plan to rehabilitate them by way of an intensive series of experiential processes designed to show them that there was a better way to live.

Then, and in our other conversations, he presented himself as locked in a decades-long conflict with the values of the "dominant culture" of the U.S.: addictive consumption, rampant self-loathing, and myriad forms of violence (directed at selves and others). During much of his nomadic career in college mental health care, his opponents took the form of administrators he saw as criminally negligent guardians of the status quo. Mark had a seemingly endless supply of examples: a morally bankrupt Vice President of Admissions who'd tried to get him to focus more on throwing parties than hospitalizing students in crisis, and who'd spoken of sexual assault as a laughing matter; a dean who'd tried to get him to brush a racially-motivated hate crime under the rug; most recently, a president who was afraid of offending the wealthy and powerful parents of fraternity members. "When people look at my resume and I'm here for four years… there for three years, you're here for two years," he said, they want to know why. He

shook his head. “I try to explain, ‘well, one guy raped 50 women. 50. *50*. On a campus of a thousand [students]! And I dealt with it, but the dean didn’t want to,” he shrugged, “and I’m the one that lost my job.” A deep sigh. “Higher education… just makes things disappear.” An index of the problem, he said, was the turnover in administration roles. “Every two years, you get a new dean,” he said, and “people who try to make a difference” are told, “why don’t you just go away!” He laughed, joylessly. “I was the 12th dean in 15 years at one place, and the tenth dean in 12 years at [another]. I [only] made it one year, because I was fighting… It was—‘you don’t want to play the game? Go away’.” He paused. “What are we doing here, you know? What are we *doing*?”

That afternoon on the island, we three were doing our best to figure out how to communicate some of Mark’s vast experience to a group of bitterly resistant fraternity boys. The three of us made for a curious trio—Mark (the veteran clinician: 60-ish and white, and spiritual leader of a ragtag band of therapists and their friends, who practice the version of Lakota Native American religion in which Mark had been steeped); Ed (the Taekwondo instructor and home-improvement contractor: 50-something, Delaware Indian, and spiritual student of Mark’s); and the Anthropologist (mid-30s, white, with a background in wilderness therapy and what increasingly felt like a personal stake in the outcome of Mark’s efforts: I found myself wanting him to be right, and to get the chance to demonstrate it). Between August 2010 and August of 2011, we’d spent a great deal of time together—in ceremonies and over meals—and, as the last summer of my fieldwork drew to a close, I’d been working with Mark on the design and implementation of what we’d taken to calling the ‘St James Street Project’.[105] By then, I was as deeply concerned

[105] Named for the location of the house.

with trying to help concoct the most effective way to reach those boys as I was with any more 'philosophical' questions.

It seemed particularly significant, just then, that, as he voiced some very real doubts about whether his plan for the year ahead would work, he tacked back-and-forth across the larger narrative of his life. As he put it, he was trying to catalyze a jump across "developmental stages," from a self-focused, "it's about me" orientation to the world, to "the next… which is, 'Everybody is my relative'."[106] Everything hinged on being able to create transformative experiences for the young men: "what I *know*," he said, "is that if we could get them into sweat lodges, and some of the [ceremonial] things we've done in the past—that's stuff they can't deny! But sitting in a group room [just] *talking* all the time…" he trailed off. "All you need," he shook his head, "is *one* kid to call *one* parent and say, 'I've been hazed! They made me go into a little hut where it was hot'." [107]He was afraid he'd be hamstrung by "the lawyers" at the university who would prevent him from conducting rituals for fear of opening up the university to liability. He sighed, "I can't even get my own fucking tiospaye here, because I'm not Joe;[108] I don't have that capability."

Why had *his* experience been so powerful? "Part of it," he mused, "was that I had *really* surrendered. I went there [to the Lakota reservation] going, 'just give me what you've got'!" Mark was acutely aware of a fine line, which seemed to me a richly compelling tension, between, on the one hand, the kinds of extreme physical hardships he'd endured as part of his surrender—days of fasting; grueling manual labor in triple-digit heat—and, on the other hand, the "hazing" to which the boys subjected each other, and which was part of the behavior for

[106] He was explicitly drawing, here, on a ubiquitous clinical from Kegan (1982), and combining it with his own understandings of "indigenous wisdom traditions."

[107] A glib reference, here, to a sweat lodge

[108] Mark's first spiritual teacher, Lakota holy man Joseph Eagle Elk; see below.

which they were being 'punished' in the first place. On the reservation, "it was: cut wood, break rocks, carry trees, build the sweat lodge," he said. "In our 'white world'—in the college world—would that be hazing? Yes, it would be. But it *wasn't* just 'torture'. It wasn't 'drink, puke, and carry cocaine'. …Was there a physical component? Yes. Was there a component of surrendering, of cleansing? Yes. Are you in a different space? Yes. Is your brain operating differently? Yes. But is it just what the physiologists say—that you're 'deprived', and so—? No!" He was adamant that his spiritual experiences were not epiphenomena.[109] As a former Ironman[110] athlete, Mark had already been well acquainted with extreme physical hardship; more to the point, however, he'd "had [spiritual] experiences before, on the *first night* of fasting," he said, well before the physiological effects of dehydration and exhaustion set in. "So," he paused, sighing again, "our culture is making it tougher and tougher—outside of organizations like fraternities—to *teach*," he said, "because you can't *do* anything *to* anybody. You can't *give* them the experience. They're sitting in a classroom," he shook his head, "and that's what you can do."

As we talked, Mark drew an immediate connection, as he frequently did, to his own experience, decades earlier, of having lived and studied and prayed with a Sicangu Lakota holy man named Joe Eagle Elk—a man he characterized as profoundly generous and kind, and who'd guided Mark out of a paralyzing existential crisis. For twenty years, Mark worked to find ways to share with others the transformative power of the spiritual experiences he'd had under Joe's tutelage. "I would sit in a sweat lodge with Joe," he recalled, "and a [spiritual] being would

[109] A common scholarly critique of Jamesian (2002) phenomenological accounts of religious experience is that such accounts, inasmuch as they insist on the irreducible particularity of the experience, circumscribe religion as a 'protected' domain inaccessible to analysis—see, for instance, Proudfoot (1985). Mark, as I have, suggested, was not wholly unfamiliar with version of this critique.

[110] A grueling triathlon race involving a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile marathon run.

appear in front of me—like *you're* there." He gestured to Ed. "This happens over and over and over," he said. Mark sat back, shaking his head: "if you could experience what I experienced," he said, "you would go to a lowampi *every night*—you would go to *inipi* [sweat lodge] *every night,* and no one could ever make you do anything that was bad." His pace slowed, and he continued, "because you *know* that there's a God; you *know* that there's spirits."

I remember being awed, as I often was, by Mark's tenacious optimism in the face of the institutions in which he labored; it seemed to verge, in particular kinds of circumstances, on a kind of ethical commitment to willful naïveté. He was always careful about how 'public' his spiritual practices were—most of his numerous employers, for instance, had never known that he was a practicing iyeska.[111] When it came to the principles that underlay his practices, however, his unwillingness to compromise had cost him jobs at several universities. He presented himself as a man on a kind of mission—fighting, as it were, against the people he saw as instruments of a social order that drove people to sometimes-fatal despair—and he utterly refused to give up on this mission, regardless of how ridiculous he *knew* he sometimes appeared to his colleagues. I was regularly amazed by (and sometimes jealous of) what struck me as his extraordinary capacity for a very specific strain of certainty… Over the two years I'd known Mark, I saw him openly doubt a great many things—friends and colleagues; his chances of success in his mission (though, crucially, each moment of doubt seemed to be the first of its kind); most pointedly, perhaps, the sense of his own material security, as retirement loomed over his scant financial resources—but I never, at any point, saw or heard (or heard anyone else recount) a wavering of his faith in the reality and power of the spirits who helped him in his work.

[111] Again, a Lakota term for 'spirit interpreter'.

That ‘work’ took place—and continues to unfold—along the long arc of Mark’s encounters with students and teachers in contexts ranging from campus to reservation. Here, however, I want to lay a foundation for understanding the complexity of these encounters, by looking at tensions internal to Mark’s approaches to learning and teaching. This first half of this section will continue with Mark’s vocational and spiritual biography; the second half, then, will dwell on several didactic moments that took place during the first tiospaye gathering I attended, in August of 2010.

A Student in Search of a Teacher

Mark was born and raised in Wisconsin. He went to college not far from home, and earned a B.A. in sociology and social welfare. In college, he also had his first encounter with Native America, and with life on a reservation: one of his sociology professors had decided that Mark needed an internship experience, and began bringing Mark with him on the hundred-mile drive to the reservation every Saturday. There, he recalled meeting an older man he knew as “Grandpa Miller” who brought him, one Saturday, into the forest, to a “sacred tree,” that, he was told, was one of the last virgin pine trees in the state. Mark was directed to walk around the tree, while the older man sang a song in his native language. He hadn’t really understood what was going on, he said, but the encounter left a strong impression on him as a young man.

From the beginning of his story, then, the ‘sacred’ enters as a kind of living remainder that presents itself without having been sought—a mystery, with roots in a particular place—that turns out, in retrospect, to have been highly significant: this was a ‘first’ encounter only in relation to Mark’s long, tangled midlife history with Native American cultures and practices. After college, Mark then began a kind of low-intensity itinerancy that has continued throughout

most of his adult life; an extreme example, perhaps, of the kind of mobility that has often been attributed to late-twentieth-century middle-class Americans: he went directly on to a Master's degree in counseling in Washington state, and practiced as a counselor at colleges and universities in Vermont, Florida, and Mississippi, before completing a doctorate in education in 1981. For most of the 80s—a period in which he describes himself as a "type-A" and "power-driver" personality—he left counseling to work in management consulting. Mark returned to counseling in 1988, beginning a series of stints as the director of university counseling centers in New Hampshire, Minnesota, Massachusetts; at schools in Iowa and North Carolina, he served as an Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students (respectively). He then spent two years as what he called a "self-employed consultant"—a period during which he was largely unemployed, and in which he and his wife struggled to make ends meet—before taking the position he held when I first met him: acting Director of Counseling at a rural, private university in the mid-Atlantic.

A cursory glance at his resume suggests a steady climb up the ranks of his profession: licensed as a Mental Health Counselor for over twenty years, he held positions of increasing responsibility—he's given the keynote address at fourteen regional or national professional conferences—and the "Transition" program (discussed below) he developed during the mid-1990s received recognition from a prominent charitable foundation, and was cited in a widely-used textbook on college mental health care at the time. To hear Mark tell it, however, it's the story of an existential crisis, mounting throughout the years in which he was supposed to have been 'in his prime', and which he attempted to keep at bay with a combination of physical accomplishments and professional achievements: he was a hard-charging competitor—he competed in numerous marathon and triathlon races, including an 'Ironman'—and when those efforts stopped working, he was at an utter loss.

As he tells it, Mark's time on the reservation was a pivotal time in his life: it coincided with, and catalyzed, his *wacin k'sape*, or "awakening to wisdom." Mark was 39 years old when he arrived, broken and in despair—wracked, as he put it, by his "sense of emptiness and life-long struggle with self-loathing"—for his first summer on the Lakota reservation in 1989. A friend had suggested he go to the reservation, to attend a summer program being offered by an elder at the tribal university; while there, he'd met Joseph Eagle Elk—a well-known and widely-respected Lakota holy man. In Mark's telling, he'd sat with Joe and other Lakota men around a fire; through his "then-typical state of tears," he'd described himself as "lost and confused"—he knew that he'd "come seeking something," but he hadn't known "what that something was." As he told his story, the men around him began to chuckle; upset, Mark asked what was funny. Joe told Mark he was laughing not at *him*, but at the situation: a thirty-nine-year-old man going through something—a wacin k'sape—that "usually happens when you are a teenager."

With Joe, and with Joe's family and helpers, Mark found what he described as a profound and transformative experience. He also found a spiritual reality he'd never imagined, but which would come to be the center of his life—and he encountered complex politics of race and cultural appropriation—but, above, all, what he seems to return to, and what he seems to want to share with others, is the extraordinary experience of love that he found in Joe's presence, and which changed the way he sees both the world and his own place in it. In his writings and professional presentations; in talks to his assembled students; and late at night, one-on-one, he's been completely consistent on that point: whatever else is true, and without sidestepping the questions of power and inequality that are inextricably bound up in a white man's practice of a Native American religion, it certainly seems to be the case that Mark has sacrificed a great deal

to share what he calls the "beauty," and that his students, much as he did, recognize something that they struggle to name, but for which they are nonetheless deeply hungry.

Mark, as it turns out, was by no means the first encounter Joe Eagle Elk had had with mental health professionals. The history of collaborations between 'western' healers and Lakota Medicine Men dates at least to James Walker's work in the late 19th century,[112]—and there was a dramatic increase in 'spiritual tourism' in the years following the 1978 Freedom of Religion Act that legalized Native American religious practices[113]—but Eagle Elk had a particularly rich record taking part in such exchanges.

In 1985, for instance, Eagle Elk participated in a conference organized by Jean-Max Gaudillière—one of several French Lacanian psychoanalysts with whom he occasionally consulted on cases, and with whom he shared ceremony (Mohatt and Eagle Elk 2000).[114] As Gaudillière recounted an exchange: "Joe told us that the cure does not come from the cure of the symptoms. … It is not a question of one instance, one moment. The first ceremonies are like

[112] Walker (1980) was a physician on the Pine Ridge reservation from 1896 to 1914; his research was later published in the form of several now-canonical texts that are both widely cited in scholarly literature and, like much 'mainstream' scholarship on Native North America, hotly contested by tribal scholars (indeed, during preliminary fieldwork on the reservation, several interlocutors at the tribal university refused to speak to me until they were sure I was not affiliated with either of two prominent American Indian Studies programs). Additionally, for a fascinating comparative study of Carl Jung's depth psychology and Lakota cosmology—with an emphasis on accounting for the appeal of Lakota spiritual practices to Jungian practitioners—see Deloria (2009).

[113] See especially Deloria (1998).

[114] Eagle Elk was well-known on several Lakota reservations and, in the years following the 2000 publication of his autobiography (a book he co-authored with Gerald Mohatt, a psychologist and professor at the University of Alaska, who lived on the Rosebud reservation from 1968 until 1983 and co-founded the tribal university), Eagle Elk's name began to circulate more broadly. In his capacity as a leader in the Medicine Men's Association, Eagle Elk collaborated with healers from many backgrounds—including, in 1985, a group of French Lacanian clinicians that counted among its ranks Francoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière. See Mohatt and Eagle Elk (2000), Davoine and Gaudillière (2004), and especially chapter 11 of Davoine (2012) for more on Davoine's ten-year collaboration with Eagle Elk.

preliminary interviews, and they sometimes take place over a few weeks or a year…. There is a ceremony, but then the practice of being cured begins. It is the work of the patient" (165). For Françoise Davoine, Eagle Elk directly recalled her Lacanian training: "Joe never forced one to think one way or the other. He simply spoke; he said very little. This has been very freeing for us and is very much within our psychoanalytic tradition of giving the patient maximum freedom to find the truth" (171-72). Both clinicians, then, emphasized an affinity they found between Eagle Elk's de-emphasis of his own role in healing encounters—that is, that the medicine man is merely a vector, connecting connecting spirits with supplicants and their communities—and a Lacanian commitment to empower clients to do their own interpretive work.

In his essay on "Science and Truth," Lacan attempts to account for and parse what he sees as a profound failure of epistemology to account for the status of the 'subject' (2006:726). Taking the Cartesian cogito as a point of departure, Lacan's claim is that in positing a subject whose status in the world begins with rational thought, Descartes inaugurated an unbridgeable gap between knowledge—that is, the suitable object of human endeavor and the means by which we ensure our own ontological consistency—on the one hand, and Truth—that which is beyond human analytical faculties, and best left to God (and the futile efforts of metaphysicians)—on the other.[115] For Lacan, there is no universal Truth; the only sense in which the term 'truth' has meaning is in relation to one's own desire—and only then as that desire is mediated by

[115] There's nothing particularly groundbreaking in that assertion; where Lacan gets creative is in insisting that the field of psychoanalysis is meaningful precisely because its origins lie in the scientistic tradition inaugurated by Descartes. "Witness," Lacan suggests, Freud's "break with… Jung, as soon as the latter slipped into something whose function can only be defined as an attempt to reinstate a subject endowed with depth" (2006: 728).

language.[116] Instead, Lacan is insistent that his discipline is both constituted and knowable by dint of its praxis: "Analysis is not a matter of discovering in a particular case the differential feature of the theory, and in doing so believe that one is explaining why your daughter is silent—for the point at issue is to get her to speak" (1998:11).

In the same round-table discussion with Davoine and Gaudillière on the reservation, Gerald Mohatt—an American psychologist, and Eagle Elk's co-author—lamented "the fear of boldness in contemporary psychotherapy," which he saw as "based on the therapist's [mistaken] sense that he or she only analyzes and interprets" (Mohatt and Eagle Elk 2000:165). By contrast, "Lacan had a much greater respect for his patients' resources, their capacity for their own work coupled with their need for direct, bold interventions by the therapist," which, according to Mohatt, "is what I think Joe meant by the practice of the cure. It will take time. It will… take place through us, by the client, and in the community. The patients make the link with the community, [and] are able to relate in new ways. They learn to trust themselves and work on themselves. …they start learning new things from relationships, from others" (Mohatt and Eagle Elk 2000:165-66). While affirming the Lacanians' perspectives on Eagle Elk's "respect for his patients," Mohatt draws particular attention to the Lakota healer's emphasis on the relational and communal nature of that work, as well as to a role for clinicians that is "bold and directive."

It's likely no accident, then—despite the fact that Mark initially came to Eagle Elk as a supplicant, rather than a colleague—that the Lakota healer's particular orientation found resonance with him. Mark devoted himself to the practice of Joe's brand of Lakota religion. He fasted; he took part in purifying *inipi*, or sweat lodges; he 'went up on the hill'—for four

[116] So when he asserts that we experience ourselves as subjects in terms of "a division between knowledge and truth," he offers the Mobius strip as a metaphor for the subject as precisely a relation between the two terms (2006: 727).

hanblecas, or vision quests—and received a sacred pipe (*canupa*); and he participated in the first of something like 16 annual Sun Dances on or near the reservation in South Dakota.

By his reckoning, he spent the summers between 1989 and 1992 living on the reservation, studying and praying and practicing Lakota ceremonies with Joe and other medicine people. Mark and another non-native man served as "human helpers—or gofers, you could call us" to Joe, Joe's assistants, and, after Joe died in 1991, to other medicine people, as well. Whenever someone would come to Joe in search of healing, Mark and Joe's other helpers would assemble the materials to be used in ceremony—trees, prayer flags, prayer ties, buckets, stones—and help prepare the supplicant for the ordeal that would often accompany requests for healing: purifying sweat lodges, for example, or four-day fasts, alone in the wilderness, in search of a vision.

Each Autumn, he would return to the university where he was working, and try to figure out how to integrate what he was living and learning into his life and work in New England: "I had a sweat lodge in the woods," he said "and was just doing a sweat lodge every day with people who wanted to come." In the summer, he would return to the reservation. "It was insane," Mark said. "In the early 1990s, everybody was playing Indian." He shook his head. "Everybody wanted to be an Indian, and they would all drive out there" to various Lakota reservations to seek spiritual guidance and wisdom at the feet of medicine men like Joe.[117] These "spiritual tourists" and "new-agers" would arrive demanding ceremonies like *hanbleca*, or vision quests—ceremonies that were intensely materially, physically, and spiritually demanding on the officiants (like Joe and other medicine men)—and the medicine men were obligated to honor these requests for help:

[117] Mark is, of course, aware that the distinction between what he himself did in 1989 and what he criticizes "everybody" else for doing is not necessarily immediately obvious to the casual observer; to him, the difference has everything to do with the "intentions" of the seekers, and their failure to follow through with the commitments they make. More on this below.

Somebody drives up and says, 'I heard about this hanbleca thing', so we're told, 'go collect this stuff'. So we're cutting down trees, collecting stones, collect[ing] all the stuff. You have to do a lodge before hand. The person has never been in a sweat lodge before, so now you have to prepare them for that. You throw them into a lodge, they freak out in the lodge, because they have never had that—and then you drive them out 10, 20 miles into nowhere. I mean *nowhere*. It's one of those things: you take down a cow fence, the truck drives through, you put the fence back up and you're just on the prairie, with three or four carloads of people, and you are on some hill in the middle of nowhere. You throw this person up who has just that morning decided they want to go up on the hill, and you say 'goodbye, we'll see you in four days.' No water, no food, and they are in the middle of nowhere having just driven from New York or flown in from Boulder, Colorado or whatever it might be. You drive back, and then Joe goes to sleep, and then his spirit helpers come and go. [And then, it turns out that] the person is running down the hill, or the person just freaked out, so then we get a call at five in the morning or whatever it is, get back into the trucks, drive over the prairie and here's the person either walking towards us or freaking out on the hill and that's their experience—and that is what wore Joe out. Day after day after day after day. We were exhausted by the end of the summer. We would take people up three, four, five times a day. We would do four, five, six lodges a day. … it was this spiritual weirdness, and Joe predicted that at the beginning of the summer all of these people would die, including himself. He predicted that he would die and the other medicine men. So it was pretty weird. It was pretty weird and so all of these people coming and going and all that kind of wiped him out.

Mark shook his head. "There were six medicine men on the rez at that time. Five of them died that summer, and the other one moved to Nebraska." Joe's death in 1991 shook Mark deeply; he quit his job, and tried private practice—which "didn't work out." Non-native interest in Lakota spirituality (and in Native America more generally) reached a fever pitch around 1993—three years after the release of the hugely popular film *Dances with Wolves*, shot on largely on location on the Oglala Lakota (Pine Ridge) reservation—and questions about this period still elicit strong reactions on the Rosebud reservation: the short-lived economic boom that attended the filming and the subsequent increase in tourism (spiritual, cultural, and otherwise) also created intense resentment among multiple activist groups in both Oglala and Sicangu Lakota nations.[118] In June of 1993, 500 representatives from the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Nations signed the 'Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality' at the Lakota Summit V—an unequivocal disavowal of what many saw as non-native appropriation of native culture.[119]

That same year, according to Mark, the American Indian Movement[120] singled him out as put his name on a "death list." In 1994, however, one of the other medicine men he'd met invited him to return to the reservation under his protection, and to participate in his Sun Dance. He'd

[118] During preliminary fieldwork on the Rosebud (Sicangu) reservation in 2009, one interlocutor compared the effects of *Dances with Wolves* to the Holocaust.

[119] The politics of pan-Indianism are both vastly complex and largely beyond the scope of this dissertation; it bears noting, however, that ten years after the Lakota Summit V—in 2003—seven medicine men from the Rosebud signed a resolution stating that they supported "other races coming to pray," and that, as of 2011, two of the 13 Sun Dances officiated by recognized tribal elders and held on or near RST tribal land allowed non-natives to fully participate in the ceremonies. These remain hotly contested, amid accusations of economic opportunism on the part of medicine men and counter-accusations of personal grudges and philosophical inconsistency; some of these issues will be taken up in the discussion of the ritual life of Mark's tiospaye below. See Fenelon (1998:295).

[120] A pan-Indian advocacy group formed in 1968, AIM is most commonly known for the 71-day standoff at Wounded Knee in 1973. For an ethnohistory of the first two decades of the movement, see Akard (1988).

left his job at the university counseling center in New Hampshire, and eagerly accepted his first faculty position, in the psychology department at a small college in Arizona. He recalled—vividly, and a little ruefully—what happened next: he'd moved his all of his belongings to the little college town, and had taken a trip back to the Lakota reservation to follow through on his commitment to do four *hanblecas*, or 'vision quests'. "When people go up on the hill," he explained, "what you say to them is, 'you may not like what you hear, so if you're going to do this, you've got to be willing to hear the answer'. You may be told go do something, and you can't go, 'well, I don't think so', because you just said 'I give you my life'."

A Teacher in Search of Students

Mark was four days into his hanbleca—alone, fasting, on the edge of the Badlands—and, that night, Joe appeared to him. "I remember the whole conversation," he smiled, "as clear as you are sitting here." Joe said, "go back to New Hampshire." Mark replied, "what are you talking about—I accepted this job!" The other spirits that visited him echoed the directive: "You said you gave us your life," they'd reminded him, "so you're going to go back to New Hampshire." They'd also given him a vision for what would become "Transition:" the set of interventions and "processes" he eventually developed. Mark described receiving "a bucket of words—all these cartoon words" that didn't make sense to him at the time. He was told, "go back" and "you are going to be doing this, that and the other thing." He'd "had no idea what they were talking about—what Joe was talking about when he appeared," he said, but he called the college and resigned. He'd had to return the $600 the school had given him toward moving expenses—and his heart broke a little when they told him they'd wanted him to spend the first year living in the wilderness, developing his courses—but, he said, there was really no question about what he had

to do. “I drove from the rez back down to Arizona reloaded my truck,” he said, “and drove all the way back to New Hampshire.”

Soon after, he took a Director of Counseling job at a university in the upper Midwest—where he started turning the “bucket of words” into a “comprehensive process and student development model” that would be called “Transition.” He had what he described as a highly successful pilot run there—it had been lauded in both a textbook on college counseling and a charitable organization’s guide to colleges that encourage character development—and, when he moved on to a Director of Student Development and Counseling position at a university in Massachusetts, he had the opportunity to more fully develop his vision for Transition. Mark began reading extensively in popular and anthropological literature on ritual and initiation practices: one of his students said to me, “Mark reads everything—and believes none of it.” As he read, he would make contact with authors, and he began seeking out “teachers” and “elders” from other “indigenous traditions.” He tells a story, for instance, of picking up a book co-authored by a Hopi elder and a Lutheran minister—and then driving out to find the Hopi man, who received him graciously, and shared a number of stories with him.

Mark describes having met a number of such people—native people who, for a variety of reasons, chose to publish work with non-native students and seekers—and counts several of them among his “elders” and “teachers.”[121] One of those elders—a prominent Aboriginal Australian activist, whom Mark had first seen in a documentary about Amazonian environmental

[121] He had, for instance, given a talk about sacred ceremony and psychological counseling at a conference for mental health professionals in Santa Fe in 2000. At the end of his talk, a woman approached him, and told him that “an Elder wants to meet you.” That was how he’d met the “Diné symbol keeper” who had explained the symbols that had come to him on his hanbleca—and the central symbol of the altar, which he described as resembling “an upside-down Jiffy-Lube™ logo,” referred to a “return to old ways.” His vision, he said, had also involved a flight through what he later realized had been the tomb of Seti, an Egyptian pharoah.

activism—came to the U.S., and lived with Mark and his wife for a time. Together, the two men taught a class[122] full of engineering students about "Indigenous wisdom—'mother earth', and all that 'new age' stuff," he laughed, "but it's going to help, in terms of… the bridges and buildings they build…. When they were done, their questions on their final exams which were designed by engineering faculty: 'So, you've been asked to build a bridge over a river in Indonesia. Based on what you learned in this class, what questions are you going to ask'?" They'd managed, Mark said, to catalyze a genuine awareness of the need for these future engineers to ask more holistic questions: "So, it wasn't anymore 'what's the soil content and how much weight will it take?' It's, 'what peoples are on each side of the river? What are their beliefs about mother nature? What ceremonies do they do? Would we be impacting their sociology if we built'—" Mark smiled. "You should have seen the questions that these kids came up with!"

He spent a full decade working at that university—the longest single stint of his career—which, he says, was instrumental in building trust with members of the administration; there, he was able to conduct sweat lodges on the campus, and to involve more students in 'Transition'. He also begin giving more talks at professional conferences—regional and national ones—at which he drew the attention of other mental health workers who shared some version of his desire to seek alternative approaches to healing themselves and their patients. During the second half of the 1990s, Mark began offering week- and weekend-long, intensive versions of the process that incorporated stories and practices from his ever-expanding repertoire of mythologies, religious traditions, and indigenous spiritual worlds.

[122] It was in that class that Mark met several students with whom he would keep in loose contact for a decade and a half, and who would come to form a central part of tiospaye; more on this in Part III.

Transition was designed to create an experience of initiation into adulthood for members of a culture—that is, contemporary America—that has "lost" its way, and which fails to guide its youth through a meaningful process of integration into society. As he uses the term, initiation is, in the most general sense, "an extended holistic process where elders teach the next generation about God-Terms, cultural mores, cultural values, taboos, and the skills of life including how to be in a relationship, how to be compassionate, kind, courageous, humble, mindful, and a care taker of the people, the culture, and Mother Earth." It "culminates in the young person making a mindful, deliberate, and sincere pledge to be a member of the community." Mark's "lecture notes"—a 176-page document he prepared and distributed to participants—offer a glimpse of his dizzying eclecticism, as well as his insatiable appetite for compelling or inspirational "wisdom," irrespective of source; it is, in many ways, a study in what Lévi-Strauss (1966) called "bricolage." Equal parts excerpted stories and poetry, exercises for participants, and Mark's woven-together, perennialist interpretations of different religions, the text describes a universalizing cosmology (in which all 'paths' lead to the same Truths, and are based on common insights into human nature and experience). His sources range from academic social science (including Erich Fromm, Robert Bellah, Abraham Maslow, James Prochaska, and Sigmund Freud) to high and popular literature (Baudelaire, Rilke, Hesse and Wolfe to Robert Bly and Cat Stevens, as well as dozens of poems by Rumi); he blends stories he's heard in person with myths retold in the pages of *Parabola*, and snippets of the Upanishads and Buddhist texts. The 2002 version of those notes also include poems and quotes from a number of former students.

At the heart of Transition is the idea that 'we' know what's wrong with 'our' culture—that 'we' are cut off from each other and from direct encounter with the sacred; in short, that acedia is

on the rise—and, crucially, that there is a solution: compassionate mentorship, ritualized through an initiation process—if only we have the courage to carry it through. In the text, Mark leans heavily (and explicitly, if only once) on the notion of "freedom" that Robert Bellah and his co-authors deployed in their polarizing 1985 text, *Habits of the Heart.* Bellah, drawing on de Tocqueville, famously asserts that the version of "freedom" that comprises "the most resonant, deeply held American value" is deeply problematic, inasmuch as it is a fundamentally negative freedom—that is, freedom *from* the dictates of others—that, as the passage that Mark quotes in his text suggests, engenders a social politics of isolation: the "freedom to be left alone is a freedom that implies being alone" (Bellah et al. 1996:23).[123]

From the late 1990s through the early 2000s, Mark brought his vision of an integrated spiritual and psychological process of human development with him. He gave talks at professional conferences; he held open teachings at his home, or in spaces made available by students or friends; he led healing rituals and ceremonial events, open to friends-of-friends; and he continued working with college students. By his reckoning, something like 2,000 people went through the some version of the process, or attended ceremonies or teachings he offered—a tiny fraction of whom progressed from their initial encounter with him to active and sustained participation in the *tiospaye*, or family, that took shape around him.

[123] Hervé Varenne—on whom Bellah et al draw—argued that: "It is not necessarily that individuals are free in a metaphysical sense. It is rather that no boundaries set by the culture on the movements that they may make or may try to make—since final acceptance depends on others—within the society. Freedom is also aimlessness—'nothing to lose', as the popular song says, because one has nothing to begin with. The very attempt to escape from it would be considered to be itself a "free" movement. It therefore comes very close to being one of the most extreme forms of authoritarianism. Community, then, refers to a certain way of perceiving the relationship between human beings, a peculiar manner of defining society that is itself dependent on a certain definition of the units involved" (1977:158). More on the tensions between 'freedom' and 'community' follows below, in Part III.

In 2005, he concluded his ten-year stint at the university in Massachusetts, and began another 'itinerant' phase: he spent a year as an Assistant Vice-President and Dean at a university in Iowa, and then a year as Dean of Students at a college in North Carolina. He worked as a "self-employed consultant" for two particularly lean years, taking speaking and training jobs when opportunities arose. He spent the last few years of his professional career at a small, rural university (which is where he was working when we met in 2010). As he moved, he brought his teachings and ceremonial practices with him and, everywhere he went, he seemed to add a few more people to the tiospaye. Many of these people—a strong plurality—were mental health professionals, drawn by his vision of a more holistic approach to healing and wellbeing.

In a Family Way

All of this, of course, took place long before I'd had the chance to meet the man in person. by the time I arrived at his home in on a Friday afternoon in August of 2010, I'd been hearing stories from a number of people about this former-Ironman-athlete, clinician-of-30-years, 'white-man-playing-Indian', and 'aspiring cult leader' (as I'd been told he'd once jokingly described himself). I had, in short, a year's worth of convoluted images and expectations in mind. But on that sweltering August afternoon, as Ed and I paced the yard behind Mark's house, I had no real idea of what the man would be like.

A few days before the gathering, Mark wrote an email addressed to Ed, who'd apparently agreed to let Mark conduct the coming ceremonies in his Taekwondo school; it looked like much of the tiospaye had been copied on Mark's letter. He began by recapitulating the requests for healing that had been made up to that point— one person's husband had cancer, and another group member had just been diagnosed; one had suffered an attack of Belle's Palsy, and still

another was having “major financial problems.” One person had just had a knee replacement, and two people had asked for the opportunity to do a “thank you (wopila) for their hanblecas (time on the hill).”

Then, with an announcement of his intention “to take a few lines to explain things,” he laid out a cursory autobiography, and noted that:

> …our family has been taught many things—we have over 45 different ceremonies—blessings—to help the people. You[, Ed,] are now involved because you are so kind as to let us use your place. It will be a blessing for you and your family and us as well. When we meet we will explain the ceremony and then you will understand that this old old way is just another way to God. Not THE way. Just a way—and a way of the spirits of this land, this country, because this place has a specific vibration.
>
> So now you know the basic story...I am what is called an Interpreter (Iyeska). I am not a medicine man and surely not a holy man...I just listen and they interpret and I relate what is said. I know very little. God’s helpers help. That is what they do. They carry our prayer to God. So we are common people Ikce Wicasa who simply are at the beck and call of something much greater than ourselves.
>
> We would be honored to call you family.
>
> I will begin to prepare the altar this week, so that come Saturday all will be ready. If you wish to invite… people that you know and trust that is fine. This is not devil worship or whatever else people come up with—it is an ancient ‘American’ continent way of contacting those things that can help us, that walk with us every day.
>
> Mitakuye Oyasin (All are related),
>
> Mark

The email raised far more questions than it had answered for me: were those diverse problems all going to be addressed in the same way—and what had he meant by "ancient 'American' continent way of contacting those things that can help us?" From the note's effort to preemptively assuage concerns about both Mark's status (i.e., that he was 'only' an "interpreter… and surely not a holy man") and the 'safety' of what lay ahead (that is, there would be no "devil worship"), it seemed clear that Mark was practiced at attempting to manage peoples expectations and fears—but, in the main, I arrived with a better understanding of what Mark wanted me *not* to think than I had of what, precisely, was in store.

It was Ed's first encounter with Mark, too, and I think he was similarly unsure of what to expect—Ed did nearly all the talking as we stood under the looming trees in the yard, trying to stay in the shade, until Mark's staff dispersed and he called us into the house. We talked about his work as the acting director of the university's counseling center. It was his first year at this university—and the twelfth school at which he'd worked in his thirty-five year career—and he talked about the challenge of adjusting to a town which he described as "very much a conservative, rural, Christian" community locked in constant tension with the "elite" student population, typified by "rich kids buying houses downtown to party in." He was trying to do something about that, he said, but it was only his first year there, and he was still getting his bearings.

In the evening, I asked him about ceremony—both the impending event, and his experience with ritual healing practices in other contexts. He talked about Arnold, the Lakota medicine man who'd given him his altar ten years earlier—and who hosted the annual Sun Dance attended by members of the tiospaye. Mark expressed his frustration with the state of the Sun Dance: how non-native people were bringing motor homes, and printing t-shirts, treating the whole event as

more "spectacle" than "sacred." He commented that the students from Steven's university—Brent, and a handful of others[124]—all had a great experience. But for him, compared to Sun Dances as of 20 years ago, it had been disappointing. And then, in a typically reflexive and self-deprecating moment, he chuckled at himself, and said that if some Lakota from 1891 had come to a Sun Dance in 1990, they would probably be appalled by how it keeps getting watered down.

We came together again in the early afternoon. Mark sat next to Shelly—middle-aged, white, one of the neophyte local women, and the proprietor of a glossy magazine that celebrated the region's 'lifestyle'—and he joked with her about "joining the cult:" "drinking the Kool-Aid," "sacrificing virgins" with an "obsidian knife," and so forth. As the group assembled, he taught us about making prayer ties and prayer flags. He pulled out bolts of brightly-colored cloth, purchased by the square yard from a nearby Walmart, and showed us how to cut and tear them into strips and then small squares for the ties, or larger strips for the flags; how to take a pinch of tobacco, say a prayer in silence, and fold the cloth around it; and how to tie the little bundles into a line. He described the finished product as akin to prayer beads in other traditions, like a "Catholic rosary" or a "Hindu mala." There were, he explained, particular sequences of colors and numbers of ties, specific to each altar and different kinds of healing ceremony; he likened the sequences to "phones number to [particular] spirit helpers."

When he spoke about beliefs and practices in group settings—then, and over the time I have known him—he quite often used a combination of the definite article and the passive voice: "the belief is" such and such, he would say. In individual conversation—and sometimes when teaching—he was attentive to the particularity of the things he'd seen and been taught, which, in

[124] A a small group of students and young alumni of the large, urban, public research university where Steven works found themselves at the Sun Dance, by way of having taken part in the service-learning trip Steven led to the Lakota reservation in May of 2010.

concert with his carefully-honed practice of responding to questions he'd been asked a thousand times as though it were the first such query, suggested to me that there was a considered performative dimension to his presentation.

As he replied to a participant's question, for instance, he characterized the content of his answers as, "what Indian people believe," "what Indian people say," "what we know," and "what the Indian people know." I asked him, then, how he reconciled what he knew about the diversity of individual people's perspectives and experiences on the one hand with, on the other, his flat assertions about what 'they' believe or what 'we' know. His response was less an answer than it was an effective and intriguing performance of an authoritative truth-effect: "there's so much scientific evidence of this—studies on prayer—but mostly, this is what our elders believe, and their elders: that when we focus our prayer on a single person, we can affect changes at the molecular level."[125]

He also described a ritual from 2004 in which participants gathered in the Grand Teton mountains of Wyoming to construct a "Medicine Wheel… encompassing a 1,200-mile diameter, alleviating the impending explosion of the Yellowstone [volcano]." The issue, he said, was that the earth was responding in an active way to human practices of pollution and resource exploitation—that the "mother is sick." Annelise[126] piped up, saying that doctors and psychiatrists were reporting that people were getting sicker[127]. The nods of assent seem to

[125] There is a long history of scientism—and empiricism—in American spiritualities; see especially Albanese (2006) and Harrington (2008).

[126] A clinician, and long-time tiospaye member, she and her husband Biff (also a clinician and highly active participant in Mark's group) made the trek up from Georgia for the weekend. Ever the pranksters, Annelise and Biff chose their own pseudonyms.

[127] This was most likely a reference to the AUCCCD Counseling Center Director's survey results that were then circulating in the group—an instrument which solicited and compiled voluntary, anecdotal reportage and impressions from Center Directors at a non-representative sample of CAPS offices nationwide.

suggest that this was taken as self-evident, commonsense fact. Mark spoke of prophecies from a variety of cultures which emphasized what he called "long-cycle wisdom," which drew on information which came to them by meteors, which all suggested that the "mother is leaving"—that, as a result of sustained abuse at the hands of her human stewards, the spirit of the earth was in some way dissociating from the physical planet, with dire geophysical consequences for present inhabitants. One of the local visitors asked Mark how the medicine men received the messages, and Mark assured her that their verification practices were quite rigorous: "they're very scientific, if you will."

At another point, he described an "electromagnetic field" surrounding people that, he insisted, was categorically "not new age aura" precisely because it was "scientifically measurable," using an instrument whose name he could not recall. Later in the weekend, Mark taught the group about the use of minerals—stones, crystals, and gems—in healing work. He asserted that "everybody knows that quartz crystals store information," and cited radios and television remote controls as examples. He showed us a piece of meteorite that was part of the altar, and then told us that "Inside the Kaaba, draped in Black, is a large meteorite; under the Vatican is a meteorite; so all faith traditions know that meteorites are the source of wisdom." More than a few times, I have heard him conclude a teaching with some version of the notion that spiritual healings "affect changes at the molecular level."

As he held forth, a great many questions arose for me: does the distinction between 'electromagnetic field' and 'new age aura' hold up? Is there any way to know whether the large-scale ceremony prevented the eruption of a volcano? Is it literally true that there are meteorites associated with sacred sites across the world? What counts as a 'faith tradition', and what kind of evidence would one need to support a claim that all of them "know" something? There is no

remotely conclusive "scientific" evidence about the effectiveness of prayer, nor is it the case that the people to whom Mark refers as "elders"—indigenous persons from various parts of North America and Oceania, for the most part—are likely to conceptualize the interventions of their ceremonial work as operant on what Mark and his listeners seem to understand as "the molecular level" (and even if these people do frame their claims thusly, the question of what it means for them to "believe" them is still wide open).

As I looked around, however, it became clear that that kind of precision is not really the point—certainly not for the people assembled in the little room. The authority with which he spoke about things that he *knows* he cannot 'know' for certain was, instead, a performance intended to help his listeners to trust that they were in 'good hands'—to "get out of their own way," as I heard him put it later. More to the point, he hopes to help his listeners to give *themselves* permission to trust their own experiences in the shared moments and ceremonies ahead.[128]

The evening involved a communally prepared dinner at Mark's house, full of laughter and conversation. As one of the small number of men present, I was asked if I would play a drum in one of the cardinal directions during the lowampi ceremony. I agreed, grateful to have found a

[128] There is, of course, a long (scholarly) history of the role of deception in healing. One thinks immediately, in the present context, of Claude Lévi-Strauss' classic treatise on "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (1949), which inaugurated an analytic approach to a host of disparate practices—from shamanism to therapy—that came to be legible through the lens of 'symbolic healing': e.g., Moerman et al. (1979). At the turn of the twenty-first century, however, the best that social science had to offer was to sequester the problem in the epistemological ghetto of 'the placebo effect' Harrington (1999b). When roughly half of U.S. doctors admit to prescribing placebos to their patients Tilburt et al. (2008)—and when U.S. drug companies are desperately concerned about the increasing degree to which placebos are shown, in randomized double-blind controlled trials, to be more effective than 'actual' pharmaceuticals Silberman (2009)—then we may well have reached the limits of usefulness of the concept. My point is that when all kinds of healers—M.D.s, Ed.D. mental health counselors, and shamans—rely on what we only selectively refer to as 'deceit' to effect healing, then it's no longer enough to bracket it in the analytical cul-de-sac of radical alterity.

way to participate; I was placed in the East, and Biff led us through intensive practices. There was a brief but emotionally charged ceremony involving the pipe at sunset, following which everyone withdrew to their various encampments—some to work on prayer ties, others to practice songs, or just to collapse with exhaustion.

The next morning began, for us, before sunrise. Mark spoke to his sleepy but attentive audience, telling us that the Lakota word for altar—*hocoka*—encompassed multiple registers: one's home and one's body, in addition to the "actual" altar. Just before dawn, we moved out into the yard. Mark's voice grew softer, and took on a slower cadence. The moments in which it felt natural, as part of Mark's audience, to hear him transition to the role of 'elder' were increasing in frequency, and he was absolutely masterful when it came to seizing them—gently. We stood silently in the field behind Mark's house, gathered to witness what Mark referred to as "the Great Conversation"—the luxuriant ruckus of birds and insects that precedes the appearance of the sun—and to attend, most particularly, to the fleeting moment, just as the sun breaks the horizon, when all of the chatter is hushed: an eighth-rest in which the world seems suspended—in which the collective attention of the whole of creation seems transfixed by the impossibly inevitable rebirth of the day.

That afternoon, Mark dealt with the 'problem' of his own authority head-on. It began in a conversation in which he and some of the other clinicians in the small group began musing on the ways in which leading ceremony was similar to mental health work. Mark observed that "just like therapists, Iyeskas bear the brunt of transference." The solution in both contexts, he said, was to "brush it back" or "mirror" it to the client or supplicant. He knew a sizable number of therapists who "take it home" with them, and who seek relief through alcohol or drugs. Annelise

concurred; she was well acquainted with what she referred to as "compassion fatigue," which she described as widespread among the other therapists she knew.

In that circle, and throughout the afternoon, a stable dynamic held among group members: Mark did the lion's share of the speaking; senior members of the group (and one outspoken neophyte) piped up up at times; and the rest of us were almost completely mute. Mark, at one point, described what he called "the dangerous relationship"—shorthand, here, for the transgression of a boundary between spiritual teacher and student—which he framed in terms of energy arcing between chakras.[129] His contention was that people often mistook an arc between higher chakras—indicative of an emotional, intellectual, or spiritual connection—for an arc between the lower, more sexually charged chakras.

As we sat in the living room, he asked one of the students from Steven's university (a newly-minted graduate named Anita) to sit cross-legged on the floor at his feet. He asked her to hold her car keys in her hand, and told her that they symbolized the means of access to her most sacred, inner self—a means of access that *she* was responsible for guarding with great care. He gave her clear, emphatic instructions that she was not to give those keys away to anyone, under any circumstances—even and especially him. She nodded her assent. He started to explain something further, and then interrupted himself, addressed her in an offhand, nonchalant way, and told her he needed to see her keys before we started. She complied without a moment's hesitation, handing them over. The room erupted with laughter, as Mark's shoulder's dropped in a parody of despair, and, for an instant, Anita's brow furrowed in confusion. She quickly got the joke, and joined in the laughter; Mark's point had been made.

[129] On the importation and usage of the Hindu chakra system in U.S./'Western' metaphysical practices, see Albanese (2006), McGuire and Kantor (1988), and Heelas (1996).

Mark is not a "guru," and the tiospaye is not the "church of Mark." Everyone made that point to me—usually more than once—and he himself was at pains, on numerous occasions, to underscore it. He made steady use of his dry, self-deprecating wit, in social situations, to demonstrate that he didn't take himself too seriously. Even, and perhaps especially, the English rendering of his Lakota name[130]—"Rags"—by which he was addressed by group members during ceremonies was a pointed reminder of the humbling he'd received when he, himself, had been a bumbling neophyte living on the Lakota reservation. As he told the story: following one of the daily healing ceremonies led by his teacher, Joe, he'd gone into the house to help set out the meal that regularly followed such events. He looked for something with which he might carry a particularly hot pot and, eyeing a towel on the table, asked his host if he could use that "old rag" as a potholder. "Rag!?" she'd exclaimed, feigning indignation: "that's my good towel!" And then she told him, as the room filled with laughter, that he'd just earned his "Indian name."

Mark was frequently at great pains to explain everything he was doing; that weekend, he spent an entire afternoon showing us the different pieces of the altar—stones, bundles, sticks, and symbols. He cycled through a bevy of metaphors: he compared prayer ties to the Roman Catholic rosary, and then explained the sequencing of differently-colored ties as "telephone numbers" to particular spirits; the altar itself, he compared to a "step-down transformer" that modulates spiritual energy to a level and form with which people can safely engage. And as he

[130] It was not uncommon for tiospaye members to acquire complementary Lakota-language appellations—Christine, for example, was known as *Glepa,* or 'vomit', in reference to an instance in which she'd thrown up during the Sun Dance. I only ever heard these names used during ceremony, or when people were referring to their ceremonial personae, and usually as a way of distinguishing, often playfully, something like 'mundane' from 'sacred' selves. The usage of Mark's ceremonial name, Rags—written, in the group's informal orthography, as "H'e H'e"—sometimes indexes an absence: that is, Rags says and does things, during rituals, that Mark only finds out about after the event, as participants gather to compare accounts and fill in the 'gaps' in each others' experiences of a particular ceremony.

spoke about the "holistic model" of healing to which he subscribed, he explained that different altars had different "specializations:" *this* tiospaye's altar, he said, was a "Black-Tailed Deer Altar"—by dint of that animal's association with the Lakota holy man who'd been Mark's teacher—and was particularly oriented toward mental health and psychology.

There are striking affinities between Mark's approach to healing in ceremony and therapy in the clinic. His goal for people who "come to the altar," as I understand it, is fundamentally not to transform people, but to give people the space to transform themselves (or to allow themselves to be transformed in a way that is contingent upon the presence of a 'sacred other' that serves as an intimate-yet-radically-external third term in the otherwise dyadic therapeutic encounter). There's an implicit tension, between, on the one hand, that orientation, and, on the other, people's requests for healing that usually involve much more discrete changes: 'I want peace with the death of a loved one'—a pet or a parent—'I want to know what I should do for work'—'I want my cancer to go away'. The work that he seems to so often find himself doing involves trying to get people to see that their problems are what Gregory Bateson (1972) would have called "ecological"—that is, they are culturally systemic, and inextricable from questions of ethos and epistemology—and, to that extent, he's coming right out of the world of Euro-American depth psychology: it's far closer to a Jungian attempt to induce in a patient a radical psychic change, than to the 'Cognitive Behavioral Therapy' that dominates the current managed-care clinical landscape.[131]

That weekend, and throughout the eighteen months I worked with him, he expressly invoked two primary sources of authority: what he understood as the ubiquity of the beliefs and practices

[131] See the Introduction and Part I, above.

across human cultures,[132] and the effectiveness and efficacy of these practices—expressed either as a) an artifact of scientific legitimation,[133] b) revealed and received indigenous wisdom, or c) some combination of these two. Mark's work locates him at a conjuncture of multiple kinds of expertise, and multiple registers of authority: registers which are not typically commensurable in an American context. He invokes both the prestige of biomedical rationality (as he refers to "scientific studies" in support of metaphysical claims, and to the extent that it attaches to his clinical credentials), and the authority of ritual expertise (buttressed by his array of first-hand experiences with "indigenous elders" in myriad ceremonial contexts). Sometimes, he talked about his goal as "integration"—bringing together different ways of knowing and modalities of healing—but, in practice, that ideal was often tempered by the exigencies of practical concerns (as, for instance, when we helped him hide his ceremonial instruments from view before a visit from his boss).

In other words, he's far from immune to philosophically 'problematic' ambivalences. What's of singular salience to Mark and his students, however, is how much less problematic those ambivalences are in practice than they seem when viewed from the heights of philosophical abstraction. And what I want to suggest that it's the particular ways in which Mark embodies and performs this tension—between, in the broadest sense, something like 'autonomy' and

---

[132] To what extent 'observed ubiquity' and 'imposed fungibility' are the same here, I'm not sure; it's an important question, but one that's beyond the scope of the chapter at hand.

[133] This is, again, thoroughly consistent with a long-running thread in American spirituality. Working with *The New Metaphysicals* in Cambridge, Massachussetts, Courtney Bender noted the importance "for spiritual practitioners to dialogically express the authority of their experiences in relation to a (secular) social science or science. The value of scientific authority is undergirded and built within the metaphysical and Harmonial traditions, marking out… robust historical entanglements. For social scientists, the space of the interview in contrast has been a site where we have discovered and interpreted individualistic spirituality. The narrative structures of experience within interviews thus reproduce (simultaneously and unequally) two different notions of scientific authority" (Bender 2010:68). More on this in Part III, below.

'deference'—that make him such a compelling figure in the eyes of his students: he epitomizes, for them, a way of being in-the-world-but-not-of it; to the extent that he forgoes much of the apparent comfort and stability that attends middle-class professional life in the U.S., he also represents a step *too* far—he is, for them, the compelling example of how they *might* feel 'if only' they were able to give up what he gives up.

4. "Well, You Could Take a Pill..."

> "With performance, effort becomes agency, but again, because it is based in the efficacy of performance, it is not necessarily the agency of a solitary ego so often presupposed in our own culture"
> - Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self* (1997:14-15)

> "My altar spirits say, 'we see this gift that you have, and this piece is missing; we're going to put Humpty Dumpty back together—but, starting tomorrow, if you don't *do* different things, nothing changes'…. It's not, 'you should or shouldn't'—it's, 'do you want to be more effective'?"
> - Mark

In the cavernous, pitch-black center of Ed's deconsecrated-church-cum-Taekwondo-school, the drumming and song intensified. The ceremonial rattles, made of deerskin and filled with quartz crystals, began shaking somewhere near the altar. I could hear them, softly at first, shortly after the first song started; by the second or third song, the rattles had begun to glow, and to move around the room at dizzying speed. By the fifth song's crescendo, the iyeska—the interpreter of spirits—in the center called out, and the frenzied activity ceased: the spirits were present, and it was time for the healings to begin.

The evening included healings for a hysterectomy and hernia surgery, and a ceremony for a recently-deceased and much-loved pet cat that belonged to Biff & Annelise. Sam was the last person in the queue of supplicants. Over the course of the diagnostic sessions, she'd come to understand a lifetime of internalized racism as the root of her troubles, and so she framed her request in terms of healing her hatred and fear of what she termed her own "Japaneseness." She

directed her request to a particular spirit-helper—Inyan Wasicu—known to group members to be brutally blunt and, at times, particularly demanding. Inyan Wasicu, [134] speaking through the iyeska, lived up to his reputation: she was told that in order to heal her self-loathing, she would need to "go to Japan and walk for a year."

After a long pause—silence, hanging between and connecting the twelve of us who waited in the darkness—Sam said, "are there any other options?"

The iyeska, who didn't miss a beat, replied: "well, you could take a pill…."

The exchange was met with raucous laughter—but it illuminated the subtle dynamics by which Mark performs and eschews authority in the course of a healing encounter, as well as the ways in which some tiospaye members struggle to relate to that dynamic. As we'll see below, his clinical authority inflected the diagnostic session before Sam's ceremony—a common dynamic between supplicants and elders in this group—but his role, there, is framed as helping Sam refine the terms of *her* request: it is, crucially, a request she makes, of her own accord, to be healed of her self-loathing. In the ritual itself, Rags is explicitly, and solely, an instrument—a "hollow bone," in tiospaye parlance, through which spirits like Inyan Wasicu travel to do their work. When Mark talks about his experience during ceremony, he describes the particulars as muffled or distant "whispers;" in this case, he had only a vague recollection of Inyan Wasicu's injunction, or Rags' joke about 'taking a pill'—and, as the group discussed the ceremony, I came to understand that being an "interpreter," for Mark, also involved helping people, post-hoc, to make sense of the experiences they'd had.

[134] The "little white man of truth," and one of the "spirit helpers" with whom Mark developed a connection while working with a Lakota medicine man, Inyan Wasicu is called on in ceremonies that require intensity and precision in the pursuit of truth. Praying for help from Inyan Wasicu is tantamount to requesting the most bruttal and direct possible encounter with 'truths' about one's self; see Sam's discussion of her fretful anticipation of what Inyan Wasicu would have to tell her, and whether or not she deserved to hear it, below.

It seemed to me, then, that he also went about this part of his work in a way that bore traces of his clinical presence: despite Sam's apparent desire for a definitive, authoritative adjudication of *her* preferred interpretation, Mark refused; what seemed important to him was that she make the decision for herself. And it's precisely this distinction—between the right to decide *to*, and the right to decide *for*—that recapitulates the tension internal to the kind of authority at stake here. Both of these senses, however, presume and reinscribe a very particular *kind* of self: that is, the putatively autonomous, self-legislating actor—a coherent self, seated in consciousness and defined by its commitments and actions—that is taken-for-granted as the object of psychotherapeutic intervention.

At the tiospaye's gathering in August, a month before Sam's ceremony, Mark had responded to a question about what happens after the healing ceremony was over. The supplicant was unclear about how to integrate the healing they'd received into their lives, and Mark—no stranger to this sort of question—explained that: "my altar spirits say, 'we see this gift that you have, and this piece is missing; were going to put Humpty Dumpty back together—but, starting tomorrow, if you don't do different things, nothing changes'." He was adamant—then, and throughout the time that I've known him—that these healings are basically useless as one-off 'treatments', and that everything hinges on whether or not supplicants seize an opportunity to make major, sustained changes to the way they live their lives. For the first of numerous times, he told me that roughly 90% of people who come in search of healing "don't follow through"—that they "go back to old habits." "It's not, 'you should or shouldn't'," he insisted; "it's, 'do you want to be *more effective*'?"

It was very much this distinction—between "right and wrong" and being "more effective"—that arose a month later, in September of 2010, when I returned to Mark's house for another

weekend of teachings and ceremony. The question of 'effectiveness' took on a much finer point as Liz and Sam arrived on the second night—and Sam, as it turned out, was one of the primary supplicants for that weekend's lowampi ceremony. Mark spoke to all of us at some length about her situation and request. He'd had several preliminary conversations with her about her impending healing ceremony. In the roughly twenty-four hours between her arrival and the start of the ceremony, she would also take part in a number of interactions that Mark described as "diagnostic," and which ranged widely in scope and technique—from conversation to storytelling to more psychospiritual and ceremonial interventions.

When she and Liz arrived, he told us that "Sam's here because she's trying to find," he paused, "a sense of peace—about Sam." He paused, then continued. "This beautiful gift that she is." As he explained what he understood to be 'the problem', Mark began with effort to frame the encounter in terms of her distorted perspective on herself—and he immediately invoked his own transformative experience of being in the presence of Joe Eagle Elk. "Joe wouldn't even understand that. Joe would just hold her[, and] she would go through probably 30 emotions while he's just sitting there, being a conduit of light. And that's *all* he would do." The capacity of such an encounter to affect an enduring transformation would have hinged, however, on whether or not "she chose to accept it."

In his attempts to underscore the need for Sam's active engagement in—and commitment to—her own healing, Mark tacitly invoked the double-bind of medicalization in the particular context of talk-centered therapy: in exchange for the experiential sense of agency that can accompany the act of 'naming' the thing, patients locate themselves in contingent, and precarious, positions at the foot of the authoritative edifice of biomedicine. In the process, they risk giving up the capacity to imagine themselves, and to act, outside of its long shadow. This, I

think, is part of why Mark is so careful about avoiding clinical, DSM-based diagnostic categories in such settings—and why, in the present case, he so consistently emphasized the idea of sadness as a choice. He mused about why people "choose to feel bad," and made a connection with his earlier distinction between sacred and spectacle—between, that is, 'being' and 'experiencing':

> Sam is here this time—because we've done this before with Sam. But this time will she really take it in? Will she just [allow herself to] *be* it—versus 'experiencing' it? In a ceremony, you can experience the wagmuhas,[135] you can experience the song, you can experience the warmth and the movement of air—and then it all goes away when you leave. Or: you can *embody* it, and you *are* it. And you never have to even forget it, because it's not a mental thing. It's—you are it. And then you walk in beauty. That's the walking in beauty—you *are* beauty. But it's the mind—Sam's mind is so strong, she—because she *loved* being 'second-best' so much, because she *loved* not quite measuring up to whatever standard she's measuring herself by? Is that her priority? Is that where she finds her happiness? Is that what she's good at? Is she good at not being good enough? That's what she has to figure out. "Do I really *want* to walk in beauty? Or do I *like* the secondary gains of 'not being good enough'?" And then, on her deathbed, she can say, "I never quite got it. My life was not all it could be, because I never got it'." And Joe would say to her, "you already 'got it'! You just are denying it. You're just not *seeing* it. I see it." Joe would say, "*I* see it! I see it. Come over here. I can even—" you know? and then, he's so—he was something!—he could even show it to you. You could hold his hand a certain way, and you'd be blinded by, "woah!"—and he'd go, "that's *you*!" Yeah. But even then—[you might] go, "what's the trick? How'd he do that?" Because we're just—

[135] Ceremonial rattles; when the spirits are present in the ceremony, the quartz crystals inside the wagmuhas glow, and the rattles move around the room at great speed.

for some reason, we want to think we're 'bad'. We want to think we're not good enough. And then we get so sleepy, "I just want to go to sleep, I'm tired, wah!"

Mark has had a great many such conversations with supplicants, and he seems to struggle with his own awareness of the limitations of such an emphasis on the moral culpability of the putatively sovereign self he's (tacitly) addressed. His approach, then, involves the judicious use of such stretches of didactic talk, interspersed with stories, ritual acts of "diagnostic" divination,[136] encounters with sacred others in ceremony, and time spent with a supportive and loving community. After a long silence, Mark shifted direction; we spent another half-hour listening to stories about Hindu mystics and Aboriginal Australian medicine men, and then sorted out logistics for the next day's events.

Following that conversation, we moved into a diagnostic ceremony for Sam that Mark referred to as "the thing with the feather." The living room was lit by a single candle. She was laid out, supine, on a buffalo hide, with a pillow under her knees. He smudged all of us,[137] then he lightly brushed her repeatedly with the feather. He drew spiral forms with the feather, rising into the air above her sternum. He then placed two stones over her eyes, and purple cloth over her face. Mark drummed for a while, and sang softly to her, in Lakota. It was almost completely impossible to tell what they were saying to each other. There seemed to be some push and pull: she wasn't seeing what he thought she would've been seeing; he explained to her what he saw, but she didn't seem to agree.

---

[136] For a rich array of contemporary perspectives on relationships between these categories, see Curry (2010) and Laderman and Roseman (1996); with particular regard to middle-class America, see McGuire and Kantor (1988).

[137] A purification and blessing performed before and after every ceremony and some teaching sessions; in this case, the smoke from a bundle of smoldering sage was blown over a person's body, using a fan made from hawk feathers.

The next day—Saturday, in the afternoon—Sam's final preparation for the ceremony took place. Between the end of the diagnostic session and the beginning of the ceremony proper, I struggled to make sense of what had transpired. It'd borne an vague resemblance to group therapy—a kind of collective engagement directed at Sam's preparation for ceremony, with the goal of helping her gain "clarity" about her questions—the heart of her fear, and her pain, and her shame. Mark also deployed what I came to understand as a key distinction—between "thoughts" and "belief."

Members of the group slowly trickled in, as we sat in the fading light of the living room, seated in a growing circle. Mark's deep, resonant voice was almost musical. Mark spoke about her experience with spirit as a "vibration of light" that was trying to "map" to her vibration, and suggested that she was "blocking" it with the idea that she didn't deserve it—that it was like a "shell" that spirit couldn't get through. He said he was starting to get from them [i.e., the spirits] what she's going to have to do, and that she's "not going to like it," and that "it's not going to be easy on any level." He said "everybody has freaky thoughts, but it's deeper than thoughts with you—it's *beliefs* at this point."

In her study of Evangelical Christians, Tanya Luhrmann observes that nearly all of her interlocutors state: "straightforwardly and unambiguously that they are Christians and that they believe in God.[138] And yet every one of them, when talking among themselves or at the end of an interview with me, uses expressions that acknowledge an acute consciousness that their belief has a complicated relationship to the everyday world in which they live" (2012:315). Her

[138] In fact, much of Luhrmann's recent work takes a psychologistic approach to understanding the means by which American Evangelicals labor to internalize a both a particular model, and a particular way of modeling, as well as the cognitive consequences of that internalization. *When God Talks Back* (2012) is, in other words, a book that is centrally concerned with the questions about belief and believing—forms of the word 'belief' and 'believe' appear roughly 377 times throughout the text.

treatment of this tension hinges on how "sensible people [become] able to believe in an invisible being who has a demonstrable effect on their lives" (xi)—and the philosophical foundation of her work rests on the notion, widely accepted in both psychological and medical anthropology, that in contemporary, 'western' contexts, the shared understanding of what it means, in the most basic sense, to 'believe' something has shifted dramatically over the course of several centuries. "Belief," she contends, "is no longer about a moral state but an epistemological conviction" (320).[139] This construction turns on the question of what "conviction" means, and how it comes to be—and Luhrmann's analysis, like much contemporary scholarship, ultimately attempts to quarantine the problem by leaning on an ethnographically emergent emphasis on affect: "to believe," for her informants, means "to really feel as if they know in their heart of hearts" (xxii).[140] In short: 'believing' both suggests and stages a moral obligation to cultivate what Joseph Dunne (1995) called "sovereign selves."[141]

This, I think, is very much what Mark is trying to resist—or, at least, what he's trying to work around. He does this, here, by combining the invocation of sacred others with an emphasis on embodied experiences and practices. In those respects, Mark's work bears striking

---

[139] Luhrmann, like Byron Good (1994) and others, leans heavily on Wilfred Cantwell-Smith (1998) here.

[140] There is, of course, a longer history here. Rodney Needham's (1972) work showed that the noun 'belief' is philosophically vacuous—that it's only intelligible as an artifact of a particular assertion, 'I believe X.' As he put it in his exhaustive philosophical survey: "Statements of belief are the only evidence for the phenomenon; but the phenomenon itself appears to be no more than the custom of making such statements" (108). And Byron Good—drawing on Needham and others—argued that "The position implied by the language of belief is often untenable," since "the myth that we can deduce beliefs from 'sincere assertions', from statements people make to us about what they really think, presumed in much of the philosophical literature, ignores [the fact]… that all discourse is pragmatically located in social relationships" (1994:23).

[141] As Charles Guignon (2004:61 n. 1) has argued, there's a direct affinity between Dunne's conception and Cushman's "empty self" (discussed in Part I); both, moreover, are moored to broader scholarly conversations about the paradigmatic nature of the notion of 'authenticity' discussed in the introduction.

resemblances to Thomas Csordas' account of Charismatic Catholics, whose "ritual healing presumes two closely related capacities of the self: the capacity to be 'wounded' or 'broken' and subsequently healed by divine power in a way that roughly corresponds to the medical system's notion of cure; and the capacity to achieve spiritual 'growth' and 'maturity' in a way that roughly corresponds to the aspirations of contemporary holistic and New Age healing" (1997:26). Of singular salience, here, is Csordas' framing of a relationship between body and spirit: an encounter with "the sacred is an existential encounter with otherness that… defines us by what we are not—by what is beyond our limits, or what touches us precisely at our limits;" crucially, in his analysis, "this sense of otherness itself is phenomenologically grounded in our embodiment" (4-5). And while this kind of bodily encounter with sacred alterity might begin with "what we are not," for Mark—and, he hopes, for his students—the point is to open up possibilities for what 'we' might yet become.

With prompting from Mark, Sam recounted her story. She'd been born prematurely, she said, and gone ten days without human contact; she thought her "abandonment issues" were related to that. She talked about her mother, who'd spent hours and hours with her violin students, but never with Sam; and her father, who never communicated that he loved her, or that he thought she was smart. She talked about dancing with Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, and about having terminated a pregnancy that occurred during her first relationship in her early twenties. She'd married a man she described as "uncommunicative" and had a son at 25; she later identified as a lesbian and eventually got together with her long-term partner, Liz. She'd started having mystical experiences when she was 20, she said, but, at every turn, she'd chosen "busyness" in life over the connections she's experienced to "spirit."

Mark invoked Inyan Wasicu, talking through him—conjuring images and given names, descriptions, and pressing her, gently but firmly, for clarification at several points. It seemed an extraordinary therapeutic dance: he invoked a source of authority external to either of them, which seemed to make it safe for her—and she allowed it. She talked, at the end, about the racism she'd encountered throughout her life, and how she'd "internalized" it: she was the child of two Japanese parents, and she talked about hating herself for having been born Japanese. When she was asked to sum up her request for healing, she talked about having the strength and will to reach her full potential, or to accept herself where she is. The diagnostic session drew to a close; we piled into cars, made our way to Ed's, and got ready for the lowampi to begin.

The next day, just after dawn, we reconvened at Mark's house. Sitting around the dining room table, talk turned to the ceremony from the night before. Several of us joked, warmly, about Sam's response—paraphrased as 'is there someone else I could talk to up there'? We took turns describing the things we'd seen and felt. At one point early in the conversation, Mark reflected on the final round of diagnostic preparation that had preceded the ceremony; he observed that "a really good sign was yesterday when we were talking to Sam, that we were able to find that space, at times, where everything else faded into the background. Because that's part of the ceremony—is that, when you do lowampi, and people bring their stick,[142] [the spirits are] present, they sleep with you, they're walking around, they're listening. And so in there

[142] Supplicants' preparation for ceremony includes (among other thing) the making of a 'turning stick'—a small branch, roughly the size and shape of a pencil; the stick is gently stripped of its bark, and a single white prayer tie is affixed to the top. When the supplicant approaches the eastern edge of altar just before the ceremony is to begin, she or he turns themselves in a circle, acknowledging the four cardinal directions, and then presents the stick to the iyeska. The presentation, as with other gifts in this version of Lakota practice, is made four times, and is accompanied by four slightly different expressions of the supplicant's gratitude—for example, 'I thank you for this healing'. On the fourth prestation, the stick is given to the iyeska, and the supplicant walks clockwise to their place in the circle around the altar, and then takes their seat.

[ceremony] is when they work through me more easily, but, like, in there [living room], they're still '*tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu*'—they're in one room listening to you guys, and—that, that was pretty intense, yesterday afternoon." The ceremony, he seemed to be saying, had begun well before that evening's metaphysical and interpersonal fireworks.

About a half-hour into the conversation, Sam spoke up. She and Mark went back and forth, across the table, with the rest of us in looking on in silence. As they talked about the response Sam had received from the altar the night before, she seemed to be looking for either permission to renegotiate the terms of the 'contract' she'd entered into with Inyan Wasicu, or absolution for a decision she'd already made to do so. Mark gave neither—he seemed to insist, tacitly, that the role of 'interpreter' was one-directional—and, in the exchange which follows, Sam's polite exasperation is legible as an expression of the kind of productive frustration that, for Mark, helps distinguish "psychotherapy" from a "relationship." I was struck by an echo of Mohatt's description, as well, of "the fear of boldness in contemporary psychotherapy," which he saw as "based on the therapist's [mistaken] sense that he or she only analyzes and interprets"—and which Eagle Elk's particular presence seemed to modulate. Mark, then, seemed to walk a very fine line between psychotherapeutic interpretation, and the work of an Iyeska, as he relentlessly reiterated his emphasis on Sam's "choices:" those she's already made, and those before her.

She began by talking about her impending trip to Japan: "I have this… feeling of impending doom," she said, "like, if I put it off, or if I decide that I need to—I just signed up for seminary, which is a two year program"

"Mm-hm," acknowledged Mark.

"So if I put *this* off 'til *after* that," Sam asked, "will there—" she coughed, and started over. "You know—my mind says, you know, I'm going to have the 'wrath of the Inyan Wasicu'. I mean, if I don't follow through—"

Mark interrupted: "there's no wrath."

"Ah—okay."

"But," he pushed her, gently, "what do you—what do you *want*? You know? It's: what *do* you want? Do you want to be a minister, or do you want to—I mean, it sounds like you know what you want?"

"Well, my reason [for enrolling in seminary] was not to *be* a minister, it was more for the deeper curriculum that seems to be there… that's why I had signed up. Um."

"What do you really need? That's—*you're* going to have to answer that question for yourself."

"Mm-hmm"

"There's no 'wrath'!"

"I know!" she laughed.

"It's that—there's always—you know, it's your choice. But again, you—*you* came and said, 'what should I do? How can you help me'?"

"Right"

Mark explained to her that the trek she'd been assigned was a spiritual practice with analogues in the aboriginal Australian 'walkabout' and the wandering of Hindu sadhu ascetics. He tried to assuage her pragmatic concerns by sharing a story from his experience about his own period of wandering, in which a stranger had given him a sum of cash when he was homeless and bankrupt.

She listened, and then tried another gambit: “Well,” she said, “I have a feeling—you know, we’re [already] going, [to Japan for two weeks] in the middle of October, and, we’ll be on an island off the shore of where my grandparents are from, and so,” she paused, “I guess I’ll get some more clarity.”

Mark paused, and his tone grew a little firmer: “‘Get some’ [more clarity],” he said, “implies that you keep looking, you keep window-shopping,” he said, “but the clarity is—”

“Well—I—”

“I know what you mean, Sam.”

“Yeah,” she relented.

“You keep looking for clarity. You know—I *think* you know, you know? You just gotta trust yourself, and *do* it, or *don’t* do it.” He paused. “But if you keep waiting—” he trailed off. “I’ve told you the story about Andy. When we were with Joe, and Andy went back to Florida, and he literally sat in his room, and he kept praying, and he called Joe, and he said, ‘Joe, nothing’s happening’. And Joe said, ‘well, what’re you doing?’ And he said, ‘I’m just sitting in my room, praying’. And Joe said ‘well, hello!? You’re just sitting in your room! You gotta get out’.” That, Mark suggested, was similar to “how you’re sitting in your room, looking for clarity. Sometimes it comes by… just… doing what you gotta do.” He paused again, then continued: “the Japanese part of this is huge.”

“Yeah.”

“For you, in this life, in this—” he trailed off.

“Well, it’s—almost feels scary, brings up fear, because when I go to Japan, they don’t consider me Japanese, either. I’m—I’m kind of looked down upon, because I’m different. I’m not Japanese to them. Um—So that’s why I’m—y’know—I—I—the—my ‘human self’ says,

'but I'm Japanese-American," she laughed, "you know? What do I do with that? But… just follow—"

Mark was unyielding: "But you're in between a lot of things right now, you know?" He paused. "The *only* person you've got to come to clarity with is yourself—"

"Yeah." She grew quiet and, after a long pause, softly said: "it's uncomfortable, but, I—thank you."

"Don't thank me!" he demurred. "[It] had nothing to do with me."

"Well," she concluded, "thank you for being the—" she paused, seeming to search for the right word: "messenger," she said with a half-smile.

This exchange is, in a sense, legible as a kind of contest of conjugation: Sam constructs her relationship to the altar's instruction as the object of an open negotiation—she's trying to figure out what to do, and what the costs and benefits of compliance will be. Mark, however, traffics in the temporality of an already-extant commitment: *she* came for help, and not for the first time—and even his parable about Joe is presented as a re-telling: "I've *told* you the story about Andy," he says. Throughout, Mark walks a very fine line: he's insisting that the she, not he, is the arbiter of her arrangement with Inyan Wasicu. Sam doesn't exactly ask him whether it would be acceptable for her to "put off" her walkabout, but by floating her fear—"what my mind tells me"—she invites, and receives, a response: "there's no wrath," Mark tells her. Having invoked the authority of his ceremonial expertise and historical knowledge (i.e. with reference to Aboriginal and Hindu mystics), he then draws on personal experience, as well: he had, he said, been homeless and bankrupt himself, and had been graced with a gift from a stranger—suggesting that Sam, by extension, might invite a comparably confirming experience into her own life, were she to take this 'leap'. She, then is left without the kind of consequences that she

seems to imagine will motivate her to take this drastic action, and presents herself as adrift: "I guess I'll get some sort of clarity," she says.

This, however, is where Mark complicates his own role: he could have left the conversation there, tacitly valorizing her assessment of the ambiguous, yet-to-arrive "clarity"—but he doesn't. Instead, he gently, but firmly, frames her actions as "window-shopping," and presents the re-told story of Andy as an illustration of the perilous futility of passivity: the moral of the story, after all, is that "clarity comes by doing what you gotta do." Twice in this brief exchange, he tells Sam that she has to decide "for herself"—which, as we'll see below, she does—but he's also suggesting, less directly, that even if it's ultimately a matter of "effectiveness" rather than "right" or "wrong," there's still a moral valence to the decision to *be* actively or passively engaged in the healing process.

After that weekend of teachings and ceremony, I didn't see Sam again for five and a half months. I spent a snowy and cold late-February weekend in suburban Massachusetts, at a sprawling home where two of Mark's students—Melanie, Mark's "spiritual daughter" and heir to his role as interpreter of spirits, her husband Rob, and their two young children—had been house-sitting for about two years. By late-morning on Saturday, eleven of us were milling about the house, catching up with each other or playing with Melanie and Rob's two young children. We spent the afternoon in a circle around a large drum, as Melanie and senior group members led us through a repertoire of songs which we'd be likely to encounter during the upcoming ceremonies, interspersed with stories and teachings. The 'formal' part of the day ended as it had begun—with smudging and a prayer—and people broke off into smaller clusters, to chat or to prepare particular items for the upcoming ceremony.

I sat at the kitchen table, taking a lesson from *Leksi*[143] Paul—'Bear Man', to all present, and a longtime member of the group—on how to construct a *waluta*.[144] We shared the table with several other small groups of people, and individuals moved in and out of the multiple conversations with which they were surrounded. While we worked, I asked him about his experience of going to the altar for healing from his cancer, several years earlier. In the exchange which follows, I was struck by his account of his frustration with Mark—it was one of only a very few instances in which I heard anyone voice such a sentiment—and I was particularly intrigued by how that frustration seemed to articulate, in potentially generative ways,[145] with Paul's own ambivalences about his spiritual life. He explained that Mark had performed a yuwipi[146] then, and that the spirits working through Rags had they told him "we will help you,

[143] "Uncle," in Lakota; a term of respectful endearment in the group.

[144] As Melanie explained it in an email, a "Waluta is a representation of *maka takaya*, all things on the earth. It will probably be best if you make it in person or with someone who is familiar with it. Make a prayer flag out of red felt - 3 ft by 1 ft. Sew/tie on a smallish (dollar bill sized or apple sized) piece of leather, a feather, and a shell. You can call Elaine on the [reservation] to get a feather and shell in particular if you don't have ways to access them otherwise." (11 Jan 2011) The 'feather' involved is an eagle feather, which are always referred to in writing as 'white feathers' because it has been illegal to trade in eagle parts since the Bald Eagle Protection Act was signed into federal law in 1940. Dead eagles are collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which issues permits to obtain parts for "religious purposes"—but "[o]nly enrolled members of a Federally recognized tribe can obtain a permit" (http://www.fws.gov/faq/featherfaq.html). The 'Eagle Feather Law', as it's colloquially known, remains controversial—it's unloved, both by non-native people whose pracices are inconvenienced, and by native activists who oppose federal enrollment regulations; see http://religiousfreedomwithraptors.110mb.com/Native.American.Eagle.Law.html for some discussion of this point.

[145] I.e., whether or not it was Mark's intention, the way that Paul narrated his experience of disappointment suggested to me that it was pushing him to grapple—productively—with the question of whether he would respond to a 'calling' he felt to be an iyeska himself; more on this below, and in Part III.

[146] A yuwipi is a particularly intense form of Lakota healing ceremony, conducted in total darkness, and brought to bear when unusually urgent or difficult healing is needed. (examples given to me included missing children and acute, life-threatening illnesses). In a yuwipi, the intercessor is tightly bound with cords around his feet, hands, and neck, and then wrapped in blankets which are themselves tied securely around him.

if… 'next Sun Dance, you will go out and dance one round in a white skirt, and pray'. And I did that," he said. "It was really intense."

I then asked him about a remark he'd made a few months earlier, about his sense that he was being called to become an iyeska himself.[147] He sighed, and said, "[the spirits are] pushing me in that direction," he smiled—"[they] keep asking me to load pipes[148] and stuff." The yuwipi Mark had held for Paul, however, had led to some confusion; he'd been told, by the spirits (speaking through Rags) that he should "go on a quest'," which, he said, he'd been unable to do right away. It'd been Paul's understanding that he had "a year and a winter to go somewhere, and wander around," and that he would "find somebody who's doing polar bear ceremonies." That, he explained, was "part of the deal that I struck with them:" the spirits had said, "we'll help you if you help the polar bears. So wander around and find somebody doing the ceremony and if he is the right person, he will give you a piece of the bear—a tooth, a claw, or whatever." Paul had managed to find someone who was going to sell him a polar bear claw—but then, when he was at a tiospaye gathering a few months later, Mark approached him and said "your time's up; you didn't do it." Paul was taken aback: "according to my calendar," he said, "I had 'til the following winter."

I was surprised, and asked him: "this was during the ceremony?"

"Yeah," he said, and sat in silence for half a minute. "Whatever. Evidently it wasn't the right guy, or something—I don't know, or they knew I wasn't going to do it anyway, or he didn't have the time. Mark said, 'don't worry about the money,' but I kinda gotta worry about the money,[149]

[147] Discussed in Part III (below)

[148] A role in lowampi, yuwipi, and inipi (sweat lodge) rituals that involves preparing the ceremonial pipe, which is loaded with tobacco, placed on the altar, and, after the ceremony is complete, is usually smoked by each of the attendees in turn.

[149] I.e., the expernses associated with the "quest" he'd been assigned.

you know? I mean, my back is gone.[150] I mean, that spirit scared the hell out of me." He laughed, then looked at me, and asked, "you know?"

"I know a little," I replied.

He thought for a moment, and then returned to the question of whether or not he might become an iyeska himself. "I *know* it worked through me. I have gone into spirit. I just 'go away', and they just use me to work with as they will. Several times. But to sit down and have a chat with them, like Mark does," he shook his head. That, he said, "scares the hell out of me." he said, and then grew quiet.

Melanie had heard Paul, and turned, just then, from her conversation at the other end of the table. Her position, that day, was complicated: as Mark's hunka daughter and heir to the altar, she was a kind of proxy for him that afternoon;[151] she was among a group of close friends; and she was hosting the gathering in her home. The series of exchanges which follow are, I think, exemplary of the ways in which tiospaye members find themselves empowered to play with the question of 'authority'—and the limits of that play, which are coterminous with their sense of their own accountability for the 'success' or 'failure' of the healings they seek. Paul uses humor to deftly parry Melanie's attempt to do for him what Mark did for Sam after the lowampi—i.e., to put the onus on him for 'failing' to follow up with Mark directly—and, by combining humor with an assertion that he didn't "want the responsibility" anyway, he manages not to engage with her challenge to the substance of his complaint.

[150] Paul suffered from a number of physical ailments, after a lifetime of manual labor; his back injury seriously limited the kind of work he could do.

[151] In fact, that day was the first time she'd led the group's preparation for a major ceremony, and, as members look to her for direction, she seemed to be working out questions about what leadership of the tiospaye might be like.

Melanie said to Bear Man, "you know, if you want to just give a pinch of tobacco[152] next weekend, any time of the day—it doesn't have to be at the ceremony—and talk about this… and say, "I don't know why this happened! I thought I had more time. I'm not getting it!"

Bear Man paused, and then parried: "But I am!" He laughed. "I found a guy to talk to me about polar bears, and he offered to send me a piece of one—sent them, supposedly—got lost in the mail, or got confiscated by 'mail police' or whatever."

Melanie probed, gently: "so you're saying—" she paused, and rephrased her statement as a question: "are you saying you feel like you are done with it?"

Bear Man huffed. "Well," he said, "since they yanked the time limit on me, I'm done with that project. They can set me up with another project, and I'll go through with it."

Melanie, her concern appearing only partially assuaged, pushed on: "yeah, if you felt like there was stuff that you needed to say, or—?"

"No," he answered.

"I'm glad about that," she said.

"I'm fine with it."

"Okay."

They spoke over each other then: "You know? I'm not saying 'you bastard! You pissed me off'!"

"I wasn't sure—there might be like hard feelings."

"No!" he assured her. "Nothing like that."

She seemed visibly relieved, then. "Okay, great," she said, smiling.

---

[152] Tiospaye etiquette—modeled on Lakota practice—involves presenting an offering of tobacco to a teacher or elder as an entrée to a request.

And then, he circled back, and reaffirmed his original position: “think I just kind of, you know… you know, polar bears are wintertime, supposedly, so I had the spring, plus a winter—or it was in the summertime? I don’t know. I forget what it was, but I thought I had another four months to go. And they kind of shortchanged me on the time limit. ‘Damn it’!” he joked. “Like they need a reason why!? You know, whatever.” He chuckled slightly ruefully, and tapped his pocket knife on table. “I don’t want the responsibility of doing a polar bear lowampi. [It’s] kind of like, ‘I ain’t ready for that one yet’! Maybe when I get old!”

“That’s right!” she joked back. They laughed together, and I was struck by the subtlety and deftness of his conversational maneuvering: he’d registered his complaint—that the ‘quest’ had been unfairly terminated—but he’d done so in a way that hadn’t put Melanie in the difficult position of having to apologize for her teacher.

Sam—who’d been hovering nearby—sat down with us, and announced, “I have a question for Bear Man.” In her conversation with Bear Man and me, Sam moved back and forth between ways of talking about whether or not the healing had ‘worked’—and it seemed to hinge on her sense of her own authority to revise the terms of her arrangement with Inyan Wasicu. She began the interaction by describing her apprehension about whether she “would be healed;” in the end, she described—tentatively, but in the past tense—how she came back from her two-week trip to Japan feeling happy, and how things have shifted for her. She began by telling him about her assignment from Inyan Wasicu: “to do a one-year walkabout throughout Japan from top to bottom, on my own;” she then explained her fears about the potential consequences of failing to complete it. “I felt horribly guilty because I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to complete it,” she said.

"That's a biggie!" allowed Bear Man. She laughed; he smirked, and said in playful incredulity: "just take a year off!?"

Sam seemed to relax, and she went on: "right, you know? Leave my life, leave Liz, leave my son, leave my stuff—put all my stuff away, you know? Well, we're thinking about possibly living there for a couple of years, and being 'in' the culture—which is *basically* what the point of it was."

Bear Man explained that, according to Mark, and despite some confusion about deadlines, he himself had failed to complete on-time the difficult assignment he'd been given when he'd gone to request healing for his cancer. "[Mark] told me, 'you didn't do it'. He told me, 'you didn't make it; time's up."

Sam looked horrified. She ventured that, "I didn't know that's there's linear time, though, in the spirit world." And then she grew incredulous: "But you—you got your health back!"

"Yeah," he acknowledged; "not all of it, but it—" he trailed off, and was quiet for a moment.

Sam seemed a little relieved, but not quite convinced; they began talking over each other: "yeah!" she said. "I just didn't want to walk around with any fear of not making a 'deadline', or fear of not accomplishing it, and then never getting the healing—" Paul tried to assuage Sam's concern, then, but when Sam attempted to use the (presumed) effectiveness of his healing as evidence of his successful renegotiation, he seemed to find himself directly accountable for his own experience and, as a result, far more circumspect. His response began with a joke that had a whiff of bluster about it; a moment later, he seemed chagrined by my question (about his decision not to go to Greenland), and the rest of his engagement in the exchange consisted of jokes.

"What are they going to do, zap you with a lightning bolt, or something?" he laughed.

"—that 'I'll never be healed, because I never accomplished it', kind of feeling—"

"I—you do the best you can," he offered.

"Right," she said. "I just," she trailed off, and was quiet for a moment. "I think we… have to find ways—to—to make it work in our lives." She straightened up in her seat. "Because *those* are things that I'm trying to move away from—the fear, and the guilt, and the shame, you know?" She laughed. "I don't want to go into ceremony, or leave ceremony, with those things either."

Bear Man concurred: "I know"

I remarked that, during the ceremony, I'd had a hard time imagining how I would have taken such an intense assignment. "Have you come to some peace?" I asked.

"Well," she replied, "we went to Japan!" They'd already had a two-week trip planned, she said. "And we had an incredible time. And I did come back feeling… for the first time… happy that I'm Japanese. So something definitely… switched. … this year has been incredible… as far as healing that. I haven't done the walkabout, but things have shifted, you know? Thank… God. You know, it's… too long to walk around with that."

We were interrupted by the collection of rituals associated with bedtime for Melanie and Rob's two-year-old and, after the fuss quieted down, I tried a different approach to my question: "in this whole process of coming to terms with what came down in the lowampi," I asked, "do you take things less literally?"

Bear Man offered: "Maybe—maybe you accomplished… what you were supposed to."

"By going back for that trip?" Sam wondered aloud. "It's possible. well—I definitely—I feel different, on some level." And then she related a story from the trip, presenting it is a powerful and instructive synchronicity: one of the other participants—a Japanese man—was, it turned out,

a Sun Dancer himself; he had brought a particular kind of drum with him that she and Liz had recognized from a shop in South Dakota. Sam spoke little Japanese, and he spoke little English, but "there we were in Kagoshima, which is *literally* where my grandparents came from to America," she smiled, "singing Lakota prayer songs. You know, I was—I couldn't stop crying afterwards, 'cause it's like, my worlds had come together. And it was amazing!" She smiled again, and then tried to reconnect this account of a beautiful moment with her question about having fulfilled her commitment to the altar. "So there's—as far as taking things literal—I don't know. I mean, things just I guess happen the way they're supposed to happen," she said.

A few moments later, I tried the question from a slightly different angle: "so," I asked, "do you feel like you're at peace with the question of what came out of that lowampi?" Sam sighed. I explained that I'd been frightened by her experience of asking for help because I was going to be asking for ceremony myself in few weeks, and I was apprehensive about being given an instruction of comparable scale and difficulty.

She laughed, and said, "well, I think—you know, like, what we were saying, it's—it's really about intention… and um… you know whatever you have in your heart is clearly read you know by spirit-you can't… 'BS'[153] spirit!" She smiled. "So—um—I really do believe that if your intention's there, and you do the best that you can in your circumstances, then… um… I mean I would like to, you know—I've had… fantasies of being like Peace Pilgrim. You know Peace Pilgrim?"

"No," I said.

"She's this—she was this amazing woman who just walked the world—thousands and thousands of miles for peace. And I've walked… I think I've walked about… 2,500 kilometers

[153] I.e., 'bullshit'

for peace, but not miles, so… We walked from Berlin to Vienna one year, and we walked to Brussels for disarmament one year. But it was with a group. And I have had flashes in my life of really just doing it on my own. Just—just walking. So it wasn't so foreign to me, the concept… but um—just not at this point in my life—I wasn't ready to… take that on, you know?"

"Sure," I agreed.

"I mean… so… I don't know… I wouldn't—I think, if you have something that you would really like to have help with, then go for it. And—I think you're given what you can handle…"

"More than you think you can handle!" said Bear Man.

"Right," said Sam. "Right!" She and Bear Man broke into laughter.

I asked her, "is that how you understand what happened for you? You were given what you could handle, or more than you could handle?"

"Well," she replied, "it opened-it opened my mind to really thinking about what I needed… And thank goodness I had that trip to Japan already planned, you know?" She laughed again, and smiled. "That made all the difference right there."

Bear Man chimed in: "and that was the other thing that I went through-was they were going to have a 'fire and ice' ceremony—in *Greenland*!"

"Oh. Yes!" Sam recalled.

He continued: "and I knew some of the elders were going to be there. And I called around," he said, "but the only flight into Greenland was a weekly flight from Iceland," by way of Denmark. He shook his head. "I think it was like $1,500 just to get to Denmark," he laughed, "and *half*way back." In a mocking voice, he said "well, you could find a tramp steamer!"

I recall being struck, then, by Paul's assumption of the *obvious* unreasonableness—I knew, for instance, that group members sometimes spent thousands of dollars to make the trip to South

Dakota for the Sun Dance, and so it appeared curious that the prospect of taking a boat to Greenland seemed a self-evidently ludicrous idea. It seemed that the question at hand was: where exactly do they draw the line between what constitutes 'reasonable' expense and inconvenience, and what's 'over the top'—and how does the line move? I couldn't tell, at first, whether he was joking about the boat—and I interjected, a little rashly, that "I was going to say, at that point, like, there's *gotta* be a boat somewhere, right?"

He got quieter, and said, "Yeah, I—you could—" and then trailed off.

Sam, then, recalled a lowampi from a few years earlier, in which she'd also sought the guidance of Inyan Wasicu. She'd prepared for two months, spending 45 minutes each day making a sequence of prayer ties, and, when the time came for the ceremony she'd was almost eager to get "clobbered" and "blitzed" by the experience of being "faced with truth" about herself. Much to her surprise, however, all she received was "love and compassion." We all laughed together as she recalled that she'd "felt disappointed" that she hadn't been "clobbered;" as she put it: "I thought maybe I didn't deserve to be given the truth!" More laughter, and she continued. "That's how bad my self-deprecation was. I didn't—I didn't *deserve* to get beat up! They only treated me with love and compassion." She feigned a pout, and the laughter grew raucous again.

"Whip me! Beat me!" cried Bear Man, pretending terror, and sending us back into hysterics.

"It's funny," I said, "and it isn't."

"It is." Sam corrected me. "No, it's totally funny." She struggled to stop laughing. "I mean, it definitely made me look at myself!"

Then I asked her: "looking back on September, is it like, 'okay, is this what you thought you needed to hear? Is this what you wanted to hear? Whack'!?"

Her voice grew soft, and she was quiet for a moment; "yeah," she said.

Bear Man, half-joking, admonished me: "now you've done it!"

I asked whether my question made sense; she explained that "I was looking to be—I think I was looking to be really judged and criticized, you know?" When I asked if the 'harsh' edict she'd received in the recent ceremony was more along the lines she'd expected to hear, she pursed her lips, and said "I don't even think of it in those terms? Um—It was… a lot… and it definitely was… um… it was a piece that I needed to hear…. And I am very grateful for it, which is why I'm doing my wopila this year, and this weekend…. Yeah—it was really it was—I was in a different space, I guess? I wasn't—I didn't have expectations—I guess, if that's what you're asking—of… what was going to come. Yeah…. It was a potent, potent weekend-the whole thing.

Sam seemed to stake her position on the assertion that "the fear, and the guilt, and the shame" were precisely what she was trying to "move away from"—and then she supports her interpretation of events by dint of the synchronicity she observed (that is, with reference to singing Lakota prayer songs in Kagoshima) and by offering a limit-case hagiography (i.e., the "Peace Pilgrim" story) as something she decidedly "wasn't ready to take on"—but which, in the telling, afforded an opportunity to state that she had already walked "2,500 kilometers for peace." Finally, she buttressed her account by connecting to a developmental narrative about how much more "self-deprecating" she *used* to be—as she described her former-self's sense that she hadn't "deserved to be clobbered" by Inyan Wasicu during ceremony.

Mark seemed to me to linger as a felt absence here—present indirectly through Melanie, and being imagined as, at first, the harsh arbiter of Bear Man's "failure." No one in the room, that day, took it upon themselves to challenge Sam's account of her re-negotiation, and my questions

on the subject were consistently interpreted as opportunities to rephrase, and add to, already-articulated justifications. The point, here, is not whether or not these warrants 'hold up' under scrutiny; rather, what's of interest is precisely kinds of interactions and moments of social self-fashioning that are made possible as people work through the tensions internal to these subject positions, as well as between the positions they take up, and the warrants to which they have recourse. For both Bear Man and Sam, those positions are defined by aspects of 'felt', experiential interiority: he insists he didn't want the "responsibility," and she avers that "guilt" and "shame" and "fear" were what she culprits all along. Strictly speaking, of course, no interlocutor of theirs could plausibly presume to *know* that either of these assertions were untrue; I found it surprising, however, that no one pushed them on either point *at all*—i.e., that the imperatives of middle-class U.S. speech might have been so binding that courtesy, in short, trumped the kind of 'deep' sociality one might expect to find among the kind of subjects ostensibly being cultivated here.

But if this is legible as a kind of 'failure' of something like 'deep' sociality—apropos of intrapsychic depth—then it also marks a kind of success on a different register: there is, I think, another kind of sociality being enabled here, even—and perhaps especially—in direct relation to the absence of a 'therapeutic authority' that would insist on depth. Paul and Sam are two people whose paths would not likely have crossed, outside of the tiospaye: he is a 60-something gruff, white, semi-retired carpenter from Massachusetts, prone to the occasional moment of casual prejudice which elicited cringes from other people in the room—and she is a 40ish, Japanese-American lesbian massage therapist. Part of what makes the tiospaye both fascinating and, I think, important is that it does seem to conjure a rare kind of American social space, in which people like Paul and Sam are engaged with each other in substantial and sustained ways.

In sum, we have seen some of the forms that authority can take among clinicians who seek to challenge the rigid boundaries of selfhood that attend the 'sovereign selves' they treat (and which much of contemporary psychotherapy is complicit in reproducing). The limitation of APT members' efforts to achieve 'authentic' relationships helped us to better understand the possibilities and dangers that attend the valorization of 'authenticity' in American life—and the crises staged for leaders like Steven and Mark as their attempts to enact 'democratic' relations become entangled with participants' fantasies of, and desires for, certainty. I suggested that it's the particular ways in which Mark inhabits this tension that make him such a compelling figure in the eyes of his students—that he represents the kind of 'proximate alterity' which is just close enough to their own life-worlds so as to avoid slipping from something like compellingly exotic to discomfitingly foreign. At the same time—as we'll see below—his lifestyle *within* that adjacent 'world' is just far enough away that they can imagine his choices to give up what he gives up as artifacts of a 'capacity' or 'calling' that they themselves don't quite have. Throughout, we have seen how notions of "belief" encode significant epistemological and ontological commitments. As we turn to Part III, we'll begin to look at how a shift in emphasis from the idea of 'belief' to the embodied experience of *believing in* something—what I'll call the 'work of believing'—opens possibilities for new experiences of subjectivity and new forms of community.

Part III :: Commitments, Kinship, and Community

1. "Nobody's Alright"

> "Being in an in-patient mental health facility was the closest that I'd ever seen to *real* community in middle-class America, because you can't lie to each other. There's no, 'how are you?' 'Oh, I'm fine'. 'How are the kids'? 'Kids are great'—because *nobody's* 'alright'."
> - Tom

When I'd arrived at the Sun Dance in South Dakota, one of the first participants I met was a young(ish) man named Tom. White, and in his late twenties, Tom had come to the dance—his first—with Jim (a veteran of many years' visit to this edge of the reservation, Jim was thirty years Tom's senior; they knew each other from a men's group in which they both participated in Missouri). As the two youngest male American non-native neophytes, Tom and I had much in common: we were both very much in search of a way to find a position from which we might relate to what was happening around us, and we both found that fit in the role of 'assistant fire keeper'.

For the first two days, Tom and I were the only firekeepers on the overnight shift; under the watchful eye of the lead fire keeper, Tom and I took turns tending to the large open-pit fire that, we were told, was the heart of the ceremony. Our job was to keep the fire burning, around the clock—he kept an eye on things until 2am; I came on duty then, and sat with the fire until shortly after sunrise. During the day, we ate together, and we were allowed to assist with the many inipi—that is, 'sweat lodge'—ceremonies which were held in the two lodges which had been built at either end of the fire pit.

Over the four-day period of 'purification' that preceded the four days of prayer and dancing, more experienced members of the fire crew trickled in; with more help on hand, Tom and I crossed paths more often. Midway through the second day of the dance itself, we walked up from

the fire toward the shade of the arbor, where 'supporters' (attendees who did not dance, as well as the three or four dozen other spectators) stood or sat or shuffled in place to the rhythms coming from the drummers, while the dancers cooked under the summer sun on those 105-degree-plus days. Tom and I were both a little giddy from exhaustion—neither of us had had more than a few hours of uninterrupted sleep over the preceding days—and we both remarked on how much we were enjoying the experience of easy camaraderie that we'd found.

Tom reflected on his own gratitude for a moment—on how much he appreciated the experience he was having of being so thoroughly comfortable, despite the physical hardships—and he spoke about how grateful he was for what he described as the experience of "community." He had, he explained, been institutionalized six times for manic depression, and he thought of the people he'd met during those experiences in terms of "layers" of closeness in which, he said, the clinical staff were the farthest out, while the janitorial and administrative staff were the closest "in."

He was by no means romantic about the time he'd spent in psychiatric facilities, but he was a great, dry wit on the subject. He'd struggled to sleep, he said, and sometimes found that he'd *thought* he'd slept, only to discover that he hadn't—he recalled asking a duty nurse a question, and being yelled at in response. When he asked her why she'd responded like that, she told him "because you asked that, like, six times last night." (Apparently, he'd been writing in the unit's sleep log that he'd slept for six hours or more, when, in fact, he hadn't been in his room for more than 45 minutes each night).

There was also a certain wry nostalgia in his demeanor, as he recounted that his experience in an "in-patient mental health facility was the closest that [he]'d ever seen to real community in

middle-class America, because you can't lie to each other. There's no, 'how are you?' 'Oh, I'm fine'. 'How are the kids'? 'Kids are great'—because *nobody's* alright."

For Tom, an experience of what he called "community" was made possible by a very particular kind of commitment: a person's very presence at such a facility precluded certain forms of *in*authenticity, and enabled the possibility of something like authentic interpersonal relations (among patients, if not necessarily between patients and staff). The third, and final, part of this dissertation takes up the ways in which matters of 'commitment' and 'community' figure centrally in my interlocutors' efforts to sustain and to navigate the social world they share. In the broadest of strokes: the ideal of 'community' is realized, in the tiospaye, as *more* than 'just' community—in a word, kin. This "family"—a voluntary association of individuals—is held together by layers of commitments: to *Tunkasila* or God; to Mark; to themselves; and, above all, to each other. As we'll see throughout the following pages, these commitments take a variety of forms; from flesh offerings in rituals, to expensive pilgrimages, to unspoken agreements to support and care for struggling members of the group.

Tiospaye events—from teachings and inipi (sweat lodges) to healing ceremonies like lowampi and yuwipi—are, in a general sense, open to the public: while even neophyte participants are frequently asked to prepare for ceremonies, I neither saw nor heard of anyone being turned away. What I'll call 'satellite' gatherings—smaller events like sweat lodges, usually held at members' homes, and at which Mark is rarely in attendance—are not uncommon; I participated in five such gatherings (two in Massachusetts, one in Georgia, and on in upstate New York), and these are generally open to anyone who expresses interest, as well.

'Membership' in the tiospaye, however, raises complicated questions. While group members generally insist there is no "hierarchy," there is—as Steven described above—a "sequence" of

escalating commitments available to participants: if a person wants to participate as a dancer in the Sun Dance, they would begin by pledging to pray with a sacred pipe. For each of the next four years, they would then undertake a four-day *hanbleca*, or vision quest. They would also take part in several of the annual trips to South Dakota, and offer "support" to the dancers (by cooking food, tending the fire, or praying). If they themselves felt called to participate as a dancer, that would entail, at a minimum, a commitment to four consecutive years of two-week trips to Arnold's property on the edge of the Lakota reservation in South Dakota. In short, participants dedicate significant amounts of time and money to their practice.

Of course, not all 'members' *do* everything; some of the most dedicated, visible participants—like Biff, who travels to almost every event, and was regularly a 'firekeeper' at Arnold's Sun Dance—have never danced themselves. While everyone uniformly emphasized a visceral, "it-just-*felt*-right" quality that had informed their decisions to take part in the tiospaye, they nevertheless talked about why they 'do' what they do in different ways—and they were especially careful, at least around me, when it came to the question of why and how *other* people did what they did. My interlocutors were hesitant, if not quite loath, to presume to determine who was or was not 'really' a member; rather, their impulses to adjudicate the quality of other people's participation were, more often than not, obliquely encoded in language about "trust."

Major ceremonial events like the Sun Dance are profound experiences for participants: in addition to whatever particular healing an individual might receive, they create opportunities for participants to share, however fleetingly, a sense of what Turner (1969) called communitas. Such an experientially intense, rich, "sacred" sociality becomes, for some participants, paradigmatic: it is an ideal for which they strive, and a reference point by which they judge the 'quality' of the other forms of sociality in their lives.

In colloquial American usage—at least, among my spiritually-minded interlocutors—the notion of "community" is highly polysemic: while it often indexes a group of people who are in some sense bound to each other, it equally invokes the experiential relation that Turner (1969) quite specifically framed as liminal.[154] Tom's usage, at the Sun Dance, would be immediately intelligible to tiospaye members, and likely met with a warm and knowing smile. This polysemy both reflects and compounds a complex set of issues.

In contradistinction to classical sociological community studies, anthropological studies of community in the U.S. have tended to emphasize relationality over territoriality.[155] In her work with Baptists in Hopewell, Carol Greenhouse, for instance, is explicit that "their community is not territorial" (1986:131), but that the circulation of their *ideas* about 'place'—in particular, that they share "the assumption that the question 'where are you from?' inevitably has an answer that is both relevant to and revealing of an individual's nature"—are key to their processes of identity-making (35).

Sherry Ortner's work on what she calls the "postcommunity" (1997) takes up "the classic stuff of community: multiple kinds of face-to-face contact, mutual awareness of relatively intimate aspects of each other's lives, mutual caring, and of course its flip side, mutual judgment" (69), but in a context of radical geographic dispersal. The members of a New Jersey

[154] There is, of course, a vast and tangled history of "community" as an object of study and an analytical term in social science of the U.S.; Bellah et al., for instance, distinguish between "community" and "network" or "lifestyle enclave" (1996:73), where the former is a value to be nurtured, and the latter are loose or mark a descent into self indulgence for which psychotherapists bear a particular guilt: "Only occasionally do we find therapists who recognize, and then only fitfully, that 'community' is not a collection of self-seeking individuals, not a temporary remedy… that can be abandoned as soon as a partner can be found, but a context in which personal identity is formed, a place where fluent self-awareness follows the currents of communal conversation and contributes to them" (135).

[155] For an excellent recent review of approaches to American community studies, see Kurie (2015:4-16).

high school's graduating class of 1958[156] were, by the mid-1990s, spread across the U.S.—and Ortner's analysis emphasizes the shared experience of "dense, intense, and often highly charged… face-to-face social relations" at a formative period in individual lives (75). She contends that the "postcommunity"—through a combination of intermittently renewed contact, memory, and, in some cases, geographical proximity—supersedes "even kinship" in its "power to provoke such intense memories, or such large numbers of social ties, in contemporary late- or postmodern American society" (75).

Kinship, in an American context, is neither limited to, nor defined by blood—as David Schneider argued (1968), and as many have since affirmed. Hervé Varenne (1977)[157] was concerned with the way that notions of community were deployed by his informants; the term seemed to mediate between individuals who saw themselves as irreducibly autonomous, and the social forms of which they were a part. "Community," he suggested, "is the result of individuals coming together, but it does not bridge the gap" between them (159)—and "while community is often valued, it is only insofar as participation in one does not demand a complete overhaul of one's personality" (150).

Varenne drew particular attention to the ways in which ideas about kinship serve to license strong claims about sociality among such individuals. Acknowledging his debt to Schneider, he argued that kinship was less about classification than relationship: "Some will not even say that their group is 'like a family', but that it is a family, because family is a feeling, a way of relating.

---

[156] Written up in Ortner (2003).

[157] After one of my early weekends of ceremony with the tiospaye, I was reading Varenne's (1977) *Americans Together*—one of the books I happened to have with me in the field—and I was initially struck by his remarks about the currency of "happiness" among a group a friends—that is, that "in Victor Turner's terms, John and his friends were a 'communitas'; most churches were 'communities'. The former found ritual irrelevant; the latter could not escape it" (120). From this, he extrapolates: "a little-noted structural characteristic: an inverse relationship between ritualism and the existential realization of ideals" (120).

… When informants say that a church or a classroom is a family, they are saying that the mode of relating among the people is fundamentally the same in all these environments" (189). Varenne's assertion is a productive intervention, but his evidence is legible in multiple ways; it seems equally plausible, for instance, to read a statement that "a church or a classroom is a family" in the opposite direction: that is, to understand it as an expression of a desire that their experience of blood 'family' more closely resembled the texture of their relationships in their voluntary associations.

A community based on voluntaristic association has immanent limits: tiospaye members, for instance, are very careful about how they adjudicate the 'quality' of other member's participation, and no one is in a position to 'compel' anyone else's attendance. When they do attend, however, Mark is consistently adamant about the *quality* of their presence: before every ceremony I attended, he emphasized how important it was for people to be completely focused on the needs and well-being of the person being healed, and to actively disattend to distractions—including, and especially, the 'mystical' dimensions of their experience (i.e., the lights and sounds that the spirits sometimes produced during ceremonies). His point was not that these things should be ignored, but rather that they were not the focus—the real reason why we were there, which was to help a suffering individual find healing—and that getting cognitively engaged in such epiphenomena[158] was self-serving, and therefore anathema to the what Mark frames as the group's purpose.

I was struck, time and again, by that emphasis on the quality of presence: how the efficacy of the ceremony itself depended on people's focused "thoughts and prayers"—the healings, he seemed to suggest, were contingent on both intention *and* attention. The former has a long

[158] That is, the sensory experiences were epiphenomenal to the presence of spirits in the room.

history in anthropological accounts of ritual; Evans-Pritchard, for instance, was primarily interested in Nuer "interior meaning" (1956:230), "sincerity of intention," and "disposition" (279)—precisely in contradistinction to something like 'attention': "[w]hat is important in sacrifice is not how people feel, or even how they behave," he avers; "what is important is that the essential acts of sacrifice be carried out… with a right intention, which is a matter of disposition, not emotion" (207-08). Mark's emphasis, by contrast, seemed a decidedly therapeutic innovation: one that called attention to the relative fragility of the ritual space itself, and suggested the scale of the labor involved in translating a version of that sacred sociality out into 'everyday life'.

In the pages which follow, I want to look closely at the ways in which ideas about and practices of 'commitment' encode sets of ambivalences related to that work of translation. These clinicians are the moral guardians of a particular kind of 'sovereign' and 'empty' self—as we saw in Part I—and, in their spiritual lives, they seek to escape some of the limitations they experience in association with those selves. Part of the answer is that spirituality, and quite pointedly not religion, seems to afford them a language in which to do that: to challenge and complicate the individualism at the heart of that kind of 'self'—but to do so without having to sacrifice more than they're comfortable giving up. Section two picks up the discussion of 'spirituality' from the Introduction, and suggests a key connection, for my interlocutors, between 'commitment' and 'experience'. In the third section, we'll look at how rituals—especially major events, like the Sun Dance—inscribe their commitments. The 'Work of Believing'—section four—considers the labor is involved in maintaining such commitments, particularly in the absence of community. The final section, then, examines how 'Family's Value' is reckoned, by way of the 'satellite' gatherings make it possible for them to sustain (and revise) those

commitments—and which, in the process, sustain their own ambivalences toward it. Ultimately, my contention here is that theirs is a community bound by commitment: one that only mimics kinship indirectly, and not so much by dint of rituals that can't be undone (at least, not among isolated actors in voluntaristic association), but rather by dint of the sacred sociality, sustained over time and regularly renewed, that occurs *around* ritual.

2. Alone Together

"to the shopworn questions of how contemporary spirituality shapes a response to feelings of alienation that attends to modernity, we must necessarily ask how contemporary spirituality itself articulates social alienation in the center of its projects"
- Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals* (2010:175).

"For me, it's really just sort of the developmental task of needing to figure out what it is that we're *doing* here. It's a tough one, right? What's your mortality all about? What's going to happen to you when you die? If you haven't really had a panic attack about that yet, then you haven't really considered the question."
- Ryan

"He always says, 'This is not about me. This is not the "Church of Mark." Someday, something's going to happen to me, and you guys are going to be on your own with this.' It's not about him, and it has nothing to do with him. I think that's how you know it's not a cult."
- Christine

Bruno and I sat in his office in that university counseling center, in matching floral-print wingback recliners. A little fountain gurgled on the small, round table between the chairs; on the salmon-colored walls hung framed posters—a photograph of a verdant tropical hillside labeled

"Kauai;" quotes from *Black Elk Speaks* (2008) against the silhouette of a man in a Native American headdress—and a small bookshelf held titles like Melody Beattie's (2013) *Co-Dependent No More*. Tucked behind Bruno's chair, against the wall and not quite out of sight, was a forked stick, about three feet tall, with an eagle feather tied to a patch of leather cloth: a *waluta*, or prayer flag, of a special type that had been part of a healing Bruno received.

Bruno first met Mark quite indirectly—and, initially, he wasn't particularly impressed: Bruno's first clinical intern wound up working under Mark in Massachusetts, and, while the two men had spoken on the phone, there'd been "no deep connection," Bruno explained. Steven—Bruno's longtime friend and colleague—attended one of Mark's weekend-long 'initiation' processes, and came back irrepressibly enthused about his experience. Bruno had decided to find out more, and attended a professional conference at which Mark was giving a keynote address. "I *loved* what he had to say," Bruno recalled, a warm smile crinkling the corners of his eyes. "It just spoke right to my heart. And I'd never heard a keynote like that before. It wasn't just a lot of 'gobbeldy-goop-nice-words'. It was speaking to the *heart*, and the spirit, and what [was] needed to change the planet. … After the keynote, though, I *knew*," he said. "I went right up to him, I gave him a big hug, and said, 'I love you. Whatever you're doing, it sounds good to me'. [Mark] said, 'If you're interested, come join me. I'm going out to Sun Dance this year'. I had no clue what Sun Dance was, or anything," Bruno recalled with a laugh. "He just invited me to come out to the reservation. I didn't question it. I just knew it was what I needed to do. That's where the journey started," he said.

For Bruno, like nearly all of my informants, his 'spiritual journeys' is deeply bound up with questions about the kind of person he wants to be—and the kinds of choices he understand himself empowered to make. All of my interlocutors had stories to tell about their spiritual

experiences—and, more broadly, about their experiences with spirituality. There are, however, markedly different ways in which they understand and perform their commitments to their what they talk about as their spiritual lives—and these are "differences that make a difference" (Bateson 1972:271-72) for the ways in which they seem to talk about (and seem to experience) what they call 'community'. It's an especially fraught relationship, for them, because of the profoundly interior and private quality of what they talk about as 'spiritual experience'.

In general—and in keeping with a well-documented trend in the contemporary U.S.—my informants identify as 'Spiritual' rather than 'religious' (and, often quite pointedly, as 'spiritual but not religious', or SBNR). Group members engage in and negotiate complex relations between practices and traditions of healing, worship, and meaning-making. Many of them had been raised in families with religious affiliations from which, in many cases, they described having worked to disentangle themselves—Bruno, for instance, half-jokingly identified as a "recovering Catholic:" he'd grown up with ritual, he explained, but no *feeling* for it.[159] And many of these people draw on, and practice, a variety of spiritual or religious forms in different domains of their lives. Even more to the point: every one of my interlocutors narrated their story using teleological, developmental tropes—notions like 'personal evolution' were not uncommon; the metaphor of 'journey' was ubiquitous[160]—and nearly all used phenomenologically-inflected language to describe the embodied and affective textures of their experiences.

[159] He'd come of age in the early 1960s, just as the tremendous changes associated with the Second Vatican Council were de-emphasizing mystical experiences in Catholic practice and bringing church doctrine and liturgy into closer alignment with the with the more 'rationalist' register of mainline Protestant churches. See McDannell (2011) for more on Vatican II, and see Orsi (2010) and Kaell (2014) for particularly compelling accounts of American life-worlds reshaped in the process.

[160] On the broader ubiquity of this trope, see Wuthnow (1994).

Ryan, in contradistinction to Bruno, didn't recall much in the way of religious influence as he reflected on his childhood. "Our family was always a non-denominational Protestant sort of thing," he said; "I don't really remember much about it. I had to go to the youth club after school sometimes, but we made them miserable." Now in his late thirties, Ryan lived in a western suburb of Boston. Although he and his wife—Christine—had only been married for seven years, they'd known each other since high school (in a northern New Jersey suburb of New York City), and had both gone to college in Rhode Island. She'd gotten a Ph.D. in Audiology; he'd gone on to an M.A.in Counseling Psychology at a small, Catholic college in central Massachusetts. Now, he served as the director of a small counseling center at a community college.

I asked him how he'd become a part of the tiospaye, and he briskly quipped, "I think what had happened [was that] Mark took control of my mind. And I'm basically Mark's slave."

Christine jumped in, laughing: "This is what I thought!" she said. "I had never met Mark," she explained. "He's learning all these cool things from Mark and getting interested in the stuff. All I'm hearing is in my mind when he's talking is, 'Mark, Mark, Mark, Mark, Mark, Mark, Mark'—it's like 'Marsha, Marsha, Marsha'!" We laughed—age-mates all, the group of us had grown up on re-runs of *The Brady Bunch*—and she continued. "And it was not until I met Mark that I could appreciate it—but I was just like, 'Okay, your "boyfriend" Mark'. Anyway," she said, settling back into her chair, "go ahead."

He did—explaining that, early in his clinical career, he'd been an intern at the counseling center run by Mark. Mark spoke openly about his own efforts to integrate psychological and spiritual aspects of his own work, and Ryan—whose training was very much in the vein of CBT,[161] and whose background included very little experience with 'religion'—was curious. "He

[161] Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (see the Introduction for a brief overview).

likes a lot of the Jungian ideas of the depth psychology," Ryan explained, "but he's a Gestalt and reality therapist by training, so a lot of this is very experiential. It wasn't like we were talking about spirituality all the time," Ryan said; rather, "it was the weaving [together of different approaches] and the depth psychology that takes you to these other places. And then," he pointed out, "there always seemed to be a cloud of students and individuals that were interested in the Lakota path and spirituality. So he would talk a little bit about that sometimes. He would come in on a Monday or something, and would be talking about, 'We did a lodge this weekend'. I wasn't really that interested," Ryan insisted.

He'd been looking into Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction techniques, however, and he'd found himself consistently frustrated. "I was trying to meditate," he said, "and trying to do something with my mind," but he wasn't able to overcome what he described as "a lot of worry." He'd "wanted to do a mindfulness meditation retreat," he said, but "it was crazy expensive"—and so he'd found himself complaining to Mark, one day in the office, about the prohibitive cost. Mark, Ryan recalled, then invited him to one of his own 'summer intensives', and, despite his apprehensions, he agreed.

Ryan described his own cognitive relationship to Mark's brand of spiritual practice as a kind of ceaseless process of data-gathering-and-comparing: "you have your own experience to go on in the ceremonies," he said, "and then you go out to the rez,[162] talk to Arnold, [and] he says the

[162] Members of the tiospaye generally spoke of attending Arnold's Sun Dance as 'going to the rez'; strictly speaking, Arnold's property was quite intentionally located just off the reservation, and few of the Dance attendees actually made the trip down to the reservation itself, except to visit the well-appointed and newly-constructed grocery store, or to buy souvenirs from any of several shops that catered to tourists (including, and especially, the shop owned by Arnold's wife). The rare occasions when Dance attendees made their way to tribal events tended to precipitate complicating moments of reflection. A group of the Swiss men drove down to the tribal powwow held on the Fourth of July weeekend, for instance; over dinner that night, Pritha—a South Asian-American woman from Taos, New Mexico who was a Sun Dance

same thing—except in Arnold's way," he added. Ryan paused, and reflected that he'd "sat in one of Arnold's lowampis. It was very different [from Mark's]. It was different, but the same—but different, but the same. So that's *real*," he mused, "but where do *I* fit into all that? I don't know." Here, as elsewhere, Ryan's narrative of his 'journey' seemed to have a particular, familiar, and stable cadence: he tacked back and forth, that is, between what he framed as his "experience," and what he presented as his evaluations of his experiences.

Mark's perspective on what he saw as the problems with "dominant culture" was what Ryan seemed to find most conceptually compelling. "What our culture has lost," Ryan said, was that "white people don't do initiation—so there's no formal transition to adulthood, and there's no formal conveyance of values and teachings to the community." This, he averred, was the root of obvious and dire concerns in modern life. "You saw *Avatar?"* he asked.[163] "The reason that movie is so fucking good," he said, "is because it's a pilgrimage and initiation story, and *we*

---

veteran—joined us all for dinner in town upon their return. She asked "how the energy was" and whether there "weren't… a lot of tourists—because there were lots of tourists at the Santa Fe powwow and the Taos powwow." The group chatted for several minutes about their experiences "with tourists" before one of their number—a quiet, bearded man in his late 30s, on his first visit to South Dakota—spoke up: "we were five of them," he said, and the rest of the group chuckled.

[163] Many of my informants made reference to James Cameron's 2009 blockbuster film, *Avatar*. It was one of the highest-grossing films of all time, and it was also the subject of a great deal of critical attention—see, for instance, sources ranging from the *L.A. Times* (Boucher 2009) to a master's thesis in English (Sutherland 2010); scholars have also attended to the efforts of indigenous activists to make use of the phenomenon (e.g., Mitchell 2011). Widely derided as '*Dances with Wolves* in Space', *Avatar* is part of a long tradition of highly popular Euro-American cultural products from the past two centuries (most recently, in the form of films like *A Man Called Horse*, *The Mission*, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, *Farewell to the King*, and *The Last Samurai*). The genre—very much of a piece with Joseph Campbell's (2008) popularization of Jung's (1977) 'transformational journey' in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*—is broadly defined by the transformation of the lead character: a (psychologically damaged) white person is healed by initiation into an indigenous culture; comes to understand the value and wisdom of the native culture; becomes more authentically native than some of the indigenous people themselves; and then 'betrays' and transcends his own 'culture', usually by leading the natives in armed struggle against Euro-Americans who haven't yet learned what he (and it is almost always a 'he') has learned.

don't have that." There had been, he said, widespread reports of people feeling "depressed and suicidal" after seeing the film, "because they *want* that, and they don't *have* that—*we* don't have that," he corrected.

Ryan criticized "the literature on development,"[164] even as affirmed his commitment to a linear metaphor of 'personal development' from birth to death, stating with certainty that what he was describing "a developmental task" at the heart of the issue. "What Mark talks about in the context of student development and student therapy," Ryan said, "is that these kids are really disconnected. …there's no—there's really no one talking to them about what they should do, or what their role is in the community, or what it means to be an adult. So they're just hooked on all this other—" he paused, and smiled: "well, it's really the marketing, right? 'We drink because it's awesome, we do drugs'—and then they hurt each other, and it becomes a vicious cycle. So, for me," he said, reflecting on the question, "it's really just sort of the developmental task of needing to figure out what it is that we're *doing* here. It's a tough one, right? But also: what's your mortality all about? What's going to happen to you when you die? If you haven't really had a panic attack about that yet," he shook his head, "then you haven't really considered the question."

The "question" is an immediate, and urgent, existential one, for my interlocutors—and they're not alone. As we saw in the Introduction, the past few decades have given rise to a surpassingly rich, multi-disciplinary (if not often *inter*disciplinary) scholarly conversation about American spirituality. Courtney Bender's 2010 monograph on *The New Metaphysicals* of

[164] Which, he snickered, "now is defining—so maybe adolescence ends 'softly' at 18, but now we have 18-25 as 'emerging adulthood'. What the fuck is that? That basically means you're an adolescent until you're 25 and your parents kick you to the curb, which less and less is happening."

Cambridge, Massachusetts constitutes some of the most nuanced and sustained ethnographic attention paid to 'lived' metaphysical religion in the contemporary United States.

Bender's informants are, in the main, concerned with some of the same questions as are mine—pressing matters of existential precarity that mingle with, for instance, uncertainties about the authenticity, ahistoricity, and legitimacy of their practices are persistent concerns for both of our interlocutors—and there is remarkable affinity between our interlocutors' deployments of highly genred narratives of self-discovery that purport to privilege individual experience above all other modes of legitimation, even as they lean on sources of authority that are external to the narrative or interaction in question (that is, popularized scientific literature synthesizing neuroscience and new-age spirituality on the one hand and, on the other, a notion of something like 'authentic' indigeneity that is anything but facile).

When gathered together as 'family', or when responding to questions about how they came to be a part of the group, core members of the family explicitly, and almost uniformly, eschew syncretism—their spiritual autobiographies are, in the main, along the lines of conversion narratives.[165] And while Mark will often draw from a host of indigenous cosmologies in the course of explaining his view of the world, and he refers regularly to personal relationships with "elders" from diverse indigenous cultures around the world, he is adamant about not "mixing medicines"—a term which is recognized within the group as an injunction to maintain participants' purity of intent and practice during the performance of the very particular ritual forms that Mark learned from his Lakota teacher.

As anthropologists Andrew Buckser and Stephen Glazier frame the question in the introduction to their 2003 edited volume on *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, "To

[165] See Stromberg (1993) and Buckser and Glazier (2003b).

change one's religion is to change one's world, to voluntarily shift the basic presuppositions upon which both self and others are understood. The fact that this is possible—that it is, indeed, almost routine in certain religious traditions—raises difficult questions about the relationship of individuals to their cultural surroundings" (2003a:xi). Under this, I think, are questions about the kinds of selves being transformed—or, rather, the kinds of selves that are being conjured (in the act of imagining the possibility of their transformation) and sustained (in the iterative transit between clinic and ceremony).

Even with the burgeoning scholarly emphasis on conversion as a 'process' rather than an 'event'—a shift in emphasis that has brought with it highly productive attention to social relations, embodied practices, and the pragmatic context of discourse, there remains a problematic kernel of 'belief'. For tiospaye members, moreover, there was always something at stake in the posing of the question: and claims about the 'authenticity' of other people's beliefs are the discursive form in which my informants encode highly fraught questions about the nature of reality and the efficacy of transformational practices.

Bender located her respondents' proclivity for experiential narratives within a modern tradition dating at least to William James' work on *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (2002)—and in which "experiential meaning cannot ever be fully conveyed to others, appropriate feeling and emotions are important markers of authenticity, and that experience apprehended in solitude trumps social authority" (Bender 2010:68-69). Within the narratives, she is attentive to "subtle and not-so-subtle shifts… from knowing to feeling" which both "protect[s] the experience from certain kinds of reductive interpretation" and "works to place those who listen within an experiential-discursive milieu where they might come likewise to experience through listening to these accounts" (67).

These stories, in short, are both accounts and invitations—and my interlocutors shared both with me. Biff and I, for instance, spent a great many hours together at campfires, and in multiple time zones: at his home in Georgia; in the Big Horn mountains of Wyoming, while his wife, Annelise, was on her hanbleca; and at Arnold's Sun Dance, in South Dakota—and then there were the weekends of ceremony with Mark, which he almost never missed. He was one of the first tiospaye members I met, and he was the one who taught me to drum, in preparation for a lowampi ceremony in August of 2010. Now in his late 40s, Biff was born and raised in Canada; he'd put himself through college in the southern U.S. by repairing and selling cars; he'd met Annelise as a student, and they'd settled in rural Georgia. One of his teachers in college had taken Biff "under his wing," helping him to "get started in the business," supervising him through licensure as a clinician, and even going into private practice with him. Now, he worked primarily with adolescents and children.

Looking back, he said, much of his experience with teachers, with spirituality, and with indigenous peoples seem to have set the stage for his encounter with Mark and, eventually, becoming a part of the tiospaye. "Whether it was where I was born and raised," he mused, in rural Ontario with the "Six Nation rez right there, or just the teachers in my life… it's always been kinda-sorta 'there'. So when the summer intensive[166] came along," in 2005, he said, "it was kind of like stepping into something, and going 'ah, I'm home. This stuff makes sense to me. This doesn't seem confounded or made up like a stage prop. A bell's going to ring now, because that's what is supposed to happen'—but," he clarified, "the bell is ringing for a *particular*

[166] A multi-day training run by Mark, involving teachings he'd derived and synthesized from a variety of indigenous traditions, and culminating in a ritualized 'initiation' experience he'd designed.

purpose, that fits in with what else is going on—and not because it's going to get an 'ooh' and an 'ah'."

In his telling, Biff's relationship to "these ways"—one of the turns of phrase used by my interlocutors to index their practice of Lakota ceremony in particular, and metaphysical spirituality in general—was inextricably bound up with precisely this very phenomenological and embodied "way of knowing." He'd "always had a bit of"—and he trailed off, seeming to search for a word that wasn't 'psychic', insisting that it wasn't like any of the practitioners of psychic work he knew, because he was "by no means *that* connected in with things." But even as a teenager, he said, he'd been "connected into things I pretty much didn't know how to handle…. so I worked on shutting it off," he explained, "and figured out rather effectively how to do that. Occasionally," however, "things would still 'bump in' or 'come through'."

Even as he'd fought against 'those kinds' of experiences, he said, he'd "definitely had a sense of 'it felt right'," which he correlated to what he described as his predilection "to go with [his] gut." He shifted in his chair, stoked the fire, and launched into another story: "Part of the answer of how I got into 'these ways'," he said:

> was [through] a very important teacher of mine… who got me started in this business [i.e., counseling]. He took me under his wing, and he helped me out in so many different ways that I could never thank him enough. He was one of my teachers at the university, and I went into private practice with him, and he started making sure that I got a licensure under his supervision. While I was at [a] conference, he just kept coming up in my mind so strongly. Just like—like—more than just as a 'thought', you know? And finally I'm talking to that part of me and going 'okay, okay, okay—when I get back into town, I will give him a call'. So when we got to within 50 minutes of being home, I'm calling

> Annelise to let her know where we are, and she's like, 'I've got some bad news'—and, immediately, I *knew* what she was going to tell me. It's not like, 'after the fact'—[as in], 'I've told this story enough times, and she told me, and, therefore in hindsight'—no! I *knew* that she was going to tell me that he had died. And after that, it was just a realization that came: I can't keep pretending to turn this part off. Obviously, it doesn't matter how much you want to turn this part of it [off—it] still wants to come through, or whatever that connection is. So, it's just like: 'I need to quit pretending that it's not there'.

Here, Biff makes a series of distinctions—between "thought" and something "more;" between a memory that had grown ambiguous "after the fact" and something he "knew" (and which, at the moment of awareness, had been marked with significance)—that culminate in a "realization" about what he then frames as an aspect of his self that has *always* been the case. His narrative shifted to the present tense at points he wished to underscore, or which he wanted me to apprehend with particular clarity or veracity: from "he just kept coming up in my mind" to "I'm talking to that part of me," for instance. He'd had a complicated, but increasingly important, relationship with his intuition: "I regret it every time I don't listen to it," he said. "That's what began my 're-looking' for connecting with a way of making more sense out of what this is." Like the distinctions that culminate (narratively) in his "realization," his emphasis, here, on having been enabled to make "more sense" reflects a striking—and, I suggest, crucially important—tension between, on the one hand, the persistent emphasis on "ways of knowing" that are embodied and phenomenological and, on the other hand, the thoroughly cognitive fruits of such labors.

He'd taken his time, he explained, balancing his embodied and affective sense of the "rightness" of the tiospaye's practices with a gentle but concerted skepticism, tempered and informed by a sense of history and context. "I think there's that 'part' that does call to people. And if you're listening," he allowed, "then you hear it. But if you don't have some of your 'bullshit filters' on, or you don't have bullshit filters, then unfortunately you're likely to be taken advantage of. You know, you're going to drink the Kool-Aid." He was particularly dubious of new members of the group who 'jumped in' without taking what he saw as the kind of time one would need to seriously evaluate the decision. It wasn't that he doubted his own experience, exactly; as he talked, it came to seem more like a matter of trusting his own willingness to suspend his doubt:

> Before I light the sage in the morning… I come here to pray. I come here to pray this way because, of all the different ways that I've experienced, or that I'm aware of, *this* is the one that makes the most sense to me. This is the one in which, *Tunkasila* ['God'; literally 'grandfather' in Sicangu Lakota], I feel the most connected to you, this is the form of communicating with you that resonates with me in a way that I can do this and I feel a connection. There isn't a sense of emptiness or, 'is this working? Oh, it's working'—it's *there*. There isn't a question about that. I go into the lodge tonight with lots of doubts, and I get to experience the tension as the stones and the water and the fire and pourer[167] and the songs and the wood are all there to help me—help us. I can *feel* the pressure as I'm resisting, and yet it's pushing on me to let go of the stuff and give it over to the stones—because *they* can take it, and that's why they're there.

[167] The ceremonial officiant; literally, the person in the lodge who poured water on the hot stones, and thereby determining the physical intensity of the heat and steam.

Here, again, is the same admixture of 'making' "sense"—apropos of meeting some standard for rationality—and 'feeling' sensations: when something "resonates" or he can "feel a connection;" by dint of the *absence* of "emptiness;" or the "tension" and "pressure" he "can feel" as he's "resisting, and yet it's pushing on [him] to let go." Some of this is doubtless of a piece with the twist in American language ideology whereby "I feel that" supplants "I think that"[168]—but I suspect that some of the semantic ambiguity here reflects the challenge of articulating precisely the kind of non-dual, interdependent experience of self that he is, by his own account, both seeking and resisting. A few lines into this passage, Biff shifts to address *Tunkasila* directly, in the second person: "this is the one in which, Tunkasila, I feel the most connected to you." A moment later, he describes the violent transition of water turning to steam as its poured over red-hot stones—and this, crucially, is not a metaphor: it is the *same* tension, consubstantial, not just with *his* own,[169] but *our* own, as we (his fireside audience) are fully implicated in and intersubjectively accountable for our receipt of his statement that "the stones and the water and the fire and pourer and the songs and the wood are all there to help me—help us," as he amends the direct object from first-person singular to first-person-plural.[170] Sometimes, he said, singing prayer songs in Lakota "felt analytical"—like he was consciously evaluating the experience he had of himself as he sang—and, at other points, it "felt natural" or "from the heart."

At the level of these individual utterances, and in the shape of his overall narrative, he creates something like (imaginal) space for his interlocutors to have (the appearance of) choice about

[168] An interactional maneuver in which the speaker preempts direct challenge by cloaking a statement in the aura of sacrosanct 'feelings', to which one is inalienably and unassailably entitled; see the discussion of Carr's "Ideology of Inner Reference" in Part II, above

[169] See Bateson's "Metalogues" (1972).

[170] For a further discussion of the notion of actors performing uncertainty as a way of inviting others into the possibility of faith, see also the discussion of Steven's talk with Martha on the way home from a lowampi ceremony in Part II.

whether or not identify with his description of his experience, as he tacks back-and-forth between conscripting his listeners into an "us" for whom the elements of the ritual are sacrificing themselves and, in the next breath, evacuating the space of certainty: "I'm still not a pipe carrier" even after five years with the group, he said, "because I'm trying to be sure this is right." Sometimes, he seemed to measure the worth of his experience in terms of its intensity; in other moments, he was absolutely unequivocal about his enthusiastic commitment: he grew especially excited every time he spoke of the "immersion in community" he felt at the Sun Dance he and Annelise attended every summer; at one point, he'd described it as "Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and the Fourth of July, all rolled into one."

The challenge—here, and at many other points—seemed to become acute only in relation to his intermittent efforts to 'connect' or 'integrate' these kinds of experiences into his more mundane existence; as he explained it when trying to "make sense" of things in the broader context of his life, the issue was the truly radical—and profoundly difficult—work of living what he framed as a genuinely spiritual life: "two or three years ago, I came back from Sun Dance and kind of semi-retired [from psychotherapy]," he said. "I don't know how people like Mother Teresa do it. I sometimes wonder how Mark does it. And they're on call twenty-four-fucking-seven. It's like, 'Jesus Christ, what kind of balance—what is it you *do* then, or what is it you figure out, to maintain any kind of sort of peace about it?" His own years of reading, study, and practice had led him to an understanding that the more "grounded" strains of metaphysical practices had started to discover their own history: "I don't think its all airy-fairy," he said; there were particularly interesting approaches, in his view, that he found increasingly consistently

"referenced as 'new thought'.[171] They've changed some of the wording from 'new age' to 'new thought'," he explained, to reflect and extend the historical connections.

Like Biff, all of my informants had their stories: about how they'd 'arrived' at a sense of themselves as "spiritual" people—and about how they'd come to *know*, for themselves, that the spiritual experiences they'd had were "real." In their narratives, they presented themselves as individuals, choosing to commit to a path that presents itself—spontaneously—as simultaneously epistemologically foreign, and phenomenologically and affectively familiar. The other, crucial ingredient for them seems to be that 'following the path' demands from them very particular kinds of commitments.

Their brand of American "spirituality"—with its emphases on new experiences and individual discernment, yet which is "grounded" in relationship to a "tradition"—arises as an historical product of a particular orientation to belief and experience. Looking forward, I want to suggest that their 'commitments' function as a language of possibility: of an imagined future agency, and a relationship to 'belief' that is less fraught than their current experience of the possibility of faith so often seems to be. As we'll see in the section which follows, the 'new' world into which 'converts' move is not ever really an absolute break with the past, and the new world is met, and understood, and experienced through the 'old'. Mark's goal seems to be not to transform people, but rather to give people the opportunity to transform themselves (or to allow themselves to be transformed) in the way that he himself understands *his* life to have been transformed by the time he spent with that Lakota holy man, and through the work he continues to do. There's an abiding tension, however, between that goal, on the one hand, and, on the other,

[171] Historically, a set of practices very much of a piece with the Mind-Cure philosophies of the early twentieth century; See, for example, Harrington (2008).

people's requests for healing that usually involve much smaller changes.[172] For these clinicians, spiritual practice is filtered through their sense of themselves as healers laboring to sacralize the world in which they live, and which they reproduce with both their 'personal' choices and the ways in which they minister to their clients—and the healings they receive seem to entail both prescriptions for, and performances of, a very particular form of 'community'.

3. Piercings and Ties

> "One of the things about rituals is that you cannot take them back in protest that you did not mean it"
> - Michael Lambek, "Sacrifice and the Problem of Beginning" (2007:27)

> "The mark on the body… declares: *You will not have the desire for power; you will not have the desire for submission*."
> - Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State* (1989:188)

In triple-digit South Dakota heat, three men—two Germans, and an American—hunched over a fourth, Rod, who lay face-down on a buffalo hide. Arnold, the Sun Dance Chief, stood outside the circle, watching. Wearing nitrile gloves and using surgical scalpel, Viktor made two pairs of incisions in the Rod's back. He pushed a small piece of buffalo shin-bone through each of the paired cuts, and then affixed thongs of brain-tanned hide to the protruding ends of the bones. The strips were joined together and tied to a rope, forming a long train behind Rod. Seven buffalo skulls, each weighing about ten pounds, were attached to the rope. Another buffalo skull,

[172] Mark quite regularly invokes a 'Stages of Change' model (Prochaska and DiClemente 1983) in reference to his clinical work, and in his many presentations and keynote speeches at professional association meeting—and he frequently emphasizes change as a "process" rather than an "event" in his explanations of his frustration with people who come in search of "quick-fix" healing.

wrapped in red cloth, was suspended directly from Rod's back, and a Texas flag—Rod's home state—was wrapped around his shoulders like a cape.

When the drumming commenced, Rod began dancing. He completed four laps around the Sun Dance tree—each circuit covering perhaps 150 feet of ground—and, at the end of the fourth, he took a running start, attempting to break free of the skulls he dragged. The thong pulled taut—the skin of his back stretching several inches from his trunk—but the skewers held, and Rod was snapped bodily backward. He hunched forward, catching his breath, and then tried again; again, he failed to break. After a brief consultation, the three men sent several other dancers to go and sit on the skulls, adding weight. Rod dropped into a runner's crouch, and sprinted forward. Finally, the shin-bone skewers snapped—I remember being sure I'd heard it—and Rod lurched forward, free, and bleeding from the fresh wounds on his back. The three older men—leaders of their own tiospayes, each of whom bore many scars from wounds such as Rod had just sustained—brought the blanket, gloves, and scalpel, back out, and the next dancer made his way over to them, laid down on the buffalo hide, and prepared to take his turn.

Arnold has been holding this Sun Dance on his property on the edge of the reservation since 2001. The ceremony lasted for eight days: four days of "purification," and four days of dancing, piercing, and prayer. By my count, in 2011, there were roughly thirteen such ceremonies on the Sicangu (Rosebud) reservation, and perhaps 83 on the Oglala (Pine Ridge)—only two of which welcomed non-native participants.[173] In addition to the half-dozen local Lakota men and women

[173] These figures are based on interviews and conversation, not observation; as such, they are very general approximations. The proliferation of Sun Dances, as Arnold explained it to me in one such interview, was "an economy thing"—that medicine men and their extended families depended on such events for "groceries and gas." See the (brief) discussion of the politics of non-native participation in such ceremonies in Part II, section two (above). For an ethnographic description of a Sun Dance on Rosebud tribal land in 1981, see Grobsmith (1981).

that Arnold hired to assist with the ceremony (as drummers or singers)[174] and to provide logistical support, there were 37 dancers—15 women, and 22 men—and roughly 80 "supporters."[175] Nearly all of the attendees came as affiliates of groups organized very much along the lines of Mark's tiospaye.[176]

The scene described above was one of the more fraught moments in an eight-day event. Individual experiences of the ceremony varied widely, of course—but there were some patters apparent at the group level: the Germans, for instance, were notorious for seeking out the most intense possible scenarios—and the leader of a group from Colorado became the subject of some derision after his request to be pierced, tied up, and staked to the ground for four days.[177] Turnout from Mark's tiospaye was particularly light that year, and only two members—both women—were dancing; the rest were there as "supporters." While many of the dancers opted to

---

[174] Strictly speaking, the group that performs the drumming and song are not subordinate to the dance chief. Dance leaders are responsible for the overall event, but when the sacred songs are being sung, absolutely no one has authority over the leader of the singers. Contentious relationships between Sun Dance leaders and the leaders of singing groups—both of whom depend upon the ceremonial events for their livelihoods—are not uncommon. Arnold, for instance, told me a story about when he'd been leading a group of singers at a Sun Dance in Texas: it was a particularly lucrative arrangement, and when the Dance Leader tried to cut Arnold out, Arnold retaliated by stretching a round of song on for hours, forcing the dance leader—and everyone else—to endure the sweltering 110-degree heat of the day.

[175] Several informants made a point of telling me that this represented an exceptionally small turnout. Estimates of attendance in other years ranged from twice as many to four times as many people, including a noticeable dearth of Lakota visitors from the nearby reservation—and speculation on the cause ranged from an intentional snub based on tribal politics to the competing draw of an annual powwow on the same weekend.

[176] Not that they were all comprised of mental health professionals (though psychotherapists were, in the main, overrepresented). Groups in attendance came from New Mexico, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado in the U.S., as well as Italy, Switzerland, and three locations in Germany. Unlike Mark's tiospaye—which traced its traditions to Joe Eagle Elk as well as some of Mark's other indigenous "teachers"—the other groups maintained ongoing relationships with Arnold throughout the year, flying him in to officiate ceremonies and give teachings.

[177] Over dinner in town, participants expressed a clear consensus, voiced particularly vehemently by one of the group leaders, that the individual in question was "grasping"—i.e., that he wanted, too badly, to be a medicine man, a role they understood to be more of a calling than a something one might 'choose'.

"pierce," they generally did so in a less dramatic fashion: rather than dragging a train of skulls around the circle, skewers were inserted in their chests (for the men) or upper arms (for the women), and the thongs were attached to the tree at the center of the circle. Most of the people to whom I spoke—and all of the members of Mark's tiospaye—emphasized what they described as "gentler" aspects of the ceremony; the focus, above all, was on prayer and intention, rather than "extreme" acts.

I thought about a conversation I'd had with Mark, several months earlier, as he and Ed and I sat in his office at the university counseling center. "The whole idea," he'd said, "is that *Wani kta cha lecamu welo*, 'I do this so that my relatives may live'. 'I have such faith in you, *Tunkasila*, that I'm going to do this'. So I fast for eight days, and if I do it with no expectation—Wani kta cha lecamu welo—then, in actuality, I don't suffer at all," Mark insisted. "You just *don't*. Now, you may get thirsty, and you may get pangs of hunger, but then you go back into your prayer—and it all goes away." He made a categorical distinction between the experience of piercing to the tree at Sun Dance, and torture: "If somebody came in right now, ripped off my shirt, poked two holes in my chest with a knife and jammed a stick in there, tied a rope to it and pulled," he said, "that would be an awful experience…. In *this* context that would be torture. Can you imagine it?"

"No," I said.

"No," he agreed. "*But*:"

> if you prepare for *years*, and you *believe* "Wani kta cha lecamu welo" ['I do this so that my relatives may live'], and you're laying under a tree that has hundreds of prayer flags in it, and a teacher that you love comes [to you] and they say, "start your prayer"—but you've been in prayer for a year, so you're just simply repeating your prayer, [for] "the

> health and help of whomever or whatever"—suddenly, the cutting is *done*, the piercing is *done*, the rope is tied, you're leaning back against the tree, and you can *feel* the heartbeat of the Earth. You're attached to literally all things! You can *feel* the energy coming through the rope. And when they say "it's time to break," you go, "I'd really rather not. I'd really rather just stay here, tied to the mother. Please don't make me go back to this reality." I've seen—I've witnessed where people will *fight*—sincerely, not out of some egotistical, macho theatric—but simply say, "*please*, don't make me come back. Please, no, I'm not going to break." And the others have to come out and grab them and pull them away, because they would stay there. It's that beautiful. And then, when you break, you feel—people *next to you* will feel the energy. It's like an explosion of prayer—an explosion of energy—as your prayer goes out and, suddenly, you're just *exhausted,* or you're in outer space, and you feel like you're just lost in wonder. It's not a torture. Right now it would be a torture. But anything in ceremony, anything in *that* context is just completely different.

"That context"—in which things are "just completely different"—is at the heart of what Mark tries to create for members of the tiospaye. The Sun Dance is the most pointed example, in their repertoire of ritual, of a ubiquitous emphasis on physicality as a means of bracketing what scholars of religion have called the "problem of presence"[178]—but there was consistent, concerted attention to embodied experience across contexts. Here, I want to examine some of the ways in which ritual (and its immediate surround) works to concretize the commitments people make to themselves, and to each other. In some cases, these commitments are literally inscribed on the body—at the Sun Dance, for instance, as participants pierce their skin with buffalo-shin

[178] E.g., Engelke (2007:9); more on this below.

skewers. My contention is that the personal sacrifices and dramatic gestures that are involved in major tiospaye events are constrained by their prior, often tacit, commitment: to a particular notion of themselves as defined by the 'freedom' to choose whether, and how, experiences in and around ceremony are legible as 'meaningful'.

Crucially, however, these operations seem to depend on particular textures of embodied experience—and this matter of texture takes on a singular salience with respect to the complex and fraught question of how these *particular* people, nearly all of whom are white, middle-class professionals, take up Lakota ritual practices. In a 2005 article on "Ritual Appropriation and Appropriate Ritual," Pamela Klassen writes of liberal North American Protestants who incorporate meditation, yoga, and reiki into their practice of Christianity. She observes that "the charged notion of appropriation rests on a conviction that particular religions and cultures are discrete historical channels owned, tended or guarded by certain peoples—a conviction made particularly forceful when the appropriating group is the historical oppressor of the appropriated" (2005:380). Tiospaye members, too, engage in and negotiate complex relations between practices and traditions of healing, worship, and meaning-making.

A question I put to just about all of them (in some form or another) was whether there'd been a particular point at which the practices had stopped feeling like 'someone else's' and begun to feel like 'their own'. Almost to an individual, they replied that the Native American ceremonies—sweat lodges; vision quests; multiple consecutive days of fasting, prayer, and dancing in triple-digit Great Plains heat—had "resonated,"[179] or had *felt* like 'theirs' from the

[179] An utterly ubiquitous turn of phrase, "resonance" seems to denote a self-evident truth, identifiable as such by dint of its (literal or metaphorical) visceral impact, which causes a notable and positive—and usually embodied—reaction. Variations in construction—'that resonates with/to me'; 'I resonate with that'—suggests speakers' sense of intersubjectivity even, and

beginning. More than that: they said that the immediate, visceral *rightness* of what they felt—the sense that they described as an unequivocal certainty that what they were doing was *more* right, real, true, and *authentic* than anything else they'd done before—was, in nearly all of their narratives, precisely what had informed them that these ceremonies, so foreign to their prior experience, were theirs to share.

This is not to suggest that my informants were unaware or unmindful of a history of cultural appropriation that has attended white participation in Native American ceremony; indeed, most of them were acutely aware of the issue, and they dealt with it in a variety of ways (Steven, recall from Part I, created a 'service-learning' program to bring undergraduates to the reservation, and he donates nearly all of the proceeds from the APT study group to Arnold's wife, for distribution on the reservation). Neither am I interested, here, in adjudicating the 'validity' of their practice (whatever that might mean), which seems, in any event, to be a more properly theological, rather than social scientific, question. I am, however, very much interested in the ways in which my interlocutors seem to make distinctions between something like the 'validity' and 'invalidity' of practices (for themselves and for others)—and, to that end, one of the *kinds* of distinctions that appears to obtain both within and across groups is the predilection to differentiate between ideal-types of orientation to a given complex of spiritual practices and beliefs. In short, in some situations, my informants tend to valorize a kind of making a "commitment" to a "path" of singular and "authentic" provenance (which one of my informants defined in contradistinction to "window shopping"), and, at other times, they seem to value what they present as a kind of spiritual flexibility—a certain supreme facility with bricolage, perhaps—which both authorizes and requires them to draw from multiple sets of practices.

---

perhaps, especially, with abstract concepts or inanimate objects. In an adjacent (literary) context, see Dimock (1997).

Becoming a part of the tiospaye involves, in some cases, at least a twelve-year-long commitment: four years of prayer with a sacred pipe; four annual hanblecas (or vision quests, involving four days of solitary fasting and prayer, ideally in the wilderness), and four years of Sun Dancing. Bruno, for instance, emphasized his appreciation for Mark's rigor: he taught in a "strict way" what he'd learned from Joe Eagle Elk. According to those strictures, Bruno said, devotees were expected to progress slowly through several distinct phases of commitment—four years spent with the canupa (praying with the pipe, that, is, on something like a daily basis, and for "unselfish" ends), and then four years in which an initiate undertook an annual hanbleca—before considering taking on the four-year commitment to dance. Bruno, for instance, had done his first hanbleca in South Dakota, and, for the three years that followed, he'd done his hanblecas on a farm, not far from Steven's home. Not everyone goes 'all the way' down this 'path', of course—but the point, for these purposes, is that these practices entail decidedly non-trivial commitments of time and money.

Scholar of Religion Rebecca Sachs Norris contends that "understanding of the language and symbols of an alien tradition can only develop gradually, and, in fact, a voluntary convert is adopting beliefs interpreted through an already existing meaning system;" given that, she wonders "how, then, is it possible to convert to a religion that is based in another culture?" (2003:172). "In the case of middle-class Americans," she avers, "this tendency is informed by American cultural ideals involving independence and freedom of choice" (175). For Norris, this leads "to a natural question: to what the convert has actually converted?" (179). In the case at hand, I think it's more productive to frame the object of conversion as an orientation to possibility—and which, I suggest, is very much what Sachs Norris called "a partial and ongoing

process that continues to be based on already established identities:" that is, their embodied and encultured habitus as very particular kinds of clinicians.

As we have seen, tiospaye members consistently emphasized visceral dimensions of their spiritual autobiographies and practices: Steven, for instance, recalled learning ceremonial songs in Lakota by passing recordings around, and transcribing the syllables, and then practicing between gatherings—a technique which Ed revived, using a portable digital recorder during tiospaye gatherings and then disseminating CDs of the songs and teaching to group members.

At every event I attended, time was set aside for teaching 'basics'—like how to make prayer ties. As we prepared for a lowampi in August of 2010, senior members sat with neophytes at Mark's dining room table, showing us how to prepare our workspace—to clean the surface; to say a prayer, to focus our intentions, and to work in relative silence—and then how to cut the fabric, make the little bundles of tobacco, and to tie them along a length of yarn.[180] (Looking at the finished strands, it was easy to tell who was a veteran—small, uniform bundles, separated by no more than an inch of yarn—and who was a 'newbie'—ours were unevenly sized, and spaced at varying intervals). I vividly recall sitting with another tiospaye member on a porch, later in the evening, making the fifty ties that were required of all attendees. Time and again, I picked up a pinch of tobacco, held it in my palm, closed my fist around it, and thought about the people who'd requested healing. At times, I could feel a light buzzing sensation in my palm; I kept wondering whether it was spiritual energy, or the effect of nicotine being absorbed transdermally, or simply my imagination. Mark's advice—then; later, and apropos of more dramatic visual and auditory sensations, especially during ceremony—was that it was fine to "notice" such things, but that we shouldn't worry too much about "figuring it out."

[180] See Part II, section three above.

His emphasis, in other words, consistently had less to do with 'meaning' as a propositional question, and more to do with "the problem of presence." Anthropologist Matthew Engelke[181] identifies "the problem of presence" as a matter of "how a religious subject defines and claims to construct a relationship with the divine through the investment of authority and meaning in certain words, actions, and objects" (Engelke 2007:9). And in her 2012 study of American Evangelicals, *When God Talks Back,* anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann connects this question to a constellation of embodied practices, as well as what she identifies as a profound shift in the meaning of 'faith' that seems to correlate with dramatic changes in the models her informants use for their relationship with God. In particular, Luhrmann emphasizes the impact that humanistic psychology has had on the particular kind of God to which her interlocutors relate: kind, unconditionally accepting; quite far removed from the Old Testament God of their putative forebears.

It's also the case that her interlocutors narrate the claims they make—and socialize each other to narrate their experiences—in the broad context of a dominant epistemological orientation to rational empiricism: that is, with an eye toward evidence that is not wholly removed from the influence of 'the authority of science'. She suggests that the kind of doubt with which her interlocutors grapple is part of what defines 'the modern': we might go so far as to think it as both a model of, and model for, the "secular" [182] way of being-in-the-world that she identifies as "modernity" (2012:318-319).

Luhrmann's analysis centers on the uniquely modern—and pragmatic, and perhaps efficacious—character of the contingency that attends the choice to believe: "In a secular society, it is always possible for an individual to abandon belief. But the practices of faith within this

[181] Among others like (Orsi 2005) and (Keane 2006).
[182] Following Charles Taylor's (2007) usage.

kind of evangelical church make it possible for someone in trouble to learn to experience God as an internal source of comfort, whether or not the idea of God makes coherent logical sense" (277).

To put a finer point on it, Luhrmann's work dwells as length on the very particular embodied practices people employ in order to cultivate their own capacity to imagine God as an intimate, and immediately present, friend and confidant: setting out a second cup of coffee at the kitchen table, for instance, or having a 'date night' with God. In the process, she raises salient questions about the relationship between a) the propositional content of belief statements; b) embodied and affective dimensions of experiential relations with sacred Others; and, crucially, c) the profound contingency of such relations: that is, the ways in which not just the 'meaning' of a particular moment, but the very phenomenological texture of the experience is rendered malleable in the crafting of experiential narratives.

On rare occasion, Mark put an exceedingly fine point on the question of "presence"—and when he did so, it underscored, for me, that the 'work' of such narration is fundamentally social. One morning, after a Lowampi ceremony in September of 2010, members of the tiospaye were gathered in Mark's dining room, discussing the previous night's events. Brent had just completed a "spirit keeping" ceremony, in which he'd pledged to spend a year carrying the spirit of his recently-murdered grandfather—a Lumbee tribal activist—so that he might help his family to heal, and that he himself might find a way to engage with his own Native American heritage.

At one point during the group's conversation, Mark turned to Brent—and began teaching the younger man how to recognize and name his own spiritual experiences. "So, Brent—" he began.

Brent, expecting an inquiry about the spirit-keeping ceremony, preempted the older man: "well, actually, there's one thing I want to talk about, before I talk about the other thing." At that,

the group fell into hysterics. When the laughter abated, he continued—and he emphasized the sheer physicality of his experience: "I had a really strange physical response last night. I felt like my bottom half was like anchored to the chair, the floor, and I could feel that. And I don't really remember at what point in the ceremony it was, but, my upper body just got so rigid—even my neck. I could *feel* my head turning to the side. My back was just like so upright. And the way I usually sit, I'm always kind of a little slouched." It had, he said, felt like he was "filling up with something, like the top half of my body wanted to go," but that he was "tethered to the chair almost. It was really strange. My mind wasn't telling my body to do this," he said, "but I was realizing it, and I could feel it, and I could still think clearly at the same time." He shook his head. "It was strange," he said. "I don't know what that could have meant."

Mark didn't seem at all interested in "what it meant." His first response was not to impose an interpretation, but to ask Brent a therapist's question: "what was the *feeling* behind it… the emotion?"

"Clear," he said; "I didn't feel like I was having a really strong emotional response to anything; I just felt like I could think clearly. I don't really remember being too mentally distracted—I felt kind of 'plugged in', in a way."

Only then did Mark try to get him to anchor his experience in linear time: "do you remember which part of the ceremony that was?"

"Probably about halfway through," he mused. "I don't know whose ceremony it was. I remember having really strong visual—like, really being able to see those people that were [in front of the altar,] having ceremony." It was markedly different from his experience during the previous month's lowampi ceremony in that respect, he noted, despite the fact that both had been held in total darkness.

"Mm-hmm," Mark prompted him.

He continued: "It was just such an odd feeling. I mean, I was able to eventually bring myself back down—just, physically, like 'okay, you've got to pull yourself down', and kind of relax a bit."

"Yeah," said Mark. "The words that you're using are very important. When we have 'out-of-body' experiences, our—our body does—for the most part, people do become rigid, and they stand there. Everybody thinks you just 'fall to the ground in this rag-lump'," he laughed, "but that's not the way it happens. It's almost like you become a stone statue. Your mind, or your spirit, leaves, and is visiting—traveling—and seeing other things." He recounted his own "first out of body experiences," after his first vision quest; he could see himself, he said. "Did you have that at all, where you could see yourself in that rigidness, and, meanwhile, you're still traveling about, and seeing things?" he asked—and, before Brent replied, he continued: "so it's almost like being 'of two minds': one part of your mind is in there, going, 'this is really weird', and the other part of you is moving about. It's very odd."

Brent seemed hesitant: "I don't think—I don't really remember being able to see myself, but I feel that maybe I did experience that 'dual mind' kind of thing—like being here and thinking, and seeing that other stuff at the same time."

Mark nodded. "Once you lose the 'dual mind' and once you get beyond the 'well, this is really weird; I'm seeing that, but I'm also right here'!" he said, "then you can just *leave*. There'll be a tether, but you can just fully experience that—and then you come back." He reassured Brent, "So right now you're just learning about that—you're just learning about leaving yourself behind, so to speak."

"Yeah," said Brent.

"It's very uncomfortable; it's very frightening, at first," allowed Mark. "It's: 'Am I dying?' or 'What is this—am I having a stroke'!"

Brent half-smiled, and said, "I just remember, like, even my neck just got really tight, and my head was turning to the side, like that—" and as he spoke, he pantomimed the movements.

Ed chimed in, then: "I could hear his physical discomfort," he said. "I could hear your breathing, and your movement, and, at one point, it just seemed like you were right in front of me—quite often, as a matter of fact—that you were right here," and he held his hand in front of his face.

"Oh, wow," said Brent.

"I could hear your breathing," Ed continued, mimicking the deep, soft sigh he'd heard, and concluded, "like you were trying to get comfortable."

"Yeah," Brent said. "It took me a little while to bring my body back down." He sounded slightly more sure of himself, as the volume of his voice increased a little, and the pace of his speech picked up. "To kind of relax a bit—and, afterwards, I think I even just kind of slouched over for a little while, to try to relax from it."

"Yeah," Mark said. "Because your muscles actually get sore, and you'll pull things. It's something that you'll get used to—[that you have to] allow to happen. It's when we *fight*, is when we get the rigidity—because your mind's trying to go, 'I need to pull this back'! But sometimes, if you go, just 'oh, here I go!', you can just go with it, and it's not as bad," he offered.

Brent nodded, and then shifted the conversation to the second point he'd wanted to discuss: the spirit-keeping. He said he'd felt a 'touch' during the ceremony—physical contact he compared to "the healing round" at the Sun Dance he'd attended three months earlier. He said

he'd received a pipe from the altar during the ceremony, and now he needed to know what to do with it.

Mark responded with a story about the provenance of the particular pipe that Brent held in his hands: he'd received instruction from spirits to go to a particular shop in South Dakota, and he and another tiospaye member had made the three-hour trip earlier in the summer, while at the Sun Dance. "I just do what I'm told," he said—and then asked Brent whether he wanted to show it to the group.

Brent's hands moved with painstaking care; it took him several minutes to unwrap the red cotton cloth in which the pipe was packaged. Mark observed that it was a "classic plains pipe"—that it was a "man's pipe"—and he said to Brent, it "will show you everything."

Brent nodded thoughtfully, and said, "I think it was something that always was coming," to provide help "for my family and my people."

Mark offered that members of the tiospaye would teach him how to pray with the pipe in the tradition that Mark had learned from his Lakota teacher, but assured the younger man that he could always change his practice "if *your* tradition dictates." The key, Mark said, was that "*you're* the pipe"—which he explained as a way of understanding that Brent, like everyone else, was already "sacred," and that he already had everything he needed to pray to, and connect with, the divine. The physical pipe was to serve as a reminder, and a tool: "to have [a pipe] is just the way to learn that." Mark told Brent that he should take plenty of time to decide—that, if he committed to carry the pipe, he would need to complete a sequence of four vision quests over the course of as many years; that he would discern a name for this pipe; and that it would become, for Brent, a member of his own family.

Throughout, Mark was careful to invite Brent to identify with *his* experience, rather than in impose an explicit, definitive interpretation on what Brent's described. Mark was assertive and clear about what *he* knows—but he very carefully locates Brent in a position from which he has the appearance of free choice: about what to make of what he's felt and seen, and, even more to the point, what to *do* about it.

Ritual, it seems, raises such questions. Writing on Salaklava mythopraxis, Michael Lambek remarked that "one of the things about rituals is that you cannot take them back in protest that you did not mean it" (2007:27). Lambek is suggesting, in part, that it's the social dimension of ritual that strengthens a commitment made in such contexts somehow—in short, his point legible as a valorization of action over words. While I'm simply not sure that it's true in general—witness annulment, among countless other kinds of undoings—it may be that the point isn't that it 'can't be taken back', but rather that 'taking it back' becomes a high-stakes undertaking. In Mark's reckoning, at least, the consequences of such carelessly broken commitments—to ourselves, and to each other—are all around us: hence the urgency with which he tries to introduce people to experiences of ritual and ceremony.

Tiospaye members' experiences suggest, however, that not just any ritual will work—they've nearly all come from religious backgrounds, for instance, and found those sorely wanting. The kinds of rituals that don't seem to *feel* empty to them are dramatic, and intensely demanding (physically and financially)—yet, somehow, these rituals don't quite require them to challenge their sense of themselves as agents defined by the choices they make.[183]

[183] In a remarkably ambitious theoretical extrapolation from their study of a community of Jainist practitioners, Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw define "ritual commitment" as "a particular stance [taken by an individual] with respect to his or her own action" (1994:88). Here, I'm particularly interested in their emphasis on the radically "external" quality of acts performed in ritual: relative to 'normal' or unmarked action, ritual acts, in their analysis, have the specific

In Bruno's case, for instance, his first Sun Dance had been a tremendously profound experience—it was a ceremony to which he felt an immediate connection: "I always thought *I'd* be a Sun Dancer, as soon as I saw them dancing," he said, as we sat in his office. I was particularly surprised, then, when he told me that while he'd attended Arnold's Sun Dance eight times, he'd never actually participated as a dancer. He sank into his wingback chair: "the last time I was out at Sun Dance," he sighed, "it was too hard. It was too hot. The heat really got to me." Even as he recalled it, it seemed clear that he was still deeply ambivalent about the fact that he'd never been a dancer. As he told the story, though, he emphasized that the disappointment, frustration, and "guilt" he'd felt had been turned to good purpose—that what he initially presented as his failure to achieve this culmination had, much to his own surprise, yielded an important lesson about his own "ego," and the work of "compassion" for himself:

> I had gotten sick. I had cancer at that time. The dynamic in the group just was too much for me. It was just too much. I had some guilt, because I always thought that I would be a sun dancer, like I said. When I talked to Mark about it, he said, 'First of all, you're an old man! That's for young men'. I didn't like that—that 'old man'. It made me want to do it more! But also, he was saying, 'Listen—you don't have to prove this to anybody! You're a Sun Dancer anyway. You've been doing *your* dance your whole life. You don't have to prove this to anyone'. That really resonated to me because that's all—a lot of my life has been about proving things—to myself, and others—and I don't have to prove anything to anybody, including myself. So it was a hard decision, it was painful—but it was right. Will I ever go back to Sun Dance? I don't know. The group thing got to be too much for

---

characteristic of being performed in such a way as to realize a prescribed intention—in short, that "ritualization transforms the relation between intention and the meaning of action" (89-90).

me. I find myself not wanting to be around large groups of people much these days. I prefer the one-on-one connection.

Looking back on his comment, I was struck that Bruno, like Sam, and several other members of the tiospaye, recounted a process whereby he came a decision to revise the terms of a commitment he'd made—he'd decided, that is, that his version was 'enough'—and that the revision is recounted as having been *immediately* understood to have been legible as the fulfillment of a 'greater', and prior, commitment, which was itself only revealed by the very 'failure' of the first commitment.

In Bruno's story—much like Sam's, and Paul's—the freedom to renegotiate the terms of their commitment is construed, in the telling, as paramount; they reserve the right to have *already received* the healing they needed. It falls on Mark—or, for Sam, a peer—to serve as a kind of 'notary', recognizing and legitimating (post-hoc) the revised arrangement.

When I asked him to elaborate on his experience with cancer, he was adamant that it had been caused by work-related difficulties: "when I came here, I got it," he said. "A lot of it had to do with the stress at the time—the battles I was embroiled in, and just toxins I was carrying around with me, that I know finally brought the cancer to a head, which" he added, "had been probably looming for ages from my background."

He recounted a straightforward decision to explore "a natural healing way to address it. … I was about trying to be healthy," he said, and none of "the traditional way[s]" of treating the cancer—which he listed as "cut out the prostate, or doing radiation or doing chemo"—particularly "appealed to" him. A member of the tiospaye had said to him: "listen to your body—ask your prostate what it needs," which he experienced as deeply "loving, powerful" advice. "I asked my prostate what it wanted," he recalled, "and it basically said, 'leave me alone! Don't let

them cut me again'!" He went "to look for a natural way of healing, and I was in the Barnes & Noble looking for some book about prostate cancer," he said, when he had an experience that he came to understand as an encounter with his deceased mother's spirit: "I was in a totally different section from the health section, and there was this book that was coming off the shelf. My mother used to be a reference librarian before she died, many years ago. I know that she brought me to that book," he said. The book was called *How To Heal Yourself From Noninvasive Prostate Cancer*—the author of which, he said, had "healed himself from prostate cancer"—and Bruno "just basically followed what the guy said in that book." He'd sought out a "radiologist who prescribed supplements that addressed the cancer, paid attention to diet and my spiritual practice, healed myself. Now," he smiled, "I'm free—cancer-free."

It was only after I explicitly asked whether anyone else from the tiospaye had been helpful that he added, in an almost offhand manner, that "Mark led a healing, a lowampi for me, which was great." It had been difficult for Bruno "to be the subject of that," he said, "because I get uncomfortable when everyone focuses on me, but it was wonderful. I had all this loving energy, and he gave me this beautiful hot stone, that I still have, that fits right on my prostate." He assured me that "I know that was a part of the healing too—prayers, and support of the tiospaye; it was great." Bruno chuckled, and grimaced. "[Mark] gave me this special drink that [he'd said] the Lakota used to use." He laughed: "didn't work very well! I just was—I couldn't stand it. Maybe—it probably did help, I don't know." He added, almost as an afterthought, that "when I [fasted during] my hanblecas, I think that detox and cleansing really helped, too. A lot of the healing prayer took place during those hanblecas, to be sure."

I wanted to know, then, whether he'd found it easier or more difficult, while sick with the cancer, to trust the answers he was receiving in response to his spiritual and existential questions.

"I think easier, in some ways," he said. "Because I really felt like my life was on the line, so I had nothing to lose—everything to gain, and nothing to lose. I had already given my life when I went up on the hill the first time. I was prepared to die. You can only go up on the hill if you're prepared to die," he averred. "That night, I thought I was going to die, because it was scary. There was a lightning storm: I was right on this hill, and then, back in the distance, I could see this lightning storm coming my way—heading right towards me! I said, 'Holy shit'! You're out there naked with a knife," which, he explained, is "going to attract this. The wind was howling, and spirits were all around me. I said, 'It's a good day to die; here I am'. So I figured, after that—when they're going to take me, they're going to take me—so I didn't have to worry about that. [I] put my life in their hands."

Bruno's narrative—and, in particular, its sequencing—suggests several possible readings. His account of his hanbleca locates him as a person who defines himself by the (dramatic) surrender of his "life"—here, he seemed to literally refer to his willingness and readiness to accept physical death—which was indexed in more mundane circumstances by a subjugation of "ego" to "higher" or "selfless" purposes. Narratively, the drama of the moment appeared significant: it seemed important to him that I, as his interlocutor, understand the stakes of his surrender. A few moments earlier, however, he'd been narrating his experience of "healing himself" from the cancer that had been "looming for ages" and which was triggered by the "toxins" associated with his stress—stress which resulted from his conflict with the ostensibly amoral institution for which he'd agreed to work (under what he described as false pretenses). His syntax marks a clear shift from the events of which he is a victim—note the passive voice in his descriptions of "the battles [he] was embroiled in" and his curiously passive location: pinned "against [his] belief about the way people heal," as he is faced with "the medical model of

therapy"—to the active, present-tense self who "spoke out," both directly addressing his superior and acting as a whistleblower before the town council.

In his classic work on *Society against the State*, Pierre Clastres argued that certain kinds of violence—torture performed during a rite, to be precise—serve a political function: they serve to locate the individual within the social. Such wounds engender, and the scars they leave behind encode, mediations of desire: above all, they mediate the threat of inequality that follows the desire for overabundance (1989). Clastres contends that—for "primitive" peoples, at least—the possibility of non-hierarchical relations inheres in such ritual practices: that, in short, the fact of a society to which the state is a foreign form is precisely an effect of voluntary submission to these forms of violence. The result—in theory—is an experience of what Turner (1969) called "communitas" in (and around) ceremony, and a stable social form on the far side of the liminal. In their search for ways to heal what they narrate, in a medicalized register, as intrapsychic wounds inflicted *by* a society defined by overabundance, my interlocutors turn to rituals they hope will help them. Tiospaye members' practices seem to regularly achieve the first half of Clastres' ideal: when gathered together, especially at the Sun Dance, they generally do get to experience what it is that they say they want. It's the second half of that formulation—i.e., a strong, stable form of sociality—that continues to prove dishearteningly difficult, as they return to their workaday lives, and to the rest of the more mundane commitments they keep.

4. The Work of Believing

> "The routineness of everyday life, however, is precisely why current understandings of the supernatural fits so well with it. One experience of the supernatural will do. Just one."
> - Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (1998:134)

> "You'll hear this pretty much every time people get together—it's the whole, 'it's easy to be sacred when you're doing sacred things', and it's the trying to generalize that to the rest of your life, and trying to be very mindful of that on a daily basis… to introduce some sort of practice and some sort of way to keep that in the forefront on a day to day basis. That's the hard part. It's not hard to do it in ceremony."

- Christine

In March of 2012—fully seven months after my last substantive contact with my informants,[184] and a year since I'd last set foot on the grounds of Ed's Taekwondo-school-née-deconsecrated-church—the tiospaye had come together one last time in Mark's rural college town. The school itself, as well as Ed's house next door, both looked as I'd remembered them; the fifty-foot patch of grass between them, however, now sported a large tipi and a sweat lodge (low, in the Cherokee style—in unremarked-upon contrast to the very precisely Lakota provenance of the content of the group's rituals—and highly engineered), as well as an extraordinarily large pile of firewood.

Mark and his wife had spent the intervening months living with the young men from the fraternity, and he seemed deeply happy with the progress they were making. The university, however, had decided not to replicate his approach, and so he was preparing to make a permanent moving back to New England, with the intention of pursuing consulting work full-time. On that weekend, however, his focus was on the bevy of ceremonies ahead—and there was much to be done. Most unusual were the anointing of two new iyeskas: a white woman in her mid-twenties (Pam), and a white man in his late-fifties (Rich), both relatively new members of the Georgia-based branches of the tiospaye.

Mark's regular assistant (and heir to the altar), Melanie, was not in attendance—but much of the rest of the family was, and I finally had the chance to meet Neal. Mark had introduced me to Neal by email fully two and a half years earlier—to whom he referred as a "psychiatrist," a "mystic," and the "Director of Counseling" at one of the top public universities in the U.S.—but we'd never actually managed to connect.

[184] Following my conversation with Mark and Ed on that small island, above.

Neal—exuberant; gregarious; peripatetic—talked about walking a very "fine line" with his spirituality at work. An M.D., Neal was the director of the counseling center where he'd worked for the last fifteen years. He supervised a staff of "full-time psychiatrists, counselors, and wellness staff," and, despite the fact that he wasn't carrying an active caseload himself, he said, he certainly spent time working individually, albiet informally, with students. Neal was more 'public' than many other members of the tiospaye who worked in college counseling—he is, to my knowledge, the only member of the tiospaye whose professional biographic blurb includes the phrase "spiritual experience" among his areas of clinical expertise—and he told me he'd been on the "red road"[185] for twelve years, which he juxtaposed with the fifteen he'd spent at his job. Like Mark, he described a slow building of trust at work; he doesn't actually perform ceremonies on campus, he explained, but "they know" he's "into spiritual stuff." If, for instance, a colleague brought to his attention a male student who was having "those kinds of questions," he said, he might take them on a ninety-minute walk in the woods to discuss their experiences.[186]

Among the many healing ceremonies on the docket (a distant member's Lyme's disease was flaring up; another woman returned for more help with her lack of "self-love"), Rich—one of the iyeskas-in-training—made a particular request for aid. He was concerned for the health of his unborn grandchild: since both of the parents carried the gene for cystic fibrosis, Rich said, they feared for the baby's chances of being born with the disease, and, in the ceremony on Friday night, they asked for protection and guidance from the altar. Rich received instructions to make a

[185] One of many euphemisms used by my informants to index their dedication to "indigenous spirituality" in the broadest sense; also a term used by my Lakota interlocutors to refer to a band of red clay that circumscribes the Black Hills in western South Dakota and eastern Wyoming, which figure centrally in both Lakota origin stories and ongoing legal struggles with the U.S. federal government.

[186] He said he wouldn't take female students on such walks, because that would "raise questions."

small flesh offering the following day, and to spend one full day pierced to the ceremonial tree at that year's Sun Dance in South Dakota.[187]

Late Saturday morning, the assembled group members discussed the previous night's events. Rich said that he was grateful for the altar's help, and then mentioned that he'd also been thinking about having a genetic test performed during the pregnancy, to determine the child's susceptibility to the disorder. Neal spoke up, quickly and forcefully: "as an M.D.," he said, he strongly advised *against* having the test done. If the results were positive, he explained, it would only cause them to worry about whether or not the altar's prescription could work—that is, the test could only interfere with their capacity to believe, fully and wholeheartedly, in the power of the healing.

Rich raised the same question again the following day, seeking clarification. Again, Neal interjected "from an M.D. perspective" and asked: "*why* are you having the test?" He was advising them not to have the test if they weren't going to terminate the pregnancy or "do anything different" as a result of the test—because, as he explained, the only thing that would be accomplished would be that they would have something else to worry about. Even more to the point, I think, is that the biomedical 'fact' of the test's result would become a knowledge structure that they would then have to work against, as they practiced faith in the possibility of healing through the ritual work they were committing to do at the Sun Dance.

---

[187] Again: for some participants, a culminating aspect of the eight-day Sun Dance ceremony involving the piercing of the skin (usually the upper chest, for men) with a piece of buffalo shin bone roughly the size of a golf pencil. The bone is attached by a leather thong to the tree (around which the Sun Dance is spatially and symbolically centered), and the person who has pierced will approach and withdraw from the tree four times, in prayer. On the fourth withdrawal, they continue to back away from the tree, pulling the thong taut, until the shin bone snaps—this is called 'breaking', and it leaves a tell-tale scar on the chest, by which dancers are recognizable to one another (and which, when counted, indicate to an onlooker how many times the person has Sun Danced).

Neal's urgings stand in subtly pointed contradistinction to a question had Mark parsed eighteen months earlier: "if you don't do different things, nothing changes," he'd said, because, "It's not, 'you should or shouldn't'—it's, 'do you want to be more effective'?" Mark takes the reality of spiritual healing as 'given': there are serious difficulties and hard work involved, he allows, but the question of 'belief' doesn't even seem to enter into it. Neal—who knew from personal experience how unevenly even a good-faith commitment to 'these ways' can translate into sustained practice—struck a different note: his point seemed to be that spiritual healing works when you believe in it, and that there was no sense making it harder to commit to the work of believing than it already was.

This kind of 'work' stages particular kinds of challenges and opportunities for group members. In keeping with American spirituality's general emphasis on 'felt' sensation and the narration of lived experience—and as I argued above—intense, communal ritual experiences provide a foundation for faith and an experiential reference point. The challenge, of course—as Christine's epigraphic remark suggests, and as Neal's prodding underscores—is how to sustain a version of the experiences they have of themselves (and each other) in their workaday lives.

They are by no means alone in this struggle. In his effort to describe the challenge of maintaining the "permanent liminality" that he saw as the prerequisite for a sustained experience of communitas, Victor Turner drew on the example of Saint Francis . For Turner, Francis' struggle to institutionalize the Franciscan Order centered precisely on this problem—and Francis' myriad proscriptions of ownership and authority were all directed toward this end: "In all this, Francis appears quite deliberately to be compelling the friars to inhabit the fringes and interstices of the social structure of his time, and to keep them in a permanently liminal state,

where," Turner averred, " the optimal conditions inhere for the realization of communitas" (1969:145).

Members of the tiospaye, as we have seen, lead lives that are far from ascetic. The material conditions of their life-worlds are, in the main, typical of professional, middle-class Americans: most of them own homes (on which they pay mortgages), and nearly all of them own cars; they have sufficient disposable income to afford the occasional vacation (in addition to, or sometimes instead of, the pilgrimage to the Sun Dance—which one of my interlocutors estimated at about $2,500). More to the point, their experiences of themselves in their day-to-day lives—as they commute from suburban homes to work, and spend days off remodeling their houses, watching television or going to the occasional professional baseball game—are far removed from the hot days spent fasting in South Dakota, sleeping in a tent.

As Neal's tacit acknowledgement suggests, this tension is, for them, both fraught and generative. Sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow contends that powerful "experiences not only reinforce belief that the supernatural exists but also persuade people that the supernatural cannot in any way be understood and, therefore, it need not take much of their time"(1998:134). This, then, leads to the putative asociality for which 'new religions' have been much derided: "It does not require them to set aside portions of their day to pray, worship, read sacred texts, reflect on ways to deepen their relationship with God, or be of service to others" (1998:134).

According to Wuthnow (1998), however, a change is on the wind: an emergent ethos of contemporary American religiosity is evident, he suggests, in a shift toward "practice-oriented spirituality"—which he frames in opposition to historically prior registers of 'seeking' (apropos

of the ostensible 'spiritual marketplace'[188]) and 'dwelling' (by which he intends membership in organized congregation that was itself a subsidiary of a larger institution). Wuthnow lauds the "discipline" that practice requires—which is what distinguishes it from mere 'seeking': "Above all, practice requires responsibility on the part of the individual practitioner rather than on the part of some community or the marketplace" (17).

For members of the tiospaye, however, the picture is even more complex: nearly all of my interlocutors, at one point or another, voiced some anxiety about their own 'daily practices'; more than one of them expressed explicit concern about whether or not they were being "sacred enough" (especially in the presence of an anthropological observer). Some made concerted efforts at maintaining a daily regimen: Biff professed daily prayer using sage for purification, and I joined Ed, on several occasions, for Lakota-language songs of prayer at sunrise. Many of them, however, had no daily practice to speak of—Ryan, with characteristic dry wit, summed up his daily practice thusly: "most days," he said, "I don't do anything. I just try not to act like a dickhead." Those that did describe daily routines were enthusiastically syncretic: Bruno, for instance, recounted in great detail a series of exercises and invocations—a breathing regime; prayers he offered, especially for people who disturbed him (political leaders, for instance); and a series of visualizations, focused on "cellular healing" for himself.[189]

---

[188] See Bellah et al. (1996) for a thoughtful formulation of this notion, and see Schmidt (2005) or Bender (2010) for thoroughgoing critiques.

[189] The picture was similarly varied among the clinicians with whom I worked who were not, strictly speaking, part of the tiospaye (i.e., Steven's students and colleagues, associated with APT). In a given week, Sandra's practices included some combination of thirty-minute yoga sessions, brief (about ten minute long) meditations, a Gestalt group she attended on Wednesday nights, and what she described with a chuckle as "mindful dog walking;" on the weekends, she said, she usuallly sat for longer periods of meditation. And for Martha, the question of whether or not she had a daily spiritual practice was met with an immediate, almost curt, affirmatice: she shifted to a didactic register as she ticked off her routine of thirty-minute pranayama—or meditative "yogic breathing," as she explained it—every day, coupled with thrice-weekly asana

There is, in other words, a marked absence of the kind of disciplined practice that these people (and scholars of religion) imagine to be foundational to other people's spiritual lives. For tiospaye members, however, this question foregrounds another dimension of Wuthnow's conception: "a practice-oriented spirituality requires paying attention to some tradition or individual who has gone before," according to Wuthnow, "because there is a realization that tradition is not simply given, but interpreted, and that tradition is changeable rather than static. In comparison, seeker-oriented spirituality often tends toward a facile view of tradition, diminishing its importance in the interest of being unencumbered when one desires to move on" (Wuthnow 1998:191). For Mark and his students, 'practice' is supplemented, if not quite supplanted, by a great deal of (highly efficacious) talk: about how they know what's real, and, more obliquely, how they decide who and what to trust. These questions, moreover, are inextricably bound up with—not quite overdetermined, but constrained by—the notions of 'self' that they both resist and reproduce: that is, individual agents bounded and defined by their capacity to exercise free choice.

Often, that kind of talk followed on the heels of shared moments of such practice. After a day spent building a sweat lodge together, Christine, Stacy,[190] Biff, and I sat around the fire pit behind Annelise and Biff's house on a warm late-April night. We'd been talking about how they'd come to trust, for themselves, that Mark's 'family' was 'real'. For Biff, the important

---

(that is, the physical poses that, she said, were often incorrectly assumed to "be" yoga). As Bender noted apropos of her Cambridge metaphysicals, "from within the world of contemporary spirituality, a person's choices to practice various bodily or ritual activities serially or multiply is not a sign of dabbling but, rather, an indication of their ability to identify the perennial and 'scientific' realities that underpin everything from therapeutic touch to insight meditation" (2010:95).

[190] Stacy—40ish; white; a convert to Quakerism and a newly-recovering alcoholic—was another clinician-member of the tiospaye, who worked at a college counseling center in Florida; she was only present at a handful of events during my time in the field, and I never had the opportunity to gather a fuller biography.

thing seemed to be that the practices were "grounded." He defined this, first, in opposition to things that were "ungrounded"—a word he used more or less interchangeably with terms like "new age" and "airy-fairy." His business partner, he averred, was "airy-fairy," which he correlated with a combination of blithe faith in the power of positive thinking and good intentions, coupled with marked self-absorption and an absence of 'healthy' skepticism. "There's this [attitude that], you know, 'everything's just going to be okay'," he said—which elided the matter of taking responsibility for one's actions: "But what are you *doing* to help make it okay?"

He explained, by way of an example, how his business partner would go to a training seminar, but when he asked about her experience of the technique she'd gone to study, she only complained that she hadn't gotten praise or special attention from the teacher. "To me," he said, "it's just there's this 'ungroundedness'—there's this mixing of medicines. Ryan has called it 'window shopping'," Biff acknowledged, "but it's a little bit more than window shopping when you're participating. You're not *just* window shopping—now, you've stepped *in*, and now you're potentially 'making a purchase', as if you're going to *do* something with this—and you don't; nothing else happens with it. It just kind of sort of gets 'put on the shelf' with the next thing."

What Biff called "groundedness" seemed to be inseparable from an active relationship between practice and "tradition"—which he framed as an engagement with a series of questions: "what's the basis or premise by which [a particular practice has] gotten to this point? What is it evolving from—or into? What are you doing this *for*?" These axes—we might think of them as historical context, telos, and interpersonal relationships—seemed to transect his effort to distinguish between, on the one hand, the kinds of "personalization" and "adaptation" that, he acknowledged, regularly occurred when people took up faith practices from 'other' cultures and, on the other hand, the commodification (in his terms, "patenting" and "copyrighting" and "sale")

of those hybrid forms to "customers." Everywhere Biff had looked, he said, "there was just a lot of people searching for something, and looking for ways to try and make meaning out of this world," and, all too often, people "seemed to be wanting to take a lot of shortcuts." He'd certainly seen his share of "airy-fairy types" and "tourists" at the Sun Dance, and he wasn't always sure what to make of "newbies" within the tiospaye who undertook what he understood to be "a lifetime commitment after three months." When he spoke about his own experiences at the Sun Dance, it often seemed that what he cherished most was the way it seemed to catalyze, for him, a different experience of himself—that is, he found himself newly or differently able to give himself 'permission' to be "present" and to allow himself to have new (and healing, and transformative) experiences of himself. "Talk about big medicine!" he said. "That's what Sun Dance does to you."

For him, it was critically important to be discerning: a skeptical orientation—but a very particular *kind* of skepticism. Even if one were to stipulate to the existence of psychic phenomena—"there does seem to be recognition that there is something else that goes on that doesn't have anything to do with time and space," he averred—that led to a sequence of pressing questions: "what is this ability about, or for? If you're talking about a sixth sense, where is that coming from, and what is that about, and what does that give credence[191] to? What is that pulling on historically, and what is that being acknowledged by, and what do these other teachings have to say about it?" These questions, he seemed to be suggesting, were *more* important—i.e., that, for him, the 'jury was still out' with respect to the tiospaye as a "path" for him, and that his ambivalence was (at least narratively) tied to the authority he attributed to his own experience.

[191] By "credence," he seemed to mean something like 'commit to/express loyalty towards/acknowledge the validity of'.

At one point in the evening, Stacy brought up the case of "self-help guru" and retreat officiant James Arthur Ray (whose recently conviction of negligent homicide in the sweat lodge deaths of three of his retreat attendees was a frequent topic conversation among my informants[192]). Christine offered that tiospaye members had been "lucky" that, in meeting Mark, they "got hooked up with somebody who has a lot of integrity, and wants to do things in the right way, and is teaching *us* to also do things in the right way, to do things in the right way, to do things in the right way" rather than someone who was "totally ungrounded" and was trying to profit financially (as Ray had done).

There seemed to be general consensus on the point; Stacy allowed that "there is a [spiritual] law of exchange—that you don't get something for nothing, and it is the right thing to do to make an offering." The key distinction, for her, was in the voluntary character of the offering: "Because ultimately if I really went to Mark and asked for a ceremony, he would *never* ask me for money," she insisted. "He would do whatever I wanted, without me paying a thing."

"And the minute he ever did that," Christine said, "everything would fall apart."

"It would. I believe that to be true," Stacy affirmed.

"And that's when people would really get hurt," Christine said.

"Yeah," Stacy nodded, "we really did get lucky."

Christine pushed her thought further, and tried out a connection: "what he said about the pressure of that—somebody comes for a healing, and they want to be healed of something" particular, she said, but, given how the altar spirits dispensed healing, "they get what they need—they may not get what they wanted." She could, she said, easily imagine someone who

[192] My interlocutors were uniformly appalled by the Ray case, and took the fact that Ray's clients had paid something like $10,000 to take part in his weekend of ceremonies as strong evidence of his inauthenticity (Newcomb 2011). Ray is the author of numerous self-help books, including *Harmonic Wealth* (2008) and *The Science of Success* (1998).

approached the healing with this perspective demanding a refund: “but I paid this money! It didn’t work,” she joked.

Stacy joined in: “You didn’t fix me—screw you, buddy! I thought you were a medicine man!” She reflected, then, on a yuwipi ceremony Rags had led a few years prior. The supplicant, she said, had been deeply depressed, and seemed genuinely ambivalent about whether or not she really wanted to live or die. Stacy recalled that the spirits, speaking through Rags, had said to the supplicant: “well, if that’s what you want, we’ll take you.” Stacy remembered speaking with Mark the next day, when he’d described his experience: as he’d observed this exchange happening through him, “he thought, ‘Holy shit. What happens’?” She fleshed out the scene: “He’s there, in the middle of this rug,” she said. “He’s a man with a professional license and a Doctorate and teaching at a college.”

“We’ve got 25 people in this room,” added Christine, from across the low fire.

“We’ve got 20-odd people in this room,” Stacy more-or-less confirmed, “and so imagine:”

> everything in that situation depended on *her* choice of whether she wanted to live or die. She chose to live. She was like, “No, no, no—I really do want to live. I don’t want to die; it’s just that I don’t want things to be so bad.” He’s in the middle tied up—it was a yuwipi—going, “Oh my God, thank God! what was I going to do?” Because the spirits were literally saying to [her, through] him, “Okay, we’ll take you. We’ll take you right now.” Can you imagine? So we would have just been another quack of a family with some crazy ‘wanna-be’ guy.

A while later, Biff—who’d been uncharacteristically quiet—said “I was playing with the comment earlier about having been ‘lucky’,” he said, “and I was kind of sort of hoping it’s more than just ‘lucky’, and maybe [the result of] paying a little bit of attention and going, ‘Is this for

real'?" As he spoke, and as he connected his supposition with his own experience, his voice picked up increasing notes of certainty: "I grew up with a salesman for a dad," he said, "so I ended up with a pretty decent bullshit detector. The thing about Mark is, he'll say he *doesn't* want 'Mark-ites'. He's very clear about the fact, and he genuinely *means* it [when he says] 'you take whatever it is I say, and you think about it', or 'you look at it' or 'you question it'. And he's open to questions, and he doesn't get annoyed, or irritated by that—he *welcomes* that."

For Biff, then—at least, in the context of this conversation—the ultimate criterion by which something felt "grounded" seemed to be that Mark was manifestly open to criticism and question, and was not, in Biff's estimation, trying to 'recruit' acolytes. Versions of this sentiment were expressed by every informant who spoke on the subject throughout the time I spent in the field. The sheer ubiquity of these statements suggests, I think, a stable, and shared, set of values—values which place a premium on the very particular kind of agency, and which presume (and perhaps reproduce) a very particular kind of self. This self, or subject, is precisely the seat of cognition within a bounded actor—which creates a jarring tension with respect to the ongoing labor undertaken by my informants to privilege affective and phenomenological 'ways of knowing'.

This tension seemed more acute for some of my informants than for others. Like Biff, Ryan had become gradually more involved with the tiospaye over time—as, eventually, had Christine (who'd finally agreed to come to a lodge with Ryan, "because it was his birthday," and who found herself similarly intrigued by her own "powerful" experience). "We kind of stayed with it," he said. "I don't know," he paused, seeming to search for a way to communicate his understanding of the experiential nature of his relationship to the tiospaye's practices. He may have decided he was overcomplicating things, because he opted to proceed with a question that

implied the obvious, self-evident nature of the truth around which he was trying to wrap words: "I mean, you've been in ceremony, right? You've been in the lowampi?" he asked. I had, as he already knew; it was a rhetorical question, but to underscore the fact that I'd also had remarkable, difficult-to-articulate experiences in that context, I nodded. "So, I mean—there it is! It's the real deal."

Ryan paused, and suggested a comparison to how he understood faith to work in another religion: "well," he said, "I think what it comes down to is that Christian faith is a matter of 'belief'. 'This is what's true, believe it, beg for it, do whatever you need to do with it, but this is what's true and that's how it works'. *But*," he parried—recalling his own experience—what if "I don't *feel* it, [or] I don't 'get' it? 'Well, tough'. Or," he mused:

> maybe you can go the charismatic route, or maybe you can be "born again," but if you don't *feel* anything, that's *your* fucking problem—that's not Jesus' problem. But *this* experience—*this* faith—is a matter of *experience*! And that's really what's different about it. But then the problem is, like, now, if I *don't* feel it, that's on *me* to try and practice, and kind of stay with it. But then when you fall short, and you get into the ceremony, they [i.e., the spirits] are like, "What's happening? What are you doing?" "Oh my God, I'm so sorry." Like, "I *know* it's real, I *get* it's real"—but then, when you're going through your daily business, your ego is running the show. At least, *mine* is. I'll speak for myself; my ego runs the show 99 and five-ninths percent of the time. And then, when I get into the ceremony, I feel like a fucking idiot. But *that's* on me, too—because it's more like: "here—look at what you're missing!"

Ryan seemed, here, to be making a complex, unstable distinction—based on a not-wholly-unproblematic series of assumptions about what he thought of as "Christianity"—which served

to frame his own "faith" as "a matter of experience" that depended, above all, on his own discipline about his practices, and for the success or failure of which he bore personal responsibility. This framing also appeared to secure a space that he could define in contradistinction to what he called "the charismatic[193] route:" he began, here, with a notion of "Christian faith" as a "matter of belief"—which he opposed to the readily available and unequivocal "experience" of the Lakota ceremonies. He then explained how his own failure to discipline his "ego" is the cause of his failure to "experience" divine presence in any particular instance.

He was making general statements about these things—it seemed important to him that these propositions be generally true—but, if pressed, he'd certainly have acknowledged that the distinction he was making was acutely autobiographical: Ryan knows, of course, that he *cannot know for sure* that a "Christian," as Ryan imagines him or her, hasn't had an analogously unequivocal "experience" of presence that can then serve as a touchstone for future encounters (nor, indeed, that she or he doesn't experience a similar imperative to assume responsibility for failures to 'connect'). And there is voluminous contemporary ethnography of Christianity that strongly suggests this 'condition' is endemic to something much broader than any one particular faith[194]—but, again, what's interesting here is precisely the evident fact that, in the context of the interaction, it seems important for Ryan that the possibility of an "experience" of presence is

[193] A reference I took to index the experientialist strain of post-Vatican II Catholicism; see Csordas (1997), as well as Orsi (2005).

[194] See, for instance, Engelke (2007) and Luhrmann (2012).

unique to *his* faith,[195] and that any given failure to achieve such an experience is his, and his alone.

I was struck, here again, by my interlocutors' relentless emphasis on individual accountability—which, for them, is a key aspect of what distinguishes 'spirituality' from 'religion', and which is inextricably bound up in the very particular kinds of selves that they both cultivate and resist as clinicians. In particular, Ryan's colloquial invocation of "ego" seems to mark both a ubiquitous etic usage of the term, and an intriguing departure from a Freudian understandings of the ego as the mediator between id and superego—that is, precisely the seat of self-discipline.[196] This notion—that the self which does the disciplining must not simply be 'liberated' (apropos of late-mid-twentieth-century humanistic psychology), but rather must *itself* be disciplined—marks, I think, a complex folding-in-on-itself of the very self that is being conjured in the process.

Christine nodded, adding that this point was "what Mark always stresses. You'll hear this," she told us, "pretty much every time people get together—it's the whole, 'it's easy to be sacred when you're doing sacred things'," which, she explained, meant that "the hard part" was "trying to generalize that to the rest of your life, and trying to be very mindful of that on a daily basis, and try to introduce some sort of practice. and some sort of way to keep that in the forefront on a day to day basis. It's not hard to do it in ceremony," she said.

For her, she said, the sense that 'this was *her* path' was a combination of "gut-level" sensation and "consistency" of experience and message. "If you're hearing the same thing or the same theme from a lot of different people," she reasoned, "then that kind of makes sense." As

---

[195] Again: this is almost certainly not a proposition to which he'd assent, were it presented to him as an abstract, survey-style yes-or-no question; the point, rather, is that the distinction serves a very particular, interaction-level purpose.

[196] On this point, see Cushman (1996).

she continued, she drew on increasingly physical characterizations: “It’s sort of like the ‘crazy meter’—that sometimes what the person is saying, you can *feel* the integrity of it, and you’re understanding their experience, so it *feels* okay, and it *feels* real, and it *feels* legitimate, and it *feels* not-threatening,” she said. It wasn’t, she insisted, “that it’s not challenging to you, but it’s just not, like, recoil-[-inducing], ‘that’s crazy’! kind of stuff.” Additionally, she said, she found herself paying close attention to how the individual in question was treated by the people she’d already come to trust: “is this person somebody who the other people I know really hold in high regard, too?” she’d ask herself. “Some people,” she explained, thereby “come with a little bit of credibility… and so I’m open to what [they’re] saying.”

Ryan nodded along: “I trust the people that are telling me—for the people that I don’t know particularly well, or that I think are swayed by some other agenda, I won’t necessarily *disbelieve* them, but I’ll certainly be less interested in what they have to say, or sort of move quickly beyond that.” Here, he makes a thoroughly intriguing rhetorical move mid-utterance, in which he shifts from a ‘positive’ statement about trusting people, to a carefully-phrased negative statement about qualified disbelief: he positions himself as a skeptic (or, at least, demonstrates his capacity for rigor) in the space of this interaction.

Christine and Ryan both spoke in clear, strong assertions about what they similarly described as “commitments” they made. As Ryan framed it, the nature of the commitment varied in relation to the interpersonal relationship in question—or, rather, in relation to how much was ‘at stake’ in the relationship. How it *felt* for him, when faced with that decision about whether or not to trust—a person; an idea; ‘even’ an experience—“depends,” he said, “on what you’re committing yourself to.” In the long stretch of uninterrupted talk which follows, Ryan moved from an abstract rumination on the nature of his commitment, to a concrete example of the

trusting relationship that his high-stakes "leap of faith" engendered—and, in the end, he illustrates in the way in which he understands that commitment to be precisely contingent upon a shared experience of trust.

> Are we committing ourselves to *Mark*, or are we committing ourselves to the pipe? It's easy to confuse the two—so, if it turns out that Mark has been fucking eight year old boys for the past ten years, and laughing at us behind our backs because this is all bullshit, as far as he's concerned, now what? For those of us that have [become] pipe carriers based on what Mark has shared with us, then the question is: 'well, *now* what?' Is it: 'oh my God!' - so, obviously, it would be 'fuck Mark, let's drop a dime and make sure that he gets arrested'. But: *now what*? Do we continue to pray with the pipe? Was that 'for real', or was that a 'Mark' thing? Mark has, I think, been pretty consistent to push us away, and say: 'this is *one* way to do it—this is what *I* was taught. So if you want to do it this way, do it this way—but don't do it for me, because I'll be gone. So you'd better be sure about what you're doing. If you're doing it for me, then you're wrong'. It would be tough, though. It would be a tough pill to swallow—but I think, for me, I committed myself to something beyond that; beyond Mark. I'm grateful to him for being a conduit, and sharing, but I think there's enough of me that thinks there's something 'more' to this than just what Mark has had to say. And there's convergent validity: listening to what these other elders have had to say, and participating in other people's ceremonies, and my own personal experience, and sort of putting my own—well, I put my fucking life on the line for it [during] the *hanbleca*. It's not 'suicide', but you could die out there. I put my life in Bear Man's hands, too. That's another thing. So really: right—it's the relationship. Because I certainly had—they put me out for four days, and it was freezing at night, so

> that's not necessarily a safe situation. How well did I know Bear Man? He's kind of this guy that came to some of the ceremonies a few times. You're out there, and you're committed to being out there for a certain amount of time. And in the ceremony I [had been] asked to go to Wyoming, to do this in the Big Horn Mountains. We didn't know where we were going; we just drove around until we found the spot that seemed 'right'. And then I sort of—okay, I left Bear Man with Christine. That was really the moment of—*that* was the leap of faith. But, so, *now* my problem is more [that], on a daily basis, I forget, and forget, and forget, and *forget*. And I worry that that's—well, it's bad for *me*, because then I lose sight of what's really important—and it's also bad for *them* [i.e., the spirits], because it's disrespectful. But I don't know what the answer to that is just yet. So the relationship's important—but at some point, if you make a commitment you make a leap of faith. And a lot of people have done that. A lot of the people that I think we look up to, and really listen carefully to what they've had to say, they've *really* done that—and we've *seen* them do that. We've *seen* them make the commitment. The people who talk a good game, and kind of hang around—we certainly enjoy their company, but certainly we're not always as interested in what they have to say.

Here, again, Ryan moved through two different kinds of stories. The first is conjectural: it's about what he imagined might happen to his relationship with "what Mark has shared," were he to find out something he deems horrifying and unforgivable about Mark himself—whom Ryan characterizes, here, as "the conduit." His point is that such a revelation would plausibly stage a crisis with respect to "praying with the pipe" as a way of life—and when he frames the question as whether "that [was] for real, or… a 'Mark' thing," Ryan is articulating a very particular kind of crisis of *the possibility* of faith in an object or practice that has been mediated by an imperfect

"conduit" (a question to which many contemporary U.S. Catholics, for instance, who struggle with their relationship to an institution that has been the site of widespread sexual abuse, can relate).[197]

The second kind of story is biographical—about what he narrates as choices to entrust a "his life" to "this guy [i.e., Bear Man] that came to some of the ceremonies a few times" and who, by implication, Ryan had barely known. These stories, then, set up his assessment of what he labels his "problem… on a daily basis"—which, he says, is that "I forget, and forget, and forget, and *forget*"—and the solution, which he summarizes as "a leap of faith" that might begin with data gathered in "relationships," but which necessarily transcends those relationships. Finally, he skirts his way around an explicit condemnation of "people who talk a good game, and kind of hang around," staking his position on a key distinction between "enjoying their company" and being "interested in what they have to say"—a distinction that seems to correlate with Christine's opposition of "disbelief" and "[dis]interest" (above).

Subtler still is Ryan's implicit denigration of the quality of 'enjoyment'. I thought about this in relation to the conversation between Sam and Bear Man (discussed in Part II) about whether or not her re-negotiation of the terms of her healing had impacted its effectiveness—that is, her decision that her thoroughly enjoyable two-week visit to Japan with her partner had sufficed as a substitute for the grueling year-long, solo 'walkabout' that the altar had prescribed—and how no one in the group seemed to see themselves as 'authorized' to suggest otherwise. I wondered whether this apparent hesitancy was bound up with tiospaye members' own doubts about the extent to which they themselves were living up to their own commitments, and making 'painful enough' sacrifices. Later, I came to think of it in a more complex way: as a kind of rigorous, if

[197] This also echoes Neal's point (above) about the extent to the effectiveness of spiritual healing depends on the labor that catalyzes the possibility of faith in these settings.

conflicted, humility—an ethical reluctance to make a presumption about the nature of someone *else's* experience.[198]

In the telling of the second story—about his hanbleca—Ryan distinguished between at least two kinds of vulnerability to which he'd exposed himself: first, the danger to his physical body that came with fasting, alone, for four days in the wilderness; and, second, the 'moral' danger (or, at least, culpability) of having asked his wife to support him in this endeavor, such that she found herself facing a potentially fraught decision[199] about having to spend four days alone with a grizzled near-stranger in the Wyoming mountains. Ryan also seemed to be working with a tension between involuntary nature of 'forgetting', on the one hand, and his explicit moral culpability for failures to be 'mindful' or 'present' enough to catalyze a powerful spiritual experience in ceremony.

Returning, finally, to the question of 'practice'—for Wuthnow, commitment is a moral act: "this moral aspect of practice-oriented spirituality most clearly distinguishes it from a spirituality of seeking. … Practice requires integrity, a commitment to the internal logic and rules of the practice itself; it generates a basis from which to make judgments that are internally consistent." (1998:185). For tiospaye members, that relation is, in an important sense, reciprocal: if morality enables commitment, it's because commitment also depends on morality. In short—as we'll see even more clearly in the section which follows—that makes it a question of community.

5. Family's Value

[198] See more on this in the discussion between Biff and Christine below.

[199] To be clear: Ryan did not, at any point, seem to think that he'd 'forced' Christine into this position—she was, quite obviously, more than capable of taking care of herself, and the sense of equal footing between them was evident from the first time we'd met—but rather, he seemed concerned that he'd made what could've been construed as an unfair or disrespectful request, that she might honor against her own better judgment.

"Neither theoretically nor empirically is a community territorially based;
it is a matter of choice on the part of the 'I'."
- Hervé Varenne, *Americans Together* (1977:34)

"Like home, a sacred place is where the heart is—not where the heart yearns to be, but where people are willing to invest the time and energy required to construct a home and to live there. At its best, making a home is a practice, an act of love."
- Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (1998:50-51)

In November of 2010, I received an invitation to meet more of the tiospaye, and to join them for an *inipi*—a sweat lodge—in Massachusetts. As usual, it started with a lengthy email exchange: I'd been introduced (by email) to Melanie, Mark's *hunka*[200] daughter and heir to his altar, a year earlier, but she hadn't been at either of the first to tiospaye gatherings I'd attended; when I found out that she would be leading the weekend's ceremony, I jumped at the chance to meet her face-to-face. Melanie wrote to about a dozen of us at the beginning of November, trying to find a date that worked for the largest number, and offering some instructions: we were told to make 144 prayer ties (in a particular sequence of colors) if we had "a specific prayer," or to make 50 red ties "for prayers… and/or to support the other people present."

In retrospect, I could read Mark's teaching throughout the note. Like Mark, Melanie emphasized that the sacralizing work of "ceremony" far exceeded the bounds of the ritual event itself: "preparation is part of the ceremony," she explained, and we should "take some time in the next few weeks—a quiet moment here and there—to prepare on the lodge, in a simple way. Sing a lodge song on your way to work. Calm mind and body. Reconnect to the outdoors for a few minutes. The inipi is a time to remember what is important and what is sacred. To remember your sacredness." She also put me in touch with "*Leksi* Paul"—a.k.a., Bear Man—who would be

[200] A Lakota word meaning, in the tiospaye's usage, "sacred relative;" Mark had once explained to me that he'd "adopted" Melanie, in part to keep the nature of their relationship "clean" and to preempt speculation about the possibility of inappropriate sexual contact between himself and his student, then in her very early 20s.

hosting the ceremony on his property in rural Massachusetts, and who offered to let me stay with him.

I made my way north on a clear, cold Friday. The drive to Paul's brought me from interstate highway to increasingly smaller byways; the road wound past condominium complexes and a ramshackle horse farm and, eventually, across a single-lane bridge to an unpaved stretch of lakeside road posted at 15mph and marked "residents ONLY." Paul, who clearly enjoyed performing the gruffness that had earned him his nickname of "Bear Man," met me at the door, and invited me into his home.

Paul is a semi-retired carpenter—he half-jokingly described himself as the "odd man out," because, he said, he was just about the only member of the tiospaye who isn't in any way involved in psychotherapy—and he'd been involved in Native American spiritual practices for decades. He'd met Mark at a Sun Dance in South Dakota almost in the late 1990s, only to find out that they were neighbors in Massachusetts; they'd become fast friends, and Paul had been part of the tiospaye ever since.

We shared a long, meandering evening: it began with conversation in the smoky living room, an episode of *House* playing at high volume on the television. He remarked, at one point, that there'd been "indications," over the years, that he was probably supposed to become an iyeska himself. He seemed a little apprehensive when he said it—and later, I asked whether that question had been "floating" for a while.

"Yep," he said—and then sat, silently, for more than a minute. Just when I was sure he'd dropped the thread, he spoke: he was scared, he said, of interacting "with spirit like that." He wondered aloud whether his reaction sounded crazy: for years on end, he'd been seeking opportunities to be in proximity to spirits during ceremonies—but the fact remained, that he was

scared. He paused, and—echoing a sentiment common to many members of the tiospaye—added that he felt like since he didn't have a daily practice, he wasn't prepared. If he had a "daily practice," he said, it would be "different."

I was struck, even then—only a few months into fieldwork—by the emerging ubiquity of tiospaye members' concerns about the regularity of their practice (which I took, at the time, to be a matter of anxiety over failure to conform to group mores[201] about 'discipline'). Later, I came to think of the way they talked about the challenge of solo practice as both an expression of that concern, and as a kind of hedge: a way to account, in advance, for their possible failure to have the experiences of themselves they sought.[202]

That weekend at Paul's home was the first of many 'local', satellite tiospaye gatherings in which I participated—'minor' events like sweat lodges, held at members' homes throughout the year and generally lightly attended. These gatherings, I suggest, perform a dual role for members: on the one hand, the get-togethers are sources of familial sociality—even as they affirm individual members' 'sovereign selfhood' (here, as the authority to decide for themselves

[201] Or, perhaps more precisely, counter-counter-cultural ideals, as they sought to distinguish themselves from "new-age window-shoppers."

[202] I want to distinguish, here, between, on the one hand, what I take to be a pattern of speech acts performed by individuals in the course of managing their own expectations and self-presentation and, on the other, the diagnostic impulse that finds expression in several (otherwise surpassingly rich) ethnographic accounts of spiritual healing in contemporary milieux that are, perhaps, discomfitingly close to (epistemological) home. Csordas, for instance, flatly asserts that "spiritual healing"—in the sense of being graced with an experience of peace and acceptance with respect to one's illness—"serves as a kind of 'consolation prize'" and "an important hedge against the failure of healing prayer, sidestepping the thorny issues of theodicy" (1997:43). And Luhrmann writes of having been "spooked" by her co-participants at a New Age meditation, who "sobbed as if they were little children who... had lost their teddy bear;" she was, moreover, "unnerved" by the "giant sucking sensation" by dint of which "it felt as if cult members felt that my involvement in the group was an essential part of their experience" (Luhrmann 2004:20). Luhrmann, in short, seems taken aback by her interlocutors' implication that she is accountable for her contribution, as it were, to an intersubjective experience. For a superlative counterexample, see Jeanne Favret-Saada's work on witchcraft in rural France, which is predicated on an epistemologically radical disavowal of such positional security (1980).

issues of meaning and personal relevance), they tend, inexorably, toward the building of interpretive consensus. On the other hand, many of these get-togethers have the effect of exacerbating a sense of 'distance'—not between the members present, but between them and the possibility of sharing Mark's experience of transformation: it was in and around these events that I most often heard people construe Mark's role as interpreter of spirits as a 'gift' or 'calling', and therefore something to which they could not access (or be expected to access) by disciplined will or good works.

In the Lodge

Saturday dawned clear and cold. Paul and I had a light breakfast, and went about preparing for the lodge. The frame stood in one corner of the yard: a skeletal, dome-shaped structure, roughly eight feet in diameter, and three feet at its highest point, made of sixteen slender wooden poles dug into the ground, bent , and lashed together with strips of red fabric. A shallow pit where the stones would eventually be placed—maybe eight inches deep and two feet across—marked the center of the lodge. Ten feet to the east of the lodge's entrance was the fire pit and, at the halfway point between the two, a mound of dirt comprised the *hocoka*, or altar.

There were stones and wood to gather and, later, tarps and blankets would cover the lodge-frame—but the first order of business was clearing debris from the ground: anything that might inadvertently catch fire needed to be swept out of the way; with a laugh, Paul handed me the "ceremonial leaf-blower," and I set to work. Ryan and Christine were the first to arrive, mid-morning; over the next few hours, more tiospaye members (and a guest or two) trickled in: Mac[203] and Stacy as well as Melanie, her sister, and their friend. Mac and Stacy spent the

[203] A long-time member of the tiospaye, and another clinician.

morning huddled in a room on the second floor of the house; Stacy had been sober for about six months, and Mac, who was also a member of a twelve-step recovery fellowship, was listening to her 'Fifth Step'.[204]

Below, Paul barked orders, and the rest of us scurried around: scraps of old carpet were arrayed on the ground inside the lodge, the frame was covered with tarps, and Melanie—who would be "pouring"[205] the lodge—verified that, when the last of the tarps was in place, the interior was pitch-black. Wood was stacked, and the stones—addressed, variously, as "stone-person," *Tunkasila*, or Grandfather—were blessed, and placed on the pyre before it was lit. As Paul and Melanie explained it, the rocks would be giving their lives for us that day: having absorbed the heat of from the fire, they would be brought, one by one, into the lodge. When cold water hit the stones, the steam they created would bear the spirit of the stones themselves, along with the teachings and wisdom that their sacrifice brought with it.

Ryan, as "firekeeper," tended the pyre, while the rest of us prepared for the ceremony. Our faces were marked with *wasé*;[206] personal effects (like jewelry) were placed on the altar; and zig-zagged lines of white and yellow corn meal were poured on the ground between fire and lodge: the path they made, connecting the center of the fire with the center of the lodge, was not to be crossed (except by the firekeeper). A *canupa*, or ceremonial pipe, was loaded, and placed on the altar. We stood in a circle, as Melanie gave instructions, explained what was going on, and told stories she'd heard from her "elders." One of the stories—about a visit to a Hopi man, who taught a lesson about crawling in corn sounded remarkably familiar to me, and it took me a

[204] The reading aloud of a "moral inventory"—a detailed accounting of one's resentments, fears, harms done to others, and sexual behavior—written in the "fourth step."
[205] I.e., leading the ceremony.
[206] A red paste made from ochre.

moment to realize what was happening: she was telling her listeners a story she'd heard from Mark, in much the same way he re-told stories from *his* teachers.

When the stones were red-hot, we gathered in a queue—men in swim trunks, women in long skirts and tee-shirts—and waited for our turn to be "smudged," or blessed and purified, by the smoldering bundle of sage Ryan held. He fanned its smoke along our limbs, front and back, and we each, in turn, made our way into the lodge. Melanie, as *iyeska*, led the procession; one by one, we got on hands and knees in the icy mud, touched our foreheads to the ground, uttered the phrase "Mitakuye Oyasin" (or its English equivalent, "All my relations"), and crawled inside.

We formed a semi-circle in the close darkness, sitting, cross-legged and hunched over our knees, held to our chests. Melanie, nearest the 'door', directed Ryan to bring the stones from the fire. One at a time, he carried the stones on the tines of a pitchfork; when he reached the door, we would call out a greeting: "Welcome, Grandfather!" Melanie would grasp the stone with a pair of deer antlers, and place it in the shallow pit in the center of the lodge. Each stone was sprinkled with cedar, and brushed with sweetgrass. The air grew warm, though it was still quite dry—especially in contrast to the wet, cold ground surrounding the scraps of carpet on which we sat—and the smoke from the cedar and sweetgrass filled the lodge with a deliciously pungent mélange.

After Ryan had carried seven stones into the lodge, Melanie called "Aho!"[207] Ryan set aside the pitchfork, crawling into the lodge, and pulling down the layered canvas-and-plastic 'door' behind him. The only light came from the glow of the stones—soft, and red—and the temperature began to rise even before Melanie poured the first ladle of water. There was a

[207] A supremely polysemic vocable meaning, in this case, 'enough'.

sizzling sound as the water hit the rocks, and I could feel, rather than see the billowing steam. Melanie's voice rose in song, and others joined in: the first round was underway.

The lodge lasted for about two hours that day. There were four rounds—song; prayer; healing; and, finally, a short 'thank you' round, in which participants offered simple statements of gratitude—and in between each, the door was opened, and Ryan got out to fetch more stones. Everyone took their cues from Melanie.

When Mark is present during tiospaye gatherings, there's a relentless emphasis on the notion that the ceremony is intended as a healing for the community, and that participants are sharing an opportunity to be together as "family." The question of individual accountability, when it arises, is often oblique—or mediated by the spirits performing the healing (as we saw during Sam's interaction with Inyan Wasicu). In ceremonial portions of the 'satellite' events, however, participants seemed to stress their own 'shortcomings': they tend to volunteer themselves as personally accountable for their 'failures'.

During the healing round, Mac—moved to tears—renewed his commitment to his spiritual "work." He recalled standing in front of the tree at the Sun Dance six months earlier, and being addressed directly by Spirit: "you gave your life to me," a voice had said, "now I give it back to you—don't forget again!"

Stacy recalled a pledge she'd made to forgo behaviors like greed, lying, and lust, but said she'd forgotten the part about "no stealing." Melanie prodded her, gently, about why that one was especially significant—and Stacy talked about having stolen drugs and money—but, she said, what was most significant was that she'd stolen time away from brothers and sisters by choosing to stay lost in addiction.

At one point, Melanie addressed Paul. His longstanding 'open' question about his interactions with spirits and the trajectory of his own path—that is, whether or not he would become an iyeska himself—was obviously the subject of an ongoing dialogue; when she broached it, it was clearly not for the first time: she asked him whether he ever had the experience of looking around his house, catching sight of something like the vacuum cleaner, and thinking he'd seen a person. He said yes, he had; and she responded—authoritatively, but with a smile in her voice: "that's how it starts."

Afterwards, we stumbled out into the early afternoon sunlight, steam rising from our skin as we hugged or shook hands, or simply looked long into each other's eyes, acknowledging a mutual understanding that we'd just shared something beautiful.

We chatted while toweling off; most of the women made their way into the house to set out the 'feast', and the majority of the men cleaned up outside—hanging tarps and carpet scraps to dry, returning buckets and fire tools to Paul's basement. By the time we gathered inside, everyone seemed as hungry as I was—and the potluck spread of fruits, vegetables, chicken, macaroni & cheese, and dessert (Christine's caramel brownies were a particular hit) seemed like a genuine feast. Conversation was light and jocular—at one point, Paul passed his special "bear pipe" around for people to inspect—but, in the main, everyone just seemed to be taking the opportunity to enjoy each other's company: to remember, if not quite hold on to, what it felt like to together as "family."

For tiospaye members, the idea of family acts as a kind of enabling constraint: it licenses certain kinds of claims, while proscribing others.[208] Christine, for instance, was adamant that

[208] When I asked Melanie about a term I'd heard Mark use to refer to her—his "hunka daughter"—she explained: "it's a spiritual relationship." Her parents, she said, had been understandably concerned about the fact that she, as a college student, was spending a great deal

when tiospaye members used kinship terms to describe their relationships or to address each other, that "the 'family' thing is more than just a metaphor. It's like we really do aspire to be an extended family, and [we] see ourselves that way. So as far as I'm concerned," she said—simultaneously disavowing and naming the gap between what she hoped for, and what she could see plausibly assert as a present-tense characterization, sustained by a combination of choices and affective labor.

"Bear Man's my uncle. I think of him that way," she explained. She and Ryan went to visit him about once a month for a 'movie night', and, on more than one occasion, they'd gone to considerable logistical and financial lengths to bring him with them to the Sun Dance. When she thought about what to make of "the people that sort of hang around, and 'dip in and out'," she said, she considered them "part of the family, [even though] they're not really committed to the 'family' aspect of it. I guess we don't necessarily—" she cut herself off, and then continued: "they're always welcome. Sometimes they dip in when they need something, and they get what they need—and they go and they do other stuff. And then they dip back in again. That's fine," she insisted. "I don't think any of us thinks that 'one way' is the right way for everybody. Nobody's preaching that," she said. "People get what they need." It was as if she were trying to find space between "metaphor" and "aspiration," but had reached the limits of metaphor in effort to be inclusive and to avoid judgment of the people who were "not really committed to the family aspect"—and then, in the course of searching for a third term, she shifted her

---

of time in mysterious ceremonies with a much older man. They "were unsure of Mark," she smiled, but they attended a sweat lodge and, "with time, they saw the change in me," she said. "And he's never let me down. We did the hunka ceremony, so it was 'father-daughter'. And it really helped for people to see that relationship, that that's how we're connected, that's what our relationship is," she said.

characterization of the object from a "we" to an "it," of which 'family-ness' was (only) one aspect, and in relation to which "people" became subtly, but decidedly, external.

In addition to being sources of enduring love and support, families can, of course, also be sites of tremendous contention and conflict—between ideals and expectations—and in which the bestowal or withholding of approval or love is a primary currency. Tiospaye—literally, "family"—members insist on a non-metaphorical notion usage of family, but it's a notion of family that's purified of many of the difficult realities that by which kinship binds individuals. They want, in other words, a voluntaristic commitment to substitute for the complex of morally binding intersubjective obligations of 'family'—which is why the temporal dimension of their commitments is so necessary (even if it's not always sufficient): it is the repeated performance of voluntary commitment—legible in sacrifices of time and money and, for Sun Dancers, literal flesh—over the course of years that comes closest to substituting for the adhesive effects of kinship.

Generations: Family and "Family"

After the sweat lodge, Melanie and I drove to her mother's house—about halfway between Paul's home and her own—to pick up Melanie's husband, Rob, and their children (a three-year-old girl, and an eleven-month-old boy). When Melanie's mother asked her how the lodge had gone, Melanie replied that she didn't really remember much of the detail—that she'd had to really "dig in [her] brain" to find the memory of what she'd done a couple of hours ago. The ceremony itself had been "easy," she said, because the ritual "kind of takes care of itself." Melanie talked about the inipi in terms of "forgetting, in order to remember"—meaning 'forgetting' the mundane matters of everyday life, in order to 'remember' the 'deeper' spiritual

truths. She answered her mother's questions without getting *too* specific: it'd been "a big year" for a number of people in the tiospaye, she explained, and so much of the ceremony had been about "renewal" and "cleansing."

A little later that evening, I sat down with Melanie and Rob in their home, for the first of several longer conversations. They were both in their early 30s; they'd met each other in college, which is where they'd also met Mark.

The escalation of commitments within the tiospaye—from 'simply' attending, to making a pipe pledge, to vision quests and participating in the Sun Dance—add another layer of complexity. Members are adamant that relations within the group are not hierarchical: as Melanie put it, it might look as though "Iyeska-is-better-than-singer-is-better-than-pipe-holder-is-better-than-non-pipe-holder," but "everyone has their role."

Rob suggested that the whole notion of "hierarchy"—the imposition of a "a value system" in which "*this* way to God is better than *that* way"—was an artifact of "Western culture."[209] Still—in the context of such voluntaristic association—these commitments seem to function as a kind of incentive structure. There's no 'revelation' that attends the attainment of 'master' level, however; instead, the hope is that they gain increasing mastery over themselves: self-consciousness, in this setting, becomes a problem to be solved, using techniques like prayer to quarantine or transcend the 'self'.

I wanted to understand the role she'd taken on in the tiospaye, and I asked her about the apparent enormity of her commitment as something like "heir apparent" to Mark's altar. I was

[209] When I challenged them on the idea that native Lakota practitioners were somehow radically free from differential relationships, Melanie quickly clarified that "we're talking about in theory—in the 'purest' form of the tradition, the teachings. In practice, and in 'reality'," she shook her head, "it is also not good to romanticize the Lakota people—the rez, especially." Rob added that "I don't think the rez, as it is now, is free from Western culture influence, either. The collision's already happened," he said.

fumbling for the right word to characterize her relationship to Mark: "'student' is the word I use most of the time," she offered. "But sometimes to explain it to people I'll say, like, 'it's an apprenticeship'."

I asked them whether they'd discussed the decision to take on the altar together. "Mark talked about it with us," Rob said. "He warned me—told me to run away," he laughed. "No," Rob shook his head, "he mentioned it a lot. I think his relationship with [his wife] Kayla—"

"—and Joe's relationship with his kids," Melanie interjected, referring to Joe Eagle Elk's well-known estrangement from his children—a condition all too common, Mark had told her, among medicine people. "Things can suffer."

"Yeah," Rob continued. "He wanted to make sure that we both understood that if I stay with Melanie, what that means—and, if Melanie accepts the altar, what *that* means. So yeah," he said, "we did have those kind of conversations."

Melanie paused, and said:

> I think that with having an altar, like being an iyeska—in *this* culture, it's not as supported. You know, originally, if you're with a tribe of people, it's an 'honor' position—it's really supported by the community, and so the family is supported. But it can be a hardship for Mark sometimes, and for Joe it definitely was. I mean, you can't really say 'no' to people, and so many people were coming asking for help and… It drained him spiritually, and physically, and monetarily. So I think that's a little bit different than just practicing the practice. I have a lot of support, and people that already trust me, that already believe in me, and trust me to do the right thing. Lots of singers, people who know the songs. Probably six month ago now, we were going to do a ceremony, but Mark couldn't make it up, so it was the first time that I did it in his

> place—then Ryan and Christine and Paul and Rob were all here, and they were so supportive, and I could really feel them. And—it's not about *me*. That's, like, what it comes out to, bottom line, at the point of the ceremony.

I was struck, then, by her assertion that "you can't really say 'no' to people." She'd used the 'indefinite you', suggesting that, generally speaking, a person in Joe or Mark's position was compelled to make themselves available to supplicants, whatever the personal cost. She hadn't said "we" couldn't decline—hadn't included herself, despite her status as heir-apparent and iyeska in training. It seemed like an important elision—especially given her conspicuous absence from several of the tiospaye's healing ceremonies that year. I only ever heard Mark comment on her absence once—he'd noted, obliquely, that having small children was one of the reasons people offered in their explanations of their absence from gatherings, and he'd mentioned Melanie as an example—but there hadn't been a hint of scorn in his voice when he said it: only something that sounded like sadness, and even that was fleeting.

When the conversation returned to the day's events, I had a chance to ask her about what she'd said to Paul, during the lodge. "You said something about his fear about moving into the role of an iyeska," I prompted.

Melanie chuckled. "He and I have had the same fear of seeing spirits," she said. "It's hard to explain 'things' that aren't explainable: being visited by these things that we pray to, and for, and *with*—we pray with: the spirit helpers. We both have had this fear," she said, "especially if I'm alone, I just get afraid—like I'm going to lose my mind, like I'm going to just be really scared." She reflected for a moment on her own experience, earlier that day: "I guess it was a little bit of an 'interpreter' moment," she said, "because I just *knew* that that had been happening to him—that it's already starting. So because of that fear, he hasn't seen anything. He wants that

experience, but he's afraid of it. So that moment was like just saying, like, 'it's already happening.' I don't know if that means, for him, [stepping into] more of an 'iyeska' thing—but he definitely has some gifts along that line," she averred.

I asked her to explain what she'd meant by "an 'iyeska' moment," and she described a tentativeness and uncertainty that hadn't been at all obvious to me during the ceremony. Even more interesting, however, was *how* she described it—that is, as she got her footing, she her her earlier passive statements about Mark and Joe were supplanted by clear, unequivocal assertions in the first-person:

> Where, like, being told—I'm being *told* that. When those things are clear, it's real easy to just say what—you can just *say* it. But the other times—like, checking in, I wonder: is this too hot? No one's really been in a lodge in a while; I know [one woman] was worried about it being too hot, and everyone's faces were so red! It's one of those times where I don't know, and I have to sort of fight it, and just *trust*, and go back and forth between—I mean, it's really important to not kill somebody in the lodge! That's interesting, that you picked up on that, because that's, for me, my experience definitely was that was a moment of, like, "Oh—Okay. Okay, I hear that. I'm going to tell that to him now." Like, "okay, Paul,"—and he's holding the pipe when, and this happened with Ryan, when he was holding the pipe for Paul. Like more stuff. It's like, when you're holding the pipe for the ceremony, or if you've given me ties for the ceremony, you've given your permission to the spirits: to have stuff said to you, to be seen, to be 'read' by the spirits. They're going to read you, and so it made it really easy for me to hear that about Paul, whereas—because you have to give permission. If you don't *ask* for help, if you don't *give* permission, they're not going to say it—or it's not going to be clear for the iyeska. Some

iyeskas, I think, have the gift that they can see into everybody, but if you don't give that permission, they won't tell you.

I was intrigued by the way she seemed to be parsing different kinds of 'gifts' for interpretation—and, given the ubiquity of emphasis on embodied experience, I pressed further in that direction: "I guess I'm wondering about the sort of—that kind of 'tacking-back-and-forth'—the *texture* of your experience of that," I said. "What's that like for you?"

"It's 'ceremony time', I guess," she said. "It's a feeling of 'letting the ceremony take over'. I'm learning; I think that I'll get better with it in time, to be less worried about 'checking in'—"

Rob interjected: "when we do four days—"

"If I was fasting," she nodded, "fasting can really help with that as well."

"Fasting," Rob nodded, "or you're doing multiple days of ceremony. Then they get more locked in, and there're less of those, 'Is everybody okay?' moments," he said.

Melanie thought for a moment, and said, a little apologetically: "I don't remember a lot of stuff either. I know that happens to Mark[, too]; someone will ask me about it, and I'll remember, but it's a little bit like I sort of forget what happened."

I tried to clarify my question: "I'm not trying to put together an account of what happened in the lodge," I laughed. "I'm really asking about your—I mean, the image I'm getting when you're talking is this is sort of like you're having these moments where you're inadvertently 'touching ground'," I said.

"Yeah!" she exclaimed. **"**Yeah."

"And" I continued, "what it's *like* for you—what the work of 'letting go' of that, to get back to an immersed, engaged, released experience of 'presence'—the *work* of, 'yeah, now I'm

worrying. Let me *not* do that'. What does *that* moment feel like for you?" I asked. "What is the work that you're doing in that moment?"

"Usually," she said, "I'll just pray." She seemed to settle into herself, and she continued with certainty in her voice:

> I just try to get really low down and pray, and just ask for help. This is really—because *I* can't do it. I can't do it, so it's really just like a 'put my face on the ground' type of thing. "Just help me to do this in a good way. Help me to help everybody. Help me to just be a vessel," and that helps. Then, when the ceremony 'clicks back in', [the] door's closed. I would just try to remember everything—not try; *remembering* everything that I've been taught, that I *know*. That it's *not* about *me*. God is in everybody. Oh—and I connect in with Mark—like he does with Joe. It's like, "okay, I don't really know what I'm doing, and I have this feeling the *maluk* that I had tied up, that's like a connection—[a] medicine bundle that ties me with him. I just have this way—like, I can just feel him. I can *feel* a *tie* to him, and so I just try to let everything go to that, because that's where the medicine bundle is. That's where the altar is. It's so hard to describe. It's like that bundle is a way to—it's like '*here's* a spiritual reality, and *here's* our physical reality', and that it's like where they touch is the bundle, and it's a way for things to go back and forth. That's the medicine, that's the 'power'—it's such a damaged word, but—the *power* of the ceremony comes from that.

Melanie's description of the position of an iyeska was (unsurprisingly) consistent with what I'd heard Mark, and other tiospaye members, assert: that one is called, but that one has a choice about whether or not to answer the call—"you have to give them permission," she'd said. Accepting the role, however, seemed another matter: on the one hand, it entailed an absolute and

binding obligation—as Biff put it elsewhere, "you're on call twenty-four-fucking-seven." On the other hand, performing the role—at least, in Melanie's experience, was fraught with ambivalence: it seemed to entail a great deal of discipline, and ongoing sacrifices that she wasn't totally sure she was willing to make; on numerous occasions during my time in the field, she was absent from tiospaye ceremonies because of "family" obligations.

It seemed like she'd surprised herself with that longer stretch of talk. She paused; her whole affect shifted, and when she said, "I don't know," it was as though she disappeared into the phrase.

"What don't you—" I trailed off.

"I don't know how to describe it," she said.

"You're describing 'it' a lot," I said, "but what do you—what are you concerned that you're not communicating?"

Something shifted, and she sat forward again: **"**How *I* am not 'doing' anything. I don't *do* anything! I don't know," she paused. "I feel like I'm saying 'me' so much and 'I do this and I do that'," she shook her head, "and I don't want to put it across that *I'm* doing anything." The cat jumped just then, distracting us; when she continued, it was in a softer voice: "And, um, [there's] the fact that I've never really talked about this. I don't know if other people do that. That's just what I do." She searched for a metaphor: "It's like I have a mole [on my skin]. It doesn't mean I have a 'gift'—it's just a part of how I was born, right? Some people have these certain moles that makes them different than somebody who doesn't. [It's like] if you can do this—" she curled her tongue. "Some people can't."

"That's true," I agreed.

She continued: “at the same time, I have to work hard. The more ‘pure’ that I live my life, the better vessel I can be—God willing.”

“Yeah,” I nodded. “that’s what strikes me as a fairly intense commitment.”

Melanie smiled. “I get a lot out of it, too.”

“What do you get out of it,” I asked.

“Peace,” she said. “Peace and joy.” She particularly valued:

> the kind of connection—like the feeling hooked in. Feeling connected with spirit. Fulfilling—and I feel like I’m living a ‘true’ life. That’s—I’m helping my relations. If I can work through the karma that I have, the anger that I have when I’m around the kids, I know part of that is because my mom’s dad was violent. He was violent to her, and so that’s in my family lineage, and it needs to be—it *could* be worked out, if I can figure out how to deal with it in a peaceful way. That’s going to heal some of that. Mark said that every time he goes on the altar to do a ceremony, he remembers the things that he’s done poorly in his life. It comes back to him, in a way, of: “how can *I* be worthy to do this? Think of this stuff that I’ve done!”

Again, she paused, and her demeanor shifted dramatically. “Enough about me!” she said, giggling. “I really feel self-conscious all of a sudden.”

Again, I pressed her: “what shifted?”

“Right now,” she asked.

“Yeah,” I said.

“I don’t know,” she dodged—and then straightened. “*Everybody* does this. *Everybody* tries hard. I’m not that special. I don’t *feel* special.”

"I think it's more of *your* family karma, too," Rob suggested, his voice conveying tenderness without a hint of condescension.

"That's true," she laughed.

"It's a [family] thing," he said. "'Don't be special! Be the same as everyone else'."

"I really *am* no different," she insisted. "Everybody is special—*everybody*." She paused. "I don't know," she said, shaking her head.

***

Later in the year, as I listened to other tiospaye members talk about Mark's "gift" or his "calling," I kept thinking back on this conversation with Melanie. Rob accounted for her wracking ambivalence about what she only grudgingly called her "gift" by reference to her biography—i.e., that being 'special' was strongly discouraged in her family of origin—but she reached for a more social, and ultimately political, framework for making sense of it. Above all, I was struck by the weight of the burden she carried—that the onus was on her not just to cultivate her own self, but to heal the violence in her "family lineage"—and her understandable apprehension about of the scope of the burden she had yet to bear, if she made the decision to step fully into the role in the tiospaye to which she had been "called."

In one of our conversations, Ryan—his voiced tinged with an uncharacteristic touch of awe—made a pointed observation about Mark's 'gift'. "The elephant in the room is that Mark is going to die young. We're going to lose him sooner than later, because he's given his life to this, and he's doing this ceremony, and he's giving up pieces of himself in order to do this," he said. "The job of the interpreter makes you crazy. Apart from having a piece of your life taken in a particular ceremony—like the yuwipi—he gets beaten up because he's trying to interpret, to make sense of this for us. I don't understand it. And he makes the point, too: they choose you.

You don't choose that life." Ryan shook his head. "Anyone who's a *real* shaman, healer, iyeska—they hate it as much as they respect it and enjoy it," he said. "It's his calling."

What struck me, then, was the tacit distinction between how Ryan framed Mark's decision to respond to a "calling"—i.e., that "he's given his life to this" and "he's giving up pieces of himself in order to do this"—on the one hand and, on the other, the halting, ambivalent quality with which he'd described his own "commitment" (as evidenced by his lack of daily practices and the dominance of his "ego" which "runs the show"). Mark's "surrender," in Ryan's account, was, crucially, still a matter of volition—that is, Mark has a choice about whether or not to respond to the "calling"—but there is a radically external element: "they choose you," he stressed. It's such a key point, in fact, that, for Ryan, it licenses a distinction between "real" healers and "wanna-be" healers—a distinction discernible, at least in part, by whether or not the healer has an appropriately ambivalent relationship to their "gift."

I thought about Weber's classic definition of 'charisma' as "an extraordinary quality of a person… to [whom] the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person" (1946b:295)—with its inescapable roots in an antecedent notion of grace: a gift; unearned, and impossible to reciprocate. I was always intrigued by how thoroughly disinterested Mark was in what people 'believe'—except to discourage them from making him the object of their faith: that this must not be the "Church of Mark." And I often wondered about Mark's relentless insistence on the quality of people's presence during ceremony—how utterly important it was to him that everyone discipline their focus: not on themselves, and especially not on him, but on the supplicant in search of healing.

James Boon once observed—apropos of Jean Pouillon's (1982) "Remarks on the Verb 'To Believe'"—that "to profess belief is to establish a distance, more than an adherence, between the

professor and the professed" (Boon 1982:viii). That distance, I think, is precisely what Mark goes to such great lengths to collapse. During ceremonies—as the interpreter of spirits—he is a present absence: a "hollow bone" at the center of things, sacrificing his 'self' (for a time) so that Others may pass (through). After—as he helps supplicants to interpret their experience—he is an absent presence: a practiced clinician, leading interlocutors to the edge of insight; and then, refusing to impose certainty, he creates a vacuum into which (he hopes) they will be drawn. His ambivalence about his own "gift"—his voluntary choice to "answer" the "call," as Ryan observed, in tension with his frequent frustrations and disappointments—is part of what marks him as 'authentic' in the eyes people who are professionally attuned to affect.

Reconciling all of this would be a lot to ask of anyone—and no wonder that so many tiospaye members take their time, and are careful with their commitments. But that, I think, is part of what they value about this family: there is no hurry. Kinship, forged in ritual but tempered over time, also becomes a way to mediate their various commitments—to hold them in abeyance—and to sustain the ambivalences that give them room to play. And in their sometimes languid journeys, they find a kind of home—grounded, if not in space, than in elliptical quality of their commitments to each other. An American poet once wrote that "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in" (Frost 1917)—and the difference between having to be taken in when one has to go, and having others choose to take one in when one has chosen to go may have less to do with the immutable frankness of blood, than with the inexorable passage of time.

Conclusion

"This isn't Psychotherapy—This is a Relationship"

> "Drumbeats of liberation, legion in brand, tend to drown out earthly ambiguities—the very stuff of cultures. … Reflexivity is not the exclusive property of therapeutic hawkers of cures for damaged 'selves'. Nor is it limited to 'new ages' or cutting edges—whether postmodernist, or before that, modernist, Romanticist, Enlightenment, or Renaissance"
>
> - James Boon, *Verging on Extra-Vagance* (1999:174-75)

> "This *isn't* psychotherapy—this is a relationship."
>
> - Mark

On a bright gray Saturday, toward the end of an unusually fierce mid-Atlantic winter in 2011, I found myself inside a deconsecrated church on the outskirts of a rural college town: I was part of a circle of more than forty people, gathered from as far as a thousand miles away. More than a third of those present were psychotherapists; three were directors of university counseling centers. Some of them had prepared and traveled and fasted for days. They'd come to be together—to pray, and sing, and dance—but, most particularly, to take part in several spiritual healing ceremonies, led by Mark.

The ceremonies on that afternoon in early March would begin with a *lowampi* ceremony, consisting of sequential rounds of drumming and song, and held in total darkness (in this case, in a cavernous room with blacked-out windows). During the rite, Mark's task was to allow his consciousness to leave his body, so that he could mediate between the people who are asking for help, and the spirits that have been called into the room to perform the healing work. Later in the evening, Mark led a far less commonplace—and more dangerous—ceremony called a *yuwipi*. Also conducted in total darkness, a yuwipi is a particularly intense form of Lakota healing ceremony brought to bear when unusually urgent or difficult healing is needed (examples given

to me included missing children and acute, life-threatening illnesses). In a yuwipi, the intercessor is tightly bound with cords around his feet, hands, and neck, and then wrapped in blankets which are themselves tied securely around him. If the prayer in the room is sufficiently intense and clear, the spirits will untie the iyeska. Injuries are common—in this case, Mark broke a rib—and, according to anecdotes I heard while on the Lakota reservation, fatalities are not unheard of.

But the first order of business, that morning, was cause for celebration: three members of the group were making their "pipe pledges"—they'd received *canupas*, or ceremonial tobacco pipes, with which they were being taught to pray in accord with the group's practice. People stood or sat, clustered in groups of two and three and seven. More experienced group members told the would-be "pipe carriers" what to expect in the ceremony. Christine made the rounds with a cup of sage tea, administering sips as a purification to the women in the group who were menstruating. Biff and Ryan discussed the challenges of getting a private psychotherapy practice up and running, given the encumbrances imposed by health insurers. Nearby, another man—a middle-aged white IT professional, who'd tagged along with Biff and Annelise on the drive up from Georgia, and who was evidently surprised by the preponderance mental health professionals in attendance—observed, "this seems like the headshrinker tiospaye!"[210]

Mark called the little groups together into one larger circle. When everyone was standing and facing the center of the room, he announced that we were gathered to "witness a Lakota pipe carrier ceremony." Mark began walking clockwise around the inside of the circle, telling his story of "why a white Italian Polish guy" is "allowed" to "do this." He spoke at length of the people he described as his teachers—"elders" from a variety of indigenous traditions. As he walked, he brushed people with a fan made of eagle feathers: part of the purification, as he

[210] *Tiospaye*, again, is a Lakota word for 'extended family', used by group members to refer to themselves formally in the collective.

explained it; a cleansing. His speech alternated between witty self-deprecation and rousing oratory about the connectedness of all things, the value of all people, and the wisdom of the teachings with which he'd been gifted. Gradually, a call-and-response cadence developed: the people in the circle met his pregnant pauses with increasingly resonant voicings of *mitakuye oyasin*—a Lakota phrase widely translated as 'all my relations' or 'everything is my relative', and deployed in a variety of contexts, most often to signal assent or to conclude a prayer. He compared the pipe-carrier ceremony to the sacrament of confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church, a reference with which most of his audience appeared familiar. He spoke of the paramount importance of a moment in a person's life that he called *wacin'k sape*—in Lakota, "awakening to wisdom."

At the center of the circle, on the altar, stood Melanie, Mark's protégé, who will inherit the altar from him when he passes away. Each of the prospective pipe-carriers—Helen, a local, white, female college professor in her forties; Ed, the 52-year-old Delaware Indian man who taught Tae-Kwon-Do (and in whose dojang-née-church we were then gathered); and Brent, the 23-year-old undergraduate student from Steven's university, and a member of the Lumbee tribe—sat cross-legged on a rug before the altar in the center of the room. By turns, they recited the pledges they had written: a commitment "to be of service to the community," each in their own way; and sang a song in Lakota. Helen wept openly as she made her pledge. Ed's voice was thick, and his wife and two youngest children looked on. Brent faltered once as he recited his pledge, and he was asked to start over. The three were then sent out into the parking lot of the deconsecrated church, to smoke the tobacco in their pipe in prayerful contemplation of the commitment they had just made.

Late in the afternoon, a small circle of senior group members—clinicians, all—took a position off in a corner of the room; one by one, the supplicants were summoned for what was later described as a "diagnostic session." I was among them. I'd been deeply conflicted about whether or not to "ask for a healing" myself, as my interlocutors so frequently had encouraged; by the time the day for 'my' ceremony finally arrived—nearly a year after fieldwork began—I was no longer clear about what I thought it would mean for me to get "caught," in Favret-Saada's (Favret-Saada 1980) sense… but I was never more aware of the epistemological precarity of my position as an ethnographer than at that moment. 'Participant/observer' describes a range of possible positions, sometimes imagined as retroactively discriminable, that one *may have* taken—a fiction, in the best sense, that holds opens a space of possibility between two horizons; the text stands, then, as a trace of the ethnographer's own longing to connect a shared moment from the past to a future reader's encounter with its 'mere' inscription. When my turn came to articulate a request, I fumbled my way through an explanation: I'd found myself, in the wake of my own episodic depression, unable to trust my own experience, I said—and I was afraid that I would always be plagued by the particular, and paralyzing, kind of self-doubt with which I'd been visited. They challenged me to refine my question further; after several halting attempts, I proved unable to do so. They didn't seem satisfied, exactly, but I was dismissed, and the next supplicant was called over.

When the last of us had been screened, and everyone else's preparations had been completed—prayer ties finished, stray bits of tobacco picked up from chairs and clothes and floor with great care, and scraps of cloth swept up—we made our final bathroom visits before the long night of ceremonies. Shoes were left outside, windows and doors were sealed with black plastic trash bags and gaffer's tape, and everyone took seats before the last of the lights were

turned out. Those of us who'd asked for help were all positioned on a buffalo-hide blanket, a few feet to the west of the altar. In the center of the room, attended by Melanie and Christine, Mark sat on the rectangular carpet. At each corner was a forked stick—painted yellow, black, red, and white, with a matching prayer flag suspended from each. Looped along the perimeter, lay all of the thousands of many-colored prayer ties that the attendees had made in preparation; the piled strands formed a boundary that would not be crossed until the ceremony was over.

Before passing fully into his role as Iyeska, Mark explained to the group that all of the supplicants were presenting with more or less the 'same' problem; he didn't call it 'acedia'—the diagnostic category he'd been tinkering with—because, in the space of ritual, my sense is that something else seemed more important. Instead, he described our shared condition as a lack of self-esteem and self-love, and it had been decided that we would be treated together. He Then, as was his usual practice, he stressed that it was critically important for everyone in the room to focus their intentions and prayers on the supplicants, and to resist the impulse to let their attention wander or to get lost in whatever sights or sounds might distract them.

The lights went off and, in the darkness, the drumming began. A sequence of songs in Lakota, sung in unison, called Mark's spirit helpers in: Black-tailed Deer; Hummingbird; finally, Inyan Wasicu. Deerskin rattles, full of quartz, began shaking in the center of the room, and lighting up—their white spark had the quality of an after-image, and each flash of light was gone even before it fully registered. The pace quickened, and the rattles moved around the room with dizzying speed, appearing everywhere at once, and flying across the vast darkness. Other kinds of light came and went; in most ceremonies I'd been in, these lights had a kind of playful, out-of-the-corner-of-the-eye quality: it was impossible to be sure what I'd seen, exactly, but there was always just enough for me to justify choosing to believe that I had seen *something*. That day,

however, bluish light seemed to pour steadily out of the sealed windows, and onto the floor—I could make out details across the room, and I was sure I could've read by it, despite the fact that I couldn't see my own hands.

Speaking through Mark, Inyan Wasicu addressed us, each in turn. It wasn't always clear *who* was being addressed, exactly—in a muffled, halting, staccato version of Mark's voice, we would hear things like "who is stuck in their head? who thinks too much?" and an awkward silence would follow, as we waited for whoever felt most nearly interpellated to speak up—and a similar pattern played out across the healings: we were asked questions about what we wanted and, since it seemed that each of us was hedging in our responses and 'choosing' to continue to suffer with our respective psychic maladies, we were asked whether or not we really *wanted* to be healed. When my turn came, I was told: to buy, and give away, a single flower every day for 28 days, and to do so without speaking. I was utterly confused by this prescription, and a little disappointed; I hadn't had a specific sense of what was coming, but this… made no sense to me. I was asked if I understood, and whether I was willing; I took the question literally, and I replied that I did, on both counts. Everyone responded in the affirmative, but without enthusiasm: there was, it seemed, a surfeit of faith in the possibility that, as comforting as it might be to be at the subject of kind attention at the center of a circle of 40-plus people—and, of course, Mark's spirit-helpers—that such things as Robbie's self-loathing, Brian's drug addiction, Jean's depression, or my own private 'epistemological crisis' might not yield to the evening's intervention, no matter how compelling the immediate experience of it was.

Another round of songs sent the spirit helpers on their way, and the lights came back up. In between ceremonies, Mark and several of the group's elders huddled in the corner. A few moments later, Mark called the group together, and made an announcement: they had decided

"as elders" that the ritual hadn't been sufficient to heal those of us who'd asked for help, and that we supplicants would need to be included in the more intensive healing that was about to begin. The respite between ceremonies drew to a close, and we returned to our positions in the room.

Lights were lowered; Mark lay on the floor, at the edge of the altar. His hands and feet were bound behind his back, and the cord tied around his neck; he was wrapped in blankets, which were then tied tightly around him. The last of lights went out, drumming began and voices rose, and the next round of ceremony was underway.

The following morning, after a rowdy breakfast, almost everyone returned to the deconsecrated church, sat in a circle on folding metal chairs, and talked about their experiences from the night before: many of us had seen lights and shapes in the darkness; several had interacted with what they identified as a "dark entity" during one of the healings.

Midway through the group's discussion, Steven—a senior clinician; the leader of the Archetypal Play Therapy study group; and, along with Mark, my other key informant—spoke up. It was the first time he'd taken part in a tiospaye gathering in years—the only time I ever saw him and Mark together, in fact—and he'd come with Alice (his wife) and their fifteen-year-old son. Steven had been growing increasingly frustrated, he said, with the limitations he experienced while engaged in his clinical work: that is, with the imperative to maintain what he called "the neutrality you bump up against in psychotherapy." By contrast, he suggested that what had felt so satisfying to him during the ceremony was precisely the clarity of the decision that had been made—that is, that the first ceremony hadn't been enough to heal the supplicants—as well as the utter directness of the action that had been taken: to include them in the second round of healing work.

Mark smiled, and chided him—gently: "this *isn't* psychotherapy," he insisted; "this is a relationship."

I was struck by the statement at the time—it seemed a curious distinction, not least because of the quintessentially relational character of the brand of psychotherapy employed by most of the clinicians in the room—but Mark knew his audience better than I did, and it was received with a knowing chuckle by group members. The conversation turned to other aspects of people's experiences, and to questions they had for Mark.

Up until that point—the weekend in March of 2011, but, quite specifically, that exchange between Mark and Steven—I'd struggled to shake the sense that I was working on (at least) two related, and adjacent, but largely distinct projects. I kept returning to an image that Walter Benjamin (1968) used to describe "The Task of the Translator," and on which Derrida (1985) famously dwelled: the tangent that touches a circle at only one point, and then extends outwards. As I grasped for always-imperfect metaphors with which to convey the complex sets of relations between my interlocutors, I sometimes thought of the APT group as akin to that line, touching the 'circle' of the tiospaye at the singular point of Steven's relationship to Mark. For Benjamin, the labor of translation is an always-inadequate act of love—a commitment to redeeming the present, predicated on the possibility of "God's remembrance" (Benjamin 1968:70)—in which "translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense" (80). As a I reflected, and eventually wrote, it seemed an increasingly productive image with which to think: Mark's own work, after all, entailed the translation of his encounter with Lakota spirituality into, and beyond, the clinic; at the time, however, I was trying to make sense of the ways in which encounters with Mark were "the original" for his students, who continued, then, on their own paths.

Those paths, however, rarely resembled a straight line.Steven was Mark's student—and, like most of Mark's students, coming to take part in ceremonies with the tiospaye was only one aspect of his spiritual life, and only one of multiple milieux in which complex negotiations of boundaries between 'personal' and 'professional' selves occurred. For some of his *own* students, Steven served as a kind of conduit to Mark: for instance, one of the newly-anointed pipe-carriers—Brent—was an undergraduate at Steven's university. They'd crossed paths when Brent joined Steven on a 'service-learning' trips Steven led, to the Lakota reservation, on which students performed 'service' (repainting a community center, for example) and met with tribal elders—people Steven had met through Mark, during his own 'personal' visits to the reservation—to learn about native life and attend cultural events.

While on the service-learning trip, the students had also taken part in a sweat lodge ceremony; they'd been invited to come back for the Sun Dance a couple of months after the school-sponsored trip, and a few of them—Brent included—had been intrigued enough to drive themselves back some 1,800 miles across the country to do so. For Brent, this had been the beginning of a reengagement with his own Lumbee Indian heritage: over the year I knew him, Brent had received healing from the altar as he grieved the murder of his grandfather, a Lumbee activist; he was apprenticed into the tiospaye (through the pipe-carrier ceremony) and made peace with his own ambivalences about that apprenticeship (with Steven's support, as they spoke at the APT session a week after the ceremony); and, upon his graduation from college, he went to live and work with a Lakota community in South Dakota.

For Brent, and me, and other people in that room, the pursuit of 'healing' led to the development of a great many an enriching relationships, and an unfolding series of encounters

with circuits of care, worship, and labor geared toward affecting social change that began with individual well-being—a process understood to be, necessarily, communal in nature.

Homework

> "if you could experience what I experienced, you would go to a lowampi [healing ceremony] every night—you would go to inipi [sweat lodge] every night, and no one could ever make you do anything that was bad, because you *know* that there's a God; you *know* that there's spirits."
> - Mark

My own 'homework' started the day after the ceremony; I suspected that if I didn't begin immediately, I might not do it at all—and so I went, on Sunday afternoon, to a supermarket just off the highway, on the edge of town, and bought a single flower. The clerk looked like she wanted to ask my why I was buying only one—at least, I hoped that the look on her face was just curiosity—and, as I walked out of the store, I gave it to the first person I saw. I was lucky, I think—it was an elderly woman, who seemed too pleasantly surprised to be taken aback—and I made my way back to Mark's with a sense of guarded optimism: maybe this wouldn't be as awkward as I'd imagined.

I wasn't clear, at any point during or immediately after the ceremony, what exactly I was 'supposed' to be 'getting' from this assignment; it occurred to me, on more than one occasion, that Mark might just be having a good laugh at the thought of me chasing people down various streets. I was resolved to complete the task, however, and I fell into a kind of meta-routine: while the specifics of each procurement-and-giveaway were unpredictable—uncomfortable, but always

in slightly new and different ways—there was a stable cadence that developed, in which part of my day involved an inevitable awkwardness.

One day during that month, I found myself in Princeton for a departmental event. It was early afternoon before I realized I'd forgotten to give a flower away that morning; I found an open florist a few blocks north of the campus, and, as I left, a woman walked past. I just missed catching her eye, which meant that I wound up pursuing her, discretely, for two blocks before I was able to overtake her and get her attention without running up to her (and, in all likelihood, terrifying her). After several demurrals, she accepted the flower, and I went on my way. An hour later, I was especially grateful I hadn't frightened her: as I took my seat in the lecture hall and waited for the talk to begin, I looked toward the door—and felt the color drain from my face, as the woman I'd just flowered walked in, and took a seat in the row below mine. I'm not sure whether or not she saw me—I did my best to be invisible—but I found myself feeling as ridiculous as I must have seemed to most of the people I'd approached during those weeks.

The woman to whom I'd given the flower in Princeton—she and I found ourselves in the same room, but different rows. I have been struck, time and again, by the varieties of proximity that we, as ethnographers, pursue and allow. One could write a history of the anthropology of religion that takes, as its analytical axis, the ways in which the relationship between 'belief' and 'knowledge' are inscribed as we move from ethnography-as-practice to ethnography-as-text, trading the infinite polysemy of relational play for the interpretive foreclosure that inevitably attends the attempt at meaningful communication. Rodney Needham (1972) once observed that the word 'belief', in its noun form, was intelligible only as an artifact of prior statement that one *believes* something. Not, that is, 'believes *in*' something; when, in our inscribing, we have dared to suspend the preposition—when we have resisted that foreclosure, and lingered in the aporia

between our interlocutors in the field, and readers of our texts[211]—we've done more than 'merely' demur.

Anthropological (and allied) scholarship abounds with such questions. As I wrote, however, my attention was repeatedly drawn to the versions of the questions that arose just *off* the page. I have heard numerous colleagues describe themselves (invoking Weber's famous formulation with various degrees of coyness) as religiously "unmusical" (Weber 1988:324). On rare occasion, someone presses the question: in the course of a discussion following a presentation on "presence" in 2013, for instance, Robert Orsi was challenged to "definitively" articulate his normative commitments: his questioner observed that Orsi's publications were scrupulously careful to hedge on the matter of whether or not the spiritual experiences Orsi described were meant to be read as "real"[212]—was he referring to the "real presence of noumenal Others," the

[211] Lévi-Strauss, for instance, relentlessly performed, in the very structure of his argumentation, the irreducible mediatedness of every binary relation he staged (1992). And for Jean Comaroff (1985), Tshidi Zionist faith is precisely suspended between what we might think of as 'possibility' and 'alternatives': as a question of inhabited, experiential practice, this is not about faith—or belief—in something (a set of propositions, troubled by syncretic practices; institutional possibilities for political action). Contrast this to Tanya Luhrmann's assertion, for instance, in the opening chapter of *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*, that despite having been "an imaginative child" and having been "enchanted by the imaginings," she—in implicit contradistinction to her interlocutors—"always knew, when [she] was child, that the make-believe was never real" (Luhrmann 1989:18).

[212] Orsi (in text) is worth quoting at length on the point: "Do I believe in… the guardian angels, the souls in purgatory, or any of the other special figures that appear in this book in relationships with people and between heaven and earth? A note of incredulity sounds in the questions-surely you don't believe. . . This suggests that what I am being asked is if I believe in the real presence of these beings. Do I think they are really there? Are they real? This is what would be so incomprehensible and so scandalous. The word belief bears heavy weight in public talk about religion in contemporary America: to 'believe in' a religion means that one has deliberated over and then assented to its propositional truths, has chosen this religion over other available options, a personal choice unfettered by authority. What matters about religion from this perspective are its ideas and not its things, practices, or presences. … But belief has always struck me as the wrong question, especially when it is offered as a diagnostic for determining the realness of the gods. The saints, gods, demons, ancestors, and so on are real in experience and practice, in relationships between heaven and earth, in the circumstances of people's lives and

historian wanted to know, or to "a belief system?" Orsi's response was meticulous: "my membership in the academy," he said, "depends upon answering 'the latter'."

Historically, literature has consistently been more reliable than science (social or otherwise) as a source for enduring insights into questions about the human condition—and not least because literature has a much longer history than does any kind of science. In that spirit, then: a little more than three years before taking his own life, David Foster Wallace gave a commencement address to the students of Kenyon University. In that speech, he advised the graduating students that: "in the day-to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship" (Wallace 2005). Wallace's direct point was that a liberal education should be about more than learning how to think critically—it should be a preparation for an ethical life, lived in reflexive engagement with the normative demands of the social world, and with the choices one makes in each moment about who one is and how one lives. More provocatively, Wallace was suggesting to them that worship could be better thought of as a fundamental orientation to the world, rather than a discrete and bounded activity.

Scholarship that seeks to install itself within the hierarchy of legitimation that has always-already been a relation of domination—a way of shoring up the levees of the 'empty', 'sovereign', rational Western self against the flood-tide of chaos comprising the phenomenological world—is simply exchanging one set of shackles for another. And this, I think, is the meaning and ends of reflexivity: that I begin by acknowledging that I am engaging with one meaningful regime of truth—what Arthur Kleinman (2006) called a "local moral

---

histories, and in the stories people tell about them. Realness imagined this way may seem too little for some and too much for others. But it has always seemed real enough to me" (2005:18).

world"—from within a different, and not necessarily superior, regime.[213] Anthropology is decades into the rigorous practice of this when our gaze is turned Elsewhere—but when that gaze is directed at 'home', a commitment to such reflexivity is more elusive. But it's not just a matter of perfunctorily acknowledging some formal variety of relativism before proceeding with our analyses; the labor of discipline, and respect, and—as Benjamin suggested, apropos of the translator's task—*love* is to attend with every breath and keystroke to our own impulsive positionings.

Mark and his students showed me that all local worlds leak. All of them are permeable. Local is a dynamic social relation, not a geography. But they're also coherent—socially, if not logically—and flexible enough to be deployed as needed by infinitely creative people by manifold means and to whatever ends are understood to be at hand. There is no fantasy more seductive than certainty. And as Steven and Mark demonstrated, time and again: the refusal to adjudicate is both ethical stance and political act—a kind of immediacy-as-mediation—taken in resistance to the tyranny of knowledge over belief. If you were to ask me whether what happened during that ceremony was 'belief' or 'knowledge', I could not—*would* not—give you an answer.

A week and a half after the ceremony, I drove back out to visit Mark. He, Ed, and I spent the day together, swapping stories, walking through the college town, and generally laughing our way through the long middle of the day. Over lunch, I asked him a technical question about my assignment from the altar: I'd been having a hard time finding vendors who would sell me a single flower, and I wanted to know whether buying a small bouquet and giving it away one flower at a time would be a violation of the terms of the altar's prescription. He laughed, and asked me what I thought the most important part was. "The giving away," I said.

---

[213] As James Boon once observed, apropos of James Clifford: the latter "cannot avoid reinscribing pretensions of expert superiority over works he finds naïve" (1999:172).

"It's every part of the giving away," he said. "It's ceremony, from beginning to end. The 28 or so people you touch—their lives *will* be different, and they will tell that story." They might actually buy flowers for other people, he said, or they might give away the flower I'd given them—or they might simply be kinder, and gentler, with another person they met that day. The point—part of it, at least—was that there was "a rippling effect" by which what *we* did, he said, propagated outward, in small and subtle, but consequential, ways. This was true, he explained, of every ceremony they ever did—and it was, in a material sense, evidence of the interconnectedness of all things: "the web," as he often put it. He was trying, it seemed, to ritualize life itself, and to show me that the telling of the stories—about moments in which people received a flower from a stranger on the street, and about the time I spent with him and his students—enfold the listener in yet another layer: not of 'meaning', but of its suspension; in a word, relationship.

"That flower," Mark asked, "could have been—what?"

I thought it was a rhetorical question, but he repeated it, twice, and waited for a response. "Anything," I said—thinking of the carbon cycle, stretching across time.

He liked the response, but he put a spiritual twist on it that gave me pause: "great answer. So it *could* have been some man a thousand years ago, or two hundred years ago who, on his deathbed, said, 'if *only* I could have been kinder to people! If only I could have given *more'*!" I sighed, and I felt a softness, in my chest, as I allowed for the possibility of what he was saying. "In our world, that human being became earth, and all of that—became a flower," Mark conjectured. "His karmic question, on his deathbed—in terms of 'the web', has been answered. Karmically, he's living his prayer through you. That's pretty heavy-duty," he said, "but that's the kind of stuff the altar doesn't explain until someone *asks* the iyeska, 'can you tell me—what is

this all about'? Then," he said, "suddenly, it's not simply buying and giving away a flower—it's, possibly, people that lived hundreds of years ago—that you're *living* their prayer. It's pretty cool," he smiled.

"Yeah," I nodded.

Not that I was suddenly 'sure' that any of the physical flowers I'd held and given away were, 'in fact' (whatever that might mean), the material manifestation of the prayer of some long-dead penitent, but, rather, it was precisely the capacity to allow for the possibility that such a thing *might* be possible—a capacity which, in that moment, felt external to me—that catalyzed a subtle, but meaningful, shift in my own perspective.[214] Mark's invitation to hold in abeyance the imperative to *know*, and to attend, instead, to the ways in which such a shared moment had the power to enchant things around it: to open them—and me—to the sheer, immanent multiplicity of a shared moment of presence.

"And so if you can explain *that*—for Brian, [for whom] the ceremony was [just] 'something cool'," Mark said, referring to one of the other supplicants from the ceremony—a young man struggling with addiction, whom Mark was afraid would become part of the vast majority of people who came for healing and who had "powerful" experiences but who, in his reckoning, failed to be healed because they didn't "follow through" by changing how they acted day-to-day. "If you can *call* Brian," he urged me, gently, "maybe that will help Brian [to see that] it's not an

[214] The notion of 'doubt' at work here—that is, as Mark explicitly says, his account is "possibly" true—has a long history in the Christian traditions shared by most members of the group, dating at least to Pascal's famous wager (1995:§233), and probably to Saint Paul's formulation of faith. It's also bound up in the more modern transition of the very notion of 'belief' in 'the West: as anthropologists like Byron Good (1994) and Tanya Luhrmann (2012) have observed, building on seminal work by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998), common usage of the verb 'to believe' have become socially legible as an expression of epistemological commitment—precisely a choice, made by an actor, in the context of imperfect information, to act 'as if' a proposition were true.

'event'."[215] Here and elsewhere, Mark's relentless emphasis was on what he referred to as "processes," and away from "events" or interactions—an emphasis on, that is, what he saw as an illness endemic to the "dominant culture" of the U.S.

He's in some esteemed company. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim all shared a central concern—addressed, respectively, as 'alienation', 'rationalization', and 'anomie'—read, in general, as inevitable consequences of the (ostensibly) rising tide of 'modernity'. Weber lamented the ascendancy of "'specialists without spirit" and "sensualists without heart" (1958:181-82), and he was particularly concerned with a crisis of meaning he called the "disenchantment of the world" (1946a:155)—a framing which, in its applications across the last century, has most often entailed the instantiation of an irreducible analytical distinction between belief and knowledge.

This distinction has been productively challenged on multiple fronts. Philosophers have taken to task the very premises of the question: Akeel Bilgrami (2006) argues for a rereading of Modern European intellectual history through the lens of 'Radical Enlightenment'—a framing in which the two primary ideals of the European Enlightenment, 'liberty' and 'equality', have existed, from at least the earliest writings of Locke, in a kind of zero-sum tension; he contends that those two ideals are best understood in relation to a third, antecedent, and subsuming romanticist ideal: that is, the notion of 'an unalienated life'.[216]

---

[215] Mark is not the only cultural critic to take such a position. Writing against the myriad applications of Caruth's (1995) formulation of 'trauma' as an analytic, Lauren Berlant, for instance, has called for "moving away from the discourse of trauma… when describing what happens to persons and populations as an effect of catastrophic impacts" because "[t]he extraordinary always turns out to be an amplification of something in the works, a labile boundary at best, not a slammed-door departure" (Berlant 2011:9-10).

[216] Bilgrami further suggests that the tension with Romantic thought—often construed post facto as a polar opposition—is, in fact, much more complex; that the notion of an unalienated life not only subsumes 'equality' and 'freedom' within enlightenment thought, but actually subsumes both so-called enlightenment and Romantic thought, elucidating the limitations of rigidly reified heuristic distinctions in the genealogy of European intellectual history. By 'an unalienated life',

Stanley Cavell takes up such "romanticism as [the] working out [of] a crisis of knowledge"—a "crisis" he understands "to be (interpretable as) a response at once to the threat of skepticism and to a disappointment with philosophy's answer to this threat" (1988:52). For Cavell, Weber's vision of a social science free from the "wish for a substitute redemption" (20) is inextricable from the usage of the university classroom as a 'therapeutic'[217] space—a problematic disposition, not least because "the use of a seductive or attractive silence to elicit another's revelation of themselves suggests procedures and powers which… universities have no credentials for" (22). He reads transcendentalism as an extension of romanticism[218]—and of a piece with a long-durée effort at a "recovery from skepticism"[219] (26): in Cavell's account, that

---

he intends to call to mind an orientation to the world of human experience in which the natural world is shot through with meaning, and which makes normative demands upon people; moreover, it is precisely this experience that is the source of human agency, inasmuch as it is in the act of experiencing ourselves as subjects—not in opposition to objects, but in the experientially irreducible act of relating to the world by acting upon objects—that experience ourselves as having the capacity to act in the world. (2006: 396) Eschewing the hard-and-fast distinction between 'early' and 'late' Marx (that is, between the Marx of "The Communist Manifesto" and the Marx of *Capital*), for example, Bilgrami executes an explicitly Freudian internalization: he contends that it is more useful to think of Marx as a romantic—which then licenses a reading 'false consciousness' as a nuanced, Hegelian dialectical relation containing an internal tension between two (temporally) distinct modes of orientation to the world (2009).

[217] "something Plato ruled *in* to his philosophy is what we might call the obligation of therapy" Cavell notes—and observes, with indefatigable wryness, that "professional philosophy does not on the whole follow Plato slavishly in this. Philosophy was seen, like poetry, to possess the power to change people, to free the soul from bondage. In the past couple of millennia other contestants have presented themselves, in addition to philosophy and poetry, on the field of therapy; religion has, and, most recently, psychotherapy (though here we need a separate term to cover the direct assault on the mind by practitioners from Mesmer to Freud). … I am of the view that philosophy is, or ought to be, haunted by the success of its escape from this obligation" (Cavell 1988:12).

[218] Indeed, he "see[s] both… ordinary language philosophy and American transcendentalism… as responses to skepticism, to that anxiety about our human capacities as knowers that can be taken to open modern philosophy in Descartes, interpreted by that philosophy as our human subjection to doubt" (Cavell 1988:4).

[219] A fraught undertaking, since "skepticism's own sense of what recovery would consist in dictates efforts to refute it; yet refutation can only extend it, as Othello notably found out. True recovery lies in reconceiving it, in finding skepticism's source" (80). This suggests a particular,

quintessentially American project is unapologetically (though certainly not 'simply') redemptive: "[t]o say that the central narrative of [Thoreau's] *Walden* is the building of a home is to say that the book is about what you might call edification," and "[e]dification might also be a reasonable term for what we were calling therapy" (20). And for Emerson—whose "philosophical distinction… lies in his diagnosis… and in his recommended therapy"—the treatment for an alienated, "uncreated life" is to become "the author of oneself;" in Cavell's reading, Emerson's crucial Cartesian innovation is to insist that "the cogito's need arises at particular historical moments in the life of the individual and in the life of the culture," and that, therefore "being the author of oneself… is a continuing task, not a property, a task in which the goal, or the product of the process, is not a state of being but a moment of change, say of becoming" (111).

'Becoming', as an analytics, is at the center of numerous contemporary critical projects that challenge us to rethink the emphasis on 'eventness' at the heart of so much twentieth-century criticism (e.g., Berlant 2011). Anthropologists João Biehl and Peter Locke, for instance, compel our attention to the collective and individual costs of psychosocial interventions, as they take up Gilles Deleuze's "emphasis on desire and the ways—humble, marginal, minor—that it cracks through apparently rigid social fields and serves as the engine of becoming" (Biehl and Locke 2010:323). Insisting on the irreducibility of ambiguities and calling for an ethnographic posture of "tentativeness" and "receptivity to different temporalities" (336), they show how "the

---

perseverating kind of sense, given the diagnostic affinities Cavell finds between skepticism and melancholia: "When Wordsworth dedicated his poetry, in his preface to Lyrical Ballads, to arousing men in a particular way from a 'torpor', the way he sought was 'to make the incidents of common life interesting', as if he saw us as having withdrawn our interest, or investment, from whatever worlds we have in common, say this one or the next. This seems to me a reasonable description at once of skepticism and of melancholia, as if the human race had suffered some calamity and were now entering, at best, a period of convalescence. … Nietzsche will say the death of God. However this calamitous break with the past is envisioned, its cure will require a revolution of the spirit, or, as Emerson puts it at the close of 'The American Scholar', the conversion of the world" (32).

anthropological venture has the potential of art: to invoke neglected human potentials and to expand the limits of understanding and imagination—a people yet to come" (337). Biehl and Locke demonstrate the conceptual force of ethnography by insisting on literary, rather than diagnostic, treatments; in the process, they demonstrate what Biehl (2013a) framed as anthropology's enduring capacity to get 'in the way of theory'—that is, not 'just' to apply or complicate philosophy, buy to lay bare the banal violence of theorizing itself.

Political philosopher William Connolly, in his manifesto on "the problematic of political action in a world of becoming*"* (Connolly 2011:7), shares a concern with the limits of theorizing; his interest, here, is in the potential for a positive political project, grounded in an ethos of self-cultivation through the use of "tactics" and "arts of the self" (79). For Connolly, such a project is contingent on what he calls "an element of faith"[220] (65). Such an element is inescapable, since—and here, he seems in full solidarity with David Foster Wallace's (2005) sentiment—"there is no place called 'unbelief'," because "every existential stance is infused with belief" (Connolly 2011:85). He is in search of a mediation between immanence and transcendence by way of what he frames as the irreducibly multiple nature of temporality: "the agenda is to move from salient experiences of time as duration, the very experience that must be pushed to the background when the dictates of action are strong, to reflections in several zones of life, and then back again, moving back and forth until we reach a reflective equilibrium that carries a degree of plausibility" (10). In short, according to Connolly, "it takes both philosophical

[220] Connolly "define[s] the term 'faith' in a way that touches but does not correspond completely to some transcendent readings of it. Faith… means a contestable element in belief that extends beyond indubitable experience or rational necessity but permeates your engagement with the world" (39). This "faith," he allows, "can be either in the powers of immanence or in some version of transcendence, for both speak to an outside that exceeds our capacities of encompassment" (65).

speculation linked to scientific experiment and dwelling in uncanny experiences of duration to vindicate such an adventure" (7).

In and around the rituals they share, Mark and his students find, and make, something very much like the kind of opportunity for temporal 'play' to which Connolly referred. And yet, on numerous occasions, I heard Mark de-emphasize the importance of 'peak experiences' or supernatural encounters—"it's just an experience," he would say, with a shrug. I've also heard him lament, on multiple occasions, his inability to conjure for others the kind of experience he himself had. His own transcendent, transformative experiences with Joe Eagle Elk, however, form the unshakable foundation of his commitments—and there's an abiding tension, for members of the tiospaye, as they attempt to reconcile the two between 'free choice' and the 'policing of presence': Mark demands 'presence' precisely to bound the space *as* liminal—i.e., that insisting on clinical-grade presence is, in this context, singularly transgressive, and therefore (he hopes) singularly efficacious.

Mark's riposte to Steven after the ceremony ten days earlier—that it wasn't "psychotherapy," but rather "a relationship"—swam into focus: part of what Mark was trying to do that he saw as adjacent to, but distinct from, his psychotherapeutic work was about engendering connections between people—in a word: community—that would outlast the experience of what Victor Turner called "communitas" (Turner 1969) that occurred during ritual gatherings, and would translate such "powerful experiences" into sustained change in the lives of participants… and, by extension, in the lives of those they touched (in Brian's case, for instance, his parents, and his friends at college).

In this dissertation, I have tried to show how Mark and his students practice healing that is both a form of care and a mode of critique. Even as they struggle with (and reinscribe) the

boundaries between themselves and others, they work to cultivate multiple registers of presence: that is, they seek, and to a surprising extent, manage to find, a way of being—together—that takes the best of what an imperfect health system has to offer, and turns to good purpose the opportunities afforded by their social positions and vocational roles.

It took me a long time to figure out what (I *think*) the healing was 'about': it seemed as though my 'assignment' had been engineered to force me to be uncomfortable on a regular basis, and thereby to pay greater attention to the 'experience' I was having (I floated this insight to Mark at one point, and I was met with a shrug). In retrospect, however, I'm not sure it had much of anything to do with 'me' at all, except inasmuch as it encouraged me to take my experience less seriously as a question—as Mark frequently said to students or supplicants seeking transcendence, "it's just an experience." Rather, I think that each giveaway had the effect of staging an experience of a fleeting 'micro-community'—and it's the precise texture of these interactions that is instructive: always ephemeral and frequently intrusive acts of conscription, they mirror some of the very challenges faced by therapists as they seek to transcend the transactional logic of sociality with which their clinical lives are so often infused.

This, then, is precisely the order on which Mark's work is political: that *meaningfulness*—a richly textured, profoundly social, embodied *sense*, so much more potent that is captured by the dry, artifactual notion of 'meaning'—lends itself to new ways of being in the world, *with* other people. It's a kind of change, a form of care—and a mode of critique—that lacks the drama of sweeping policy intervention; what it lacks in breadth, however, it makes up for in depth. The trick, of course, is to make it 'stick': to translate a compelling moment into something enduring and self-propagating. How, precisely, to do this—effectively—is the defining question of Mark's work.

Coda: In the Office

"Exploitation and domination are things to contest and oppose….
The restoration of belief in this world provides an existential resource to draw upon
as those struggles are fought energetically and creatively"
- William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (2011:66)

After lunch, the three of us—Ed, Mark, and I—went back to Mark's office in the university counseling center. We'd sunk deep into plush chairs, and chatted away the early afternoon. Mark was eagerly awaiting news about a(nother) proposal that, if accepted, would change the shape of his day-to-day life for the coming year, and which might well represent the culmination of his four-decade career in college mental health care.

Neal—a psychiatrist, the director of counseling services at a top public university, and a long-time member of the tiospaye—had set up a meeting with one of the top officials in his university system; Mark had gone for a two-day visit, and made his pitch. He'd proposed a year-long "series of processes"—called 'Transition'—that was, he insisted, categorically distinct from a "program" to be "delivered:" he'd spent his life developing a holistic approach to addressing what he framed as a deeply dangerous campus culture of violence in which one in four women experience sexual assaults, and men were frequently abusers of alcohol and drugs, and were either perpetrators or victims (or both) of psychological, emotional, and physical violence, and he'd offered to spend the academic year ahead working "day and night" proving that his approach could work—that "these men will be different."

The men under his care would, he'd explained, meet frequently with mentors from the school and the community—and it was exactly this kind of sustained, relational support that was missing from standard approaches, he said. This was the key difference between one-off "programs" that students were forced to attend—whether half-day 'awareness' seminars or

inpatient rehab programs—the effects of which were limited to the context in which the programs were administered; he, on the other hand, intended to offer a "process" that engendered sustained change in the way a person related to the world around them.

"They're discussing my proposal," Mark said. In it, he'd tendered a tacit critique of the bureaucratic rationality of psychosocial care—'peer' institutions, benchmarking each other in an infinite regress—which served the status quo above all else. "What I've said is, 'let me do the *real* work. Can you let me not go to any more meetings and have to do any more politics? Let me just go there and *do* this," he said, jabbing the air with his finger. "I'll measure it. I'll do all the scientific stuff and I'll do all the sociological stuff—just give me nine months. At the end of nine months, you can kiss me goodbye, or you can go, 'Wow, that really worked, can you hang around'? So they're meeting this afternoon. I don't have great hope."

"Is this a study you're pitching?" I asked.

"It's a series of processes," he parried. He wanted to do both: "*let* me go back and do some things in a 'collective' manner, in a 'tribal' manner," he said, but he'd "pre- and post-test, all of that. We can use GPA, retention, drinking habits, self-reports, other measurable factors. But just let me prove to you that this stuff works." He sat back again, sighing. "And then, like I said, when I'm done—*then* I can retire a happy man. For 40 years, I've been trying to get a university just to give it a shot," he mused. Scowling, and in a pinched, mocking voice, he continued: "and they just [say], 'Go to dance and drum? Let's have another meeting about that'." He was visibly frustrated. "'Let's not, and say we did! Let's just say we met, and then we decided to *do* it. What do you say'? 'No, can't do that'." Another sigh. "So any moment the phone may ring."

"That phone?" I asked, pointing at his desk.

With a wry smile, and a laugh, he said: "This is the naïve world that I live in. Really! I just keep—'one more time, let me try *one* more angle, *one* more time."

Ed looked concerned: "But you *see* the truth, and you see what things *could* be, and you *hope*—you're a hopeless romantic in that way, I'd say."

I asked Mark, then, to what extent this was about trying to introduce his 'new' diagnostic category of acedia; he cocked his head a little, and explained:

> when I present, I'll say to the psychiatrist, "This is not a diagnostic category! You will not find this in the *DSM-III-R*. But do you all agree that you've all met students, and people in general—and, now, geriatric people—who are hopeless? They don't care that they don't care, and they're not even depressed, and no medication will touch them?" And they all go, "Yeah; there's a hole in the system." It's a spirit hole—and that's what we can reintroduce to the world: spirit. But it's not going to be a 'program'; it's not going to be an 'event'. It's [going to effect change] over time, with many interventions. So let me just run a pilot.

The conversation turned light for a while—Mark had a practiced knack for knowing how long to sustain a high note—and, in the middle of some amiable banter about Ed's daughter's basketball game, the phone rang. Mark jumped up, and went behind his desk to answer it.

For most of the next fifteen minutes, Ed and I sat in silence, listening to Mark's side of a telephone conversation. It would have been awkward, I think, were it not for the earnestness with which we were listening. As Mark had hoped, the caller was, in fact, Neal—and he was giving Mark the long-awaited news. Ed and I kept looking at each other, and then back at Mark, trying to get a read on how the conversation was going. "It's obviously disappointing." A pause. "Don't they understand that we can write a million dollar grant? Templeton will fund this if they see that

one place will operationalize it!" Another pause; Mark shook his head. "Ask him about the *millions* that they're spending on kids dropping out, suing the university." At one point, Mark scribbled a note, and then, with slumped shoulders and a smirk, held up a sheet of paper that read: 'we need more meetings'. "No, I understand, you've got to be careful for yourself, too," he said. "Hey, thank you so much. Love you, Neal. Bye."

Silence, then a deep sigh. "Same story," said Mark, "different day. They're all doing the same shit, and all of their students are suffering the same maladies. Everybody's afraid."

In the years since, the problems he sought to address—sexual violence, substance abuse, despair; in a word, acedia—have only grown more acute, and more visible. As of this writing, the U.S. Department of Education is conduction dozens of active Title IX investigations of universities' mishandling of the few sexual assaults that are actually reported, and colleges are attempting to redress substance-abuse-related fatalities through such innovative approaches as prohibiting the consumption of hard liquor at parties.

He sighed again. "So now," he said, "I've got to figure out what I'm going to do next."

Works Cited

Akard, William Keith
1988 Wocante Tinza: A History of the American Indian Movement. Ph.D. dissertation, Social Science, Bell State University.

Albanese, Catherine L.
2006 A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion. New Haven: Yale University Press.

American Psychiatric Association
2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (DSM-5). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Aneshensel, Carol S., Jo C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman
1999 Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health. Springer.

Angell, Marcia, and Jerome P. Kassirer
1998 Alternative Medicine—The Risks of Untested and Unregulated Remedies. New England Journal of Medicine 339(12): 839-41.

Astin, John A.
1998 Why Patients Use Alternative Medicine. JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association 279(19): 1548.

Barnes, Linda L.
2009 Cultural Messages Under the Skin: Practitioner Decisions to Engage in Chinese Medicine. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 28(2): 141-65.

Barnes, P.M., B. Bloom, and R.L. Nahin
2008 Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

Bateson, Gregory.
1972 Steps to an Ecology of Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beattie, Melody
2013[1986] Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself. Minneapolis, MN: Hazelden Publishing.

Bellah, Robert Neelly, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton
1996[1985] Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bender, Courtney.
2010 The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benedict, Ruth

2006[1934] Patterns of Culture. New York: Mariner Books.

Benjamin, Walter.
1968 Illuminations. New York: Shocken Books.

Berlant, Lauren G.
2011 Cruel Optimism. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.

Biehl, João G.
2007 Pharmaceuticalization: Aids Treatment and Global Health Politics. Anthropological Quarterly 80(4): 1083-126.

2010 Catkine… Asylum, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Pharmacist, I and the Cure: Pharmaceutical Subjectivity in the Global South. *In* Pharmaceutical Self: The Global Shaping of Experience in an Age of Psychopharmacology. Janis H. Jenkins, ed. Pp. 67-96. Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press.

2013a Ethnography in the Way of Theory. Cultural Anthropology 28(4): 573-97.

2013b The Judicialization of Biopolitics: Claiming the Right to Pharmaceuticals in Brazilian Courts. American Ethnologist 40(3): 419-36.

Biehl, João G., and Peter Locke
2010 Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming. Current Anthropology 51(3): 317-51.

Bilgrami, A
2009 Democracy and Disenchantment. Social Scientist 37(11/12): 4-21.

2006 Occidentalism, the Very Idea an Essay on the Enlightenment and Enchantment. Economic and Political Weekly 3591-603.

Black Elk, Nicholas and John G. Neihardt
2008[1932] Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux. Binghamton, NY: SUNY Press.

Boas, Franz
1938 The Mind of Primitive Man. New York: Macmillan.

Boon, James A.
1982 Introduction to the English Edition. *In* Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History, and Myth. M. Izard, and P. Smith, eds. Pp. v-xx. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1999 Verging on Extra-Vagance: Anthropology, History, Religion, Literature, Arts… Showbiz! Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

2005 Anthropology, Ethnology, and Religion. *In* The Encyclopedia of Religion (Vol. 1). Lindsay Jones, ed. Pp. 308-16. New York: Macmillan.

Boozang, Kathleen M.

1999 Is the Alternative Medicine: Managed Care Apparently Thinks So. Connecticut Law Review 32: 567.

Boucher, Geoff
2009 James Cameron: Yes 'Avatar' is' Dances With Wolves' in Space. Sort of.

Briggs, Charles L.
1986 Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Michael F.
1999 The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bucko, Raymond A.
1998 The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Buckser, Andrew, and Stephen D. Glazier
2003a Preface. *In* The Anthropology of Religious Conversion. Andrew Buckser, and Stephen D Glazier, eds. Pp. xi-xviii. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Buckser, Andrew, and Stephen D. Glazier, eds.
2003b The Anthropology of Religious Conversion. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Campbell, Joseph
2008[1949] The Hero With a Thousand Faces. New York: New World Library.

Cantwell Smith, Wilfred
1998[1968] Believing—an Historical Perspective. Oxford: Oneworld.

Carr, E. Summerson
2010 Scripting Addiction: The Politics Therapeutic Talk and American Sobriety. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Caruth, Cathy
1995 Trauma: Explorations in Memory. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cavell, Stanley
1988 In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clastres, Pierre
1989 Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology. New York: Zone Books.

Clements, William M.
2001 The New Age Sweat Lodge. *In* Healing Logics: Culture and Medicine in Modern Health Belief Systems. Erika Brady, ed. Pp. 143-62. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Clifford, James, and George E Marcus
1986 Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Comaroff, Jean.
1985 Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Connolly, William E
2011 A World of Becoming. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Csordas, Thomas J.
1997 The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Curry, Patrick, ed.
2010 Divination: Perspectives for a New Millenium. New York: Ashgate.

Cushman, Philip
1996 Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy. New York: Da Capo Press.

Davies, James P.
2009 The Making of Psychotherapists: An Anthropological Analysis. New York: Karnac Books.

Davoine, Francoise
2012 Wittgenstein's Folly. New York: YBK Publishers, Inc.

Davoine, Françoise, and Jean-Max Gaudillière
2004 History Beyond Trauma: Whereof One Cannot Speak, Thereof One Cannot Stay Silent. New York: Other Press.

Deleuze, Gilles
1986 Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.

1998 Essays Critical and Clinical. London: Verso.

1993 The Deleuze Reader. Constantin V, ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari
1987 A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Deloria, Philip J.
1998 Playing Indian. Yale University Press

Deloria, Vine
2009 C. G. Jung and the Sioux Traditions: Dreams, Visions, Nature and the Primitive. New York: Springer.

Derrida, Jacques

1985 Des Tours De Babel. *In* Difference in Translation. Pp. 165-207. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Desjarlais, Robert
1996 The Office of Reason: On the Politics of Language and Agency in a Shelter for "the Homeless Mentally Ill". American Ethnologist 23(4): 880-900.

Devereux, Georges
1978 Ethnopsychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis and Anthropology as Complementary Frames of Reference. University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

Dimock, Wai Chee
1997 A Theory of Resonance. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 112(5): 1060-71.

Druss, Benjamin G., and David Satcher
2010 Bridging Mental Health and Public Health. Preventing Chronic Disease 7(1):

Dumit, Joseph
2012 Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define Our Health. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dunne, Joseph
1995 Beyond Soveriegnty and Deconstruction: The Storied Self. Philosophy & Social Criticism 21(5): 137.

Duranti, Alessandro, and Charles Goodwin
1992 Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Durkheim, Émile.
1995[1912] The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. New York: Free Press.

Eagan, Kevin, Ellen Bara Stolzenberg, Joseph J. Ramirez, Melissa C. Aragon, Maria Ramirez Suchard, and Sylvia Hurtado
2014 The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2014. Higher Education Research Institute.

Eisenberg, David M., Ronald C. Kessler, Cindy Foster, Frances E. Norlock, David R. Calkins, and Thomas L. Delbanco
1993 Unconventional Medicine in the United States—Prevalence, Costs, and Patterns of Use. New England Journal of Medicine 328(4): 246-52.

Eliade, Mircea
1959 The Sacred and the Profane. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Eliason, B. Clair, Annette Dickinson, Mehmet Oz, Eric Rose, Gerald M. Lemole, Dan Cherkin, Janet Street, Bernard S. Siegel, Howard Posner, and Daniel Seitz
1999 Alternative Medicine—The Case of Herbal Remedies. New England Journal of Medicine 340(7): 564-66.

Engelke, Matthew

2007 A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Epstein, William M.
2006 Psychotherapy as Religion: The Civil Divine in America. Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press.

Estés, Clarissa Pinkola
2008[1996] Women Who Run With the Wolves: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman. New York: Random House.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan
1956 Nuer Religion. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne
1980 Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage. Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press.

Fenelon, James V
1998 Culturicide, Resistance, and Survival of the Lakota ("Sioux Nation"). New York: Garland Publishing.

Foucault, Michel
1978 The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge. New York: Pantheon.

1986 The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self. New York: Pantheon.

Frank, Arthur W.
2010 The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Freud, Sigmund
1964[1933] New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. New York: WW Norton & Company.

2005[1929] Civilization and Its Discontents. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Frost, Robert
1917 North of Boston. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Gallagher, Robert P.
2010 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors 2009. Alexandria, VA: The International Association of Counseling Services.

Girard, René
1987 Generative Scapegoating. *In* Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, ed. Pp. 73-105. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Good, Byron J.
1994 Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1996 Culture and DSM-IV: Diagnosis, Knowledge and Power. Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry 20(2): 127-32.

Good, Mary Jo DelVecchio, Byron Good, and Anne E. Becker
2002 The Culture of Medicine and Racial, Ethnic, and Class Disparities in Healthcare. Russell Sage Foundation Working Paper #199:

Gordin, Michael D.
2012 The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Greenhouse, Carol J.
1986 Praying for Justice: Faith, Order, and Community in an American Town. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Grobsmith, Elizabeth S.
1981 Lakota of the Rosebud: A Contemporary Ethnography. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Guignon, Charles B
2004 On Being Authentic. New York: Psychology Press.

Hacking, Ian
1998 Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Hahn, Robert A., and Arthur Kleinman
1983 Belief as Pathogen, Belief as Medicine: "Voodoo Death" and the" Placebo Phenomenon" in Anthropological Perspective. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 14(4): 3-19.

Harding, Susan Friend
2001 The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harrington, Anne
1999a Reenchanted Science. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

1999b The Placebo Effect: An Interdisciplinary Exploration. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2008 The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Heelas, Paul
1996 The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Heritage, John
2011 Territories of Knowledge, Territories of Experience: Empathic Moments in Interaction. *In* The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation. Tania Stivers, ed. Pp. 159-83. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

1991 Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. New York: Polity.

Hirschkind, Charles
2006 The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics. New York: Columbia University Press.

Homans, Peter
1979 Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Humphrey, Caroline, and James Laidlaw
1994 The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated By the Jain Rite of Worship. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jackson, Stanley
2001 Presidential Address: The Wounded Healer. Bulletin of the History of Medicine 75(1): 1-36.

1985 Acedia the Sin and Its Relationship to Sorrow and Melancholia. *In* Culture and Depression: Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder. Byron Good and Arthur Kleinman, ed. Pp. Berkeley: University of California Press.

James, William.
2002[1902] The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature. New York: Modern Library.

Jung, Carl Gustav
2013 The Psychology of the Transference. New York: Routledge.

1977 Symbols of Transformation (Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 5). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kaell, Hillary
2014 Walking Where Jesus Walked: American Christians and Holy Land Pilgrimage. New York: NYU Press.

Kaptchuk, Ted J. and David M. Eisenberg
1998 The Persuasive Appeal of Alternative Medicine. Annals of Internal Medicine 129(12): 1061.

Keane, Webb
2006 Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Kegan, Robert
1982 The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kirmayer, Laurence J.

2003 Asklepian Dreams: The Ethos of the Wounded-Healer in the Clinical Encounter. Transcultural Psychiatry 40(2): 248-77.

Klassen, Pamela
2005 Ritual Appropriation and Appropriate Ritual: Christian Healing and Adaptations of Asian Religions. History and Anthropology 16(3): 377-91.

Kleinman, Arthur
2006 What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life Amidst Uncertainty and Danger. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2008 Catastrophe and Caregiving: The Failure of Medicine as an Art. Lancet 371(9606): 22-23.

2009 Caregiving: The Odyssey of Becoming More Human. The Lancet 373(9660): 292-93.

Kluckholn, Clyde, Henry A. Murray, and David M. Schneider
1948 Personality in Nature. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Kripal, Jeffrey J.
2007 Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kroskrity, Paul V.
2000 Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities. Oxford:James Currey Publishers.

Kurie, Peter Demoor
2015 Trust in Perpetuity: Legacies of Charity in a Storied Company Town. Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, Princeton University.

Lacan, Jacques
1997 The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII. New York: WW Norton & Company.

1998 The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book Xi. New York: WW Norton & Company.

2006 Science and Truth. *In* Écrits: The First Complete Edition in Engligh. Pp. New York: Norton.

Laderman, Carol, and Marina Roseman, eds.
1996 The Performance of Healing. New York: Routledge.

Lambek, Michael
2007 Sacrifice and the Problem of Beginning: Meditations From Sakalava Mythopraxis. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 13(1): 19-38.

Latour, Bruno
1997 A Few Steps Toward an Anthropology of the Iconoclastic Gesture. Science in Context 10: 63-84.

1987 Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society. Cambridhe, MA: Harvard University Press.

Leith, Dick
1997 A Social History of English. New York: Routledge.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude
1949 The Effectiveness of Symbols. *In* Strucural Anthropology. Pp. 186-205. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

1966 The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1992 Tristes Tropiques. New York: Penguin.

Lindholm, Charles
2007 Culture and Identity: The History, Theory, and Practice of Psychological Anthropology. Oneworld Publications Limited.

2008 Culture and Authenticity. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Lippi-Green, Rosina
1997 English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States. New York: Routledge.

Lock, Margaret, and Vinh-Kim Nguyen
2011 An Anthropology of Biomedicine. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Lugo, Luis
2012 Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life (October 9, 2012). http://www. pewforum. org/Unaffiliated. nones-on-the-rise. aspx (accessed October 16, 2012):

Luhrmann, Tanya M.
1989 Persuasions of the Witch's Craft. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2001 Of Two Minds: An Anthropologist Looks At American Psychiatry. New York: Vintage.

2004 Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary Us Christianity. American Anthropologist 106(3): 518-28.

2012 When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship With God. New York: Knopf.

MacIntyre, Alasdair
1984 After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

1988 Whose Justice? Whose Rationality. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Mark, Tami L, Katharine R, Levit, Rita Vandivort-Warren, Jeffrey A, Buck, and Rosanna M. Coffey
2011 Changes in Us Spending on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment, 1986—2005, and Implications for Policy. Health Affairs 30(2): 284-92.

Martin, Emily
2007 Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

McDannell, Colleen
2011 Spirit of Vatican Two. New York: Basic Books.

McGuire, Meredith B., and Debra Kantor
1988 Ritual Healing in Suburban America. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Mead, Margaret
1954 Coming of Age in Samoa: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies. Penguin books.

Messer, Stanley B., and Alan S. Gurman
2011 Essential Psychotherapies: Theory and Practice. Guilford Press.

Mezzich, Juan E., Lawrence J. Kirmayer, Arthur Kleinman, Horacio Fabrega Jr., Delores L. Parron, Byron J. Good, Keh-Ming Lin, and Spero M. Manson
1999 The Place of Culture in DSM-IV. The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease 187(8): 457.

Miller, William R.
1999 Integrating Spirituality Into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Milroy, Lesley, and James Milroy
2002 Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English. London: Routledge.

Mitchell, Emma
2011 Seeing Blue: Negotiating the Politics of *Avatar* Media Activism. http://prijipati.library.usyd.edu.au. Accessed June 20, 2012.

Miyazaki, Hirokazu
2000 Faith and Its Fulfillment: Agency, Exchange, and the Fijian Aesthetics of Completion. American Ethnologist 27(1): 31-52.

Moerman, Daniel E., Jean Benoist, Eugene B. Brody, Maureen Giovannini, Miguel F. Gracia, Edward T. Hall, H.K. Heggenhougen, Doris F. Jonas, M. Kearney, and Dean Kedenburg

1979 Anthropology of Symbolic Healing [And Comments and Reply]. Current Anthropology 59-80.

Mohatt, Gerald, and J. Eagle Elk
2000 The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer's Story. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)
2009 Americans Spent $33.9 Billion Out-of-pocket on Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Press Release. http://www.nccam.nih.gov/news/2009/073009.htm. Accessed July 12, 2012.

Needham, Rodney
1972 Belief, Language, and Experience. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Newcomb, Alyssa
2011 Supporters: James Arthur Ray Doesn't Deserve Prison. Nightline. http://abcnews.go.com/US/james-arthur-ray-sentenced-sweat-lodge-deaths/story?id=14989777, Accessed July 21, 2012.

Noll, Richard
1997 The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement. New York: Free Press.

Norcross, John C., Melissa Hedges, and Patricia H. Castle
2002 Psychologists Conducting Psychotherapy in 2001: A Study of the Division 29 Membership. Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training 39(1): 97.

Norcross, John C., Gary R. VandenBos, and Donald K. Freedheim
2011 History of Psychotherapy: Continuity and Change. American Psychological Association.

Norris, Kathleen
2008 Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life. New York: Penguin.

Norris, Rebecca Sachs
2003 Converting to What? Embodied Culture and the Adoption of New Beliefs. *In* The Anthropology of Religious Conversion. Andrew Buckser, and Stephen D. Glazier, eds. Pp. 171-82. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Nouwen, Henri J. M.
1979 The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society. New York: Random House.

Nye, Robert A.
2003 The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century. Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences 39(2): 115-29.

Obeyesekere, G.
1981 Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience. University of Chicago Press Chicago, IL.

Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps
1996 Narrating the Self. Annual Review of Anthropology 25: 19-43.

Orsi, Robert A.
2005 Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

2010 The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ortner, Sherry B.
1997 Fieldwork in the Postcommunity. Anthropology and Humanism 22(1): 61-80.

2003 New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Pascal, Blaise
1995[1910] Pensées. New York: Penguin.

PDM Task Force
2006 Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM). New York: Alliance of Psychoanalytic Organizations.

Pouillon, Jean
1982 Remarks on the Verb 'to Believe'. *In* Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History, and Myth. Michel Izard and Pierre Smith, ed. Pp. 1-8. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pritzker, Sonya E.
2014 Living Translation: Language and the Search for Resonance in U.S. Chinese Medicine. New York: Berghan.

Prochaska, James O., and Carlo C. DiClemente
1983 Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change. Journal of consulting and clinical psychology 51(3): 390.

Proudfoot, Wayne
1985 Religious Experience. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Putnam, Robert D.
2001 Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rando, R., V. Barr, and C. Aros
2008 AUCCCD Survey. The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors

Ray, James A.
2008 Harmonic Wealth: The Secret of Attracting the Life You Want. New York: Hyperion.

1998 The Science of Success: How to Attract Prosperity and Create Life Balance Through Proven Principles. La Jolla, CA: James Ray International.

Rieff, Philip

1966 The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rose, Nikolas
1996 Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sapir, Edward
1927 The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society. Illinois Society for Mental Hygiene, Apr-May, 1927, City Club of Chicago, Chicago, IL, US

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret M. Lock
1987 The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology. Medical anthropology quarterly 1(1): 6-41.

Schmidt, Leigh Eric
2005 Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality. San Francisco: HarperOne.

2003 The Making of Modern "Mysticism". Journal of the American Academy of Religion 71(2): 273.

Schneider, David M.
1968 American Kinship: A Cultural Account. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Silverstein, Michael
1997 The Improvisational Performance of Culture in Realtime Discursive Practice. *In* Creativity in Performance. R. Keith Sawyer, ed. Pp. 265-312. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.

Spiro, Melford E.
1951 Culture and Personality; the Natural History of a False Dichotomy. Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes

Stivers, Tanya, Lorenza Mondada, and Jakob Steensig, eds.
2011 The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Stone, Donald C.
1981 Enlightenment American Style: The Personal and Social Significance of Est and the Human Potential Movement. Ph.D. dissertation, Sociology, University of California, Berkeley.

Stromberg, Peter G.
1993 Language and Self-Transformation: A Study of the Christian Conversion Narrative. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sundararaman, Ramya
2009 US Mental Health Delivery System Infrastructure: A Primer. Washington, DC: DIANE Publishing.

Sutherland, Aaron

2010 Dances With Wolves in Space: Aliens and Alienation in James Cameron's Avatar. M.A. thesis, Department of English, University of Saskatchewan.

Taylor, Charles
2007 A Secular Age. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

Tilburt, Jon C., Ezekiel J. Emanuel, Ted J. Kaptchuk, Farr A. Curlin, and Franklin G. Miller
2008 Prescribing "Placebo Treatments": Results of National Survey of Us Internists and Rheumatologists. BMJ: British Medical Journal 337:

Trilling, Lionel
1973 Sincerity and Authenticity: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures; 1969-1970. Harvard University Press.

Turner, Victor Witter
1968 The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

1969 The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction.

U.S. Surgeon General
1999 Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Bethesda, MD: Office of the U.S. Surgeon General.

van der Kolk, Bessel
1987 Psychological Trauma. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.

Varenne, Hervé
1977 Americans Together: Structured Diversity in a Midwestern Town. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Wadell, Paul J., and Darin H. Davis
2007 Tracking the Toxins of *Acedia:* Reenvisioning Moral Education. *In* The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education. Michael D Beaty, and Douglas V Henry, eds. Pp. 133-54. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Walker, James A.
1980 Lakota Belief and Ritual. Demallie, Raymond and Elaine Jahner, eds. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Wallace, Anthony FC, and Raymond D Fogelson
1961 Culture and Personality. Biennial Review of Anthropology 42-78.

Wallace, David Foster
2005 Commencement Address from Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. May 21.

Weber, Marianne
1988 Max Weber: A Biography. Ne Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Weber, Max

1946a Science as a Vocation. *In* From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. H.H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, eds. Pp. 129-56. New York: Oxford University Press.

1946b The Social Psychology of the World Religions. *In* From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. H.H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, eds. Pp. 267-301. New York: Oxford University Press.

1958 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. New York: Scribner.

1978 Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wenzel, Siegfried
1967 The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Wilce, James M.
2011 Sacred Psychotherapy in the "Age of Authenticity": Healing and Cultural Revivalism in Contemporary Finland. Religions 2(4): 566-89.

Wuthnow, Robert
1998 After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s. Berkeley: University of California Press.

1994 Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community. New York: Free Press.

Zola, Irving Kenneth
1972 Medicine as an Institution of Social Control. The Sociological Review 20(4): 487-504.