THE CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN CONSERVATISM*

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If one generalization can be made about Native North American peoples over the past 500 years it might well be that they have survived as communities and cultures. Contemporary Native American communities, however, are different from those before the arrival of Columbus in 1492. After significant North American colonization, Indian life was exposed to new forms of political competition, markets and cultural and religious ideas that had great affect. Nevertheless even to the present, Native American groups place great emphasis on community survival and cultural maintenance. They might not always be successful, and their cultures and communities may not survive quite in the ways that they prefer, for the forces arrayed against them for change and assimilation are extremely strong. The conservative emphasis on cultural and community survival is at once a great asset and helped preserve Indian identity and a sense of nationality, but at the same time constrained the ways in which Indian groups adapted to Western contact.

Native Americans adapted to the changes of the past 500 years in many ways such as revitalization movements among the Paiute, Iroquois, Delaware, Kickapoo, Shawnee, Creek, and others, state formation among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek, or conservative resistance as among some Apache, Sioux, Navajo, or conservative integration as among the Ojibway Drummer Movement, and the Crow and Wind River Ute (Jorgensen 1972, Vennum 1982, Champagne

1989). Whether it is the Cherokee, who tried to preserve their nationality by building a state government in the 1820s, or the San Carlos Apache, who willfully resisted reservation life and assimilation, the emphasis on community preservation and cultural survive is central to the strategies and concerns of Indian people. The wide range of differences in Indian responses to colonial conditions is due to regional and local ecological variations and differences in political, economic, and cultural relations with colonizing societies, but also, and not least of all, each Indian nation defends a different cultural and institutional order from the others. For example, the Iroquois, with their clans and confederacy, defend a very different cultural and institutional order than Tlingit, with their *potlatches* and moieties. A combination of Indian cultural and colonial conditions helps explain the diversity of change patterns among Native American cultures over the past 500 years.

Nevertheless, throughout the history of Indian and colonial relations, Indians have emphasized maintenance of their institutions and cultural orders. Despite major efforts by the United States, Canada or other colonial powers, Indians generally preferred to live in their own societies and usually decline to assimilate. The persistence of reservations and reserves within the United States and Canada is testament of the Indian quest for cultural and political survival. Continuing legal and political struggles, land claims cases, emphasis on tribal sovereignty and national or tribal rights in both the United States and Canada attest to the desire by Indian communities to retain selfgovernment and cultural heritage. The history of most Indian nations over the past 500 years can be viewed as a struggle to retain institutional and cultural integrity. Many groups changed aspects of their culture, but they did so relatively reluctantly, and often under extreme conditions of political competition, economic necessity, or by means of new cultural forms and ideas introduced by agents of the colonizing society. Indian groups changed because their economic, political and cultural relations and environment was drastically changed by colonizing nations.

The emphasis on retaining cultural integrity, whether it be world view, ceremonies, religion, art, dress, identity, kinship groups, is not an antiquarian or *ad hoc* interest, or merely

created in defiance of colonial assimilation efforts, but is deeply seeded in the values and orientations of Indian cultures and in the organization of Indian social orders. There are cultural and institutional reasons for the pervasiveness of Indian conservatism, and it can be examined and analyzed through ethnographic and historical means.

Theories of change and traditionalism

In comparison with modern or Western societies, Indian groups before 1492 and since, do not emphasize the accumulation of wealth with the intention to reinvest wealth in the means of production according to the demands of the market place. Hence Indian societies did not emphasize economic innovation, or use wage labor, or capitalism entrepreneurship, as engines of economic accumulation and material progress. For Karl Marx, the constant demands for technological innovation and profit making characterized capitalist society (Marx 1967). Indian societies such as the Iroquois represented an earlier form of primitive communism, primarily because for Marx and Engels, Iroquois society did not have the technological or productive capacity to free people from the demands nature made upon them (Engels 1972: 96, 160). For Marx and Engels true communism would arise only after society gained productive and technological capacity to relieve people from most basic material needs. Weber agrees generally with Marx's analysis but emphasizes that while Marx explains the formation of the English working class through the historical process of enclosure of the English commons, he does not fully explain the rise of the capitalist spirit among entrepreneurs. In general, Weber's work focused on the question of why capitalism or modern society rose in Europe and not in other parts of the world. He investigated the history, politics, economic organization and cultures of the major civilizations of the world, including India, China, Judaism, and was working on a study of the history of Christianity (Weber 1963, 1967*a*, 1967*b*, 1968). Through his comparative historical and cultural studies, Weber searched for the conditions that led to the rise of rational capitalism: the strong emphasis on market

oriented economic accumulation and production. While looking at multiple arguments, for Weber, world view and religion are primary elements in his explanation.

In particular, Weber argues that Calvinist doctrines are critically important in understanding the motivations for the rise of an entrepreneurial capitalist class. For Weber, Marx explained how the working class came about in England, but did not explain why capitalists were ready and waiting to exploit the labor of workers who had been separated from the means of production and had little but their labor power to sell for a living. Marx assumed that simple self-interest explained capitalist motivations to exploit worker's labor. Weber argues, however, that rational capitalism, the productive organization of labor and factors of production according to the demands of the market place, is not an inherent feature of human nature for truck and barter, but rather a constructed and particular form of social, political, and cultural order. Some prerequisites to markets are stable economic laws and courts, a formally free labor force, rational accounting systems, money as a *medium* of exchange, as well as values fostering the accumulation and economic reinvestment of wealth (Weber 1981: 275-278)

People are economically interested, and for that matter self interested, throughout human history, and in every society and culture. But the willingness to exchange or barter or to engage in self interested activity is not enough for Weber to explain the rise of rational capitalism in the West. For Weber there are a variety of economic ethics and cultures. A traditional worker or trader does not act according to the demands of the market place. A traditional worker, given the opportunity to earn more money at a higher rate, will work only enough to gain a customary level of pay or subsistence, and will not work more in order to accumulate wealth or to reinvest in business. Rather than work to accumulate wealth, the traditional worker will prefer to spend time in leisure after securing a customary subsistence level (Weber 1958: 59-65). This type of labor ethic is observed in many societies. Weber also characterizes adventure capitalism, where great risks are taken in hopes of high reward, as a form of accumulation that is not congruent with the relative low risk taking of rational capitalism and accumulation. Merchant capitalism, where the entrepreneur

buys cheap at one location and sells dear at another, also does not characterize rational capitalism, since there is no direct management of the means of production. Weber further distinguishes traditional capitalism, where entrepreneurs engage in business but are satisfied with customary levels of profit, and do not exert themselves to out perform their fellow businessmen, but rather after achieving their usual profit share, prefer to engage in leisure. Weber characterizes much of the economic ethic in Europe before the 1500s, and elsewhere in the other major civilizations, as having various forms of merchant and traditional capitalism, and the workers having traditional labor ethics (Weber 1981: 352-369)

For Weber, an explanation for the rise of capitalism needs to explain the spirit of capitalism, or the rise of rational capitalism; since market oriented rational capitalism is not inherent in the nature of people, the motivation for capitalists to exploit labor and organize the means of production according to the demands of the market place must be a specific social and cultural form.

While Weber recognizes that a variety of legal, political, and monetary conditions were necessary for the rise of capital markets and production, he argues that these features are not enough to explain the rise of capitalism without explaining the motivation of the capitalists to break the norms of traditional capitalism in favor of the competitive and innovative action of rational capitalism. Weber finds an explanation for the breakdown of European traditional capitalism in the Calvinist doctrine. He argues that the specific features of Calvinist doctrine motivated Protestant Calvinists to cast aside the customary norms of traditional capitalism in favor of competitive rational capitalism. Calvinist doctrine proclaimed that God's will was predetermined for all time, only the Elect received salvation, and all had a specific calling. Weber interpreted Calvinism as a strong other-worldly religion, where people sought to achieve salvation in the other-world, not in this-world, which was considered evil, corrupt, and full of sin. Although other-worldly salvation is the primary goal, Calvinists needed to show that they were one of the Elect, a person chosen to go to heaven. Although the Elect were predetermined, none knew if they were one of the chosen, and each was enjoined by

the Calvinist community to act like one of the Elect, and to do the work of God on earth. Calvinists were not allowed to enjoy this-worldly comforts, but were enjoined to be moral, upright, work hard, and to accumulate wealth as sign of their labor and moral fortitude. Wealth was a sign of the fruits of constant labor, but could not be used to satisfy personal pleasures, and therefore was reinvested in order to make more wealth and provide more work for others. Hence Calvinist entrepreneurs broke the norms of traditional capitalism by working longer hours, accumulating wealth as an end in itself, and reinvesting wealth as a means of generating more economic wealth. Once Calvinist entrepreneurs start innovating and producing cheaper goods they attract more customers. The traditional capitalists are now forced to either follow the acquisitive and innovating path of the Calvinists, or go out of business (Weber 1958: 180-183). This is what Weber called the Iron Cage, once the initial break through is made to rational capitalism, then all entrepreneurs are forced to follow the path of constant innovation, change, and capitalist accumulation, which Marx and Weber both characterize as the core of capitalism or modern society.

Both Marx and Weber, as well as most observers, do not characterize Indian societies as capitalist or modern, but rather they consider them traditional. According to Engels, one reason that American Indians societies did not take up agriculture, as opposed to horticulture which depends on hand held instruments while agriculture requires a plow and draft animal, is that there were no domesticated animals in North America. Consequently, without the rise of agriculture, Indians could not move toward capitalist society on the evolutionary scale. Weber makes few comments on Native American societies within his comparative studies, mainly because he believes that the religious orientations of indigenous groups, depending largely on magical beliefs, excludes them from consideration for a likely place where capitalism and/or significant internally generated change may occur. That Indian societies are conservative or traditional is widely observed.

Nevertheless, the conservatism of Indian societies demands more attention, and deserves more exacting explanation. The reason for this is not so much that such an explanation will

change the assessment of anthropologists and theoreticians like Weber and Marx that Indian societies are conservative, but rather the classification of Indian societies as traditional does not do justice to their complexity and to their individual cultural and institutional variations. Although both the Apache and Hopi can be characterized as conservative, they vary considerably in terms of religion, kinship structure, economy, political structure and other features. The classification of traditional is not a completely adequate characterization for indigenous societies. In many theories of the rise of modernity or capitalism, Indian societies play no significant theoretical or empirical comparative role, and hence their bunching into the traditional category. Theories of social change and the organization of human societies that are not so centered on the models of change found in Europe or on modernity or capitalism, will need more explicit understandings of Indian cultures and institutional orders with respect to their inherent possibilities of change. The specific features of Indian societies are of interest to a theory that explains patterns of change and adaptation of indigenous societies to colonialism or the expansion of the world-economic system.

It is beyond the scope of my task here to set out a theory of change for Indian societies over the past 500 years of colonial contact. A prerequisite to such a theory, however, is a systematic assessment of the possibilities of change inherent within Indian cultures and societies. Despite the variations of colonial contact, the conservatism of pre-contact Indian societies carries over to the processes of adaptation during the colonial period. The pervasive persistence of conservative orientation in American Indian societies deserves explanation since it is one of the most general and notable features about Indian communities over the past five centuries.

Culture and societal differentiation

Weber's theory for the rise of the spirit of capitalism points to a major place to look for the genesis of conservative orientations in the specific doctrines of religion or more broadly cultural world view. Weber's analysis of Calvinist doctrine

provides clues to analyzing culture with respect to social change. For example, his analysis of Calvinism emphasizes several features of religion such as: the relation of radical dualism of this-world and other world, the emphasis on domination of the earth, the emphasis on this-world as evil and changeable, and the view of an omniscient but unapproachable God. The latter features of Calvinism and Christianity can be compared with the cultural norms and beliefs within Indians societies in order to investigate world view, orientation toward change, and economic ethic.

A second and complementary argument, indirectly given to us from Marx and Weber through Parsons (1977) is the theory of societal differentiation, which provides means for conceptualizing relations among major societal institutions such as culture, polity, economy, and community. This argument of institutional differentiation differs from arguments of role differentiation, where specialized roles emerge such as shaman, head warrior, or chief. There may be specialized roles in a society, although major institutional relations are not distinguished or specialized. While all major societal institutions are interrelated to some degree in all societies, the theory of societal differentiation suggests that some specific configurations of institutional relations may be better predisposed for change than others. The theory argues that more highly differentiated institutional orders, those where culture, polity, economy and community are relatively more specialized and insulated from the activities of the others, will have greater general capacity for change and adaptation than less differentiated societies, where the major institutions are overlapping, less specialized, and less autonomous from one another (Engels 1972: 96, 160; Parsons 1977).

It is possible to create a complex scheme of relations among specialized activities within major institutions, such as polity or economy. For example, an internally differentiated polity is often characterized as a democratic state with political parties, separation of political powers among executive, judiciary, and legislature powers, and special rules of political decision making. A specialized economy is a market economy with many businesses, factories, financial exchanges, banks, and mass consumers. This degree of theoretical description is not

necessary for the argument presented in this paper, so we will consider primarily the relations among major institutions: economy, polity, community and culture.

Much of differentiation theory is based on systems relations, but this is a very abstract formulation, and it is much more pragmatic and empirically useful to work with concrete ethnographic case studies. Relations among culture, polity, economy, and community can be studied from the ethnographic and historical literature available on any particular society. For example, among the Iroquois it is well known that members of the Iroquois Confederacy are elected by matrilineal clans and that clans and family lineages are primary political decision making groups. This well known knowledge tells us that family and clan relations, which make up much of the Iroquois community, define traditional Iroquois political relations. Political leadership within the Iroquois Confederacy is legitimately controlled by matrilineal clans and families. In fact clan rights supersede Confederacy prerogatives, unless the clans grant unanimous consent to the Confederacy. Furthermore, in Iroquois society most economic activity is undertaken and organized by families and clans. Women cultivate the fields and control the horticultural output, and males deliver the results of their hunting to their wives or mothers. Thus in Iroquois society, economy and polity are closely interrelated through family and clan relations. The rules and norms of Iroquois economy, polity and community or kinship relations were known by most Iroquois (Morgan 1901: 221; Parker 1968: 100-108; Wallace 1972: 44-50). This kind of knowledge was not hidden and was accessible to most interested adult members of the society, if not understood from childhood. Ethnographic descriptions of a society, or the ways in which economy, polity, culture or community activities are carried out in specific historical instances provide clues to understanding how major societal institutions are related and how they operate in historical and normative situations.

One advantage to an ethnographic and historical approach to understanding relations of societal differentiation is that it avoids theoretical abstractness and ahistoricity. The theory of differentiation was formulated to understand broad evolutionary trends of change, but is relatively less helpful for understanding

the process of how societies moved from one arrangement among culture, polity, economy, and community relations to another arrangement. The theory also classified indigenous societies as relatively undifferentiated, which overlooks considerable variation in institutional relations among them. For example, the major institutions in Iroquois society are undifferentiated, but so are those of the Creek. The Creek, however, do not have the same clan, economy, and polity relations as the Iroquois. An ethnographic approach to understanding relations of societal differentiations allows the researcher to avoid a too Western and evolutionary bias in the abstract formulation of the theory, where highly differentiated societies always look like industrialized Western democracies such as the United States. An empirical and ethnographic approach to understanding relations of societal differentiation helps underscore the systemic ways in which societal organization varies. Differentiation theory assumes that institutional relations and interchanges are fundamentally similar across societies, but empirically relations among polity, economy, community and culture are unique to each society, and their patterns of interrelations deserve considerable empirical and theoretical attention. An empirical and ethnographic understanding of institutional differentiation can account for the unique and holistic relations of polity, economy, community, and culture found in all societies. Only after having gained such knowledge will we be in a better position to survey the many permutations of institutional orders found in human societies, and be in a better position to study their empirical patterns of change through history.

The theory of societal differentiation suggests that undifferentiated societies will be less capable of generating change. Change is defined as a process of increased societal differentiation, such as the increased insulation of polity from religion, as for example, in the U.S. constitution with its policy of separation of church and state. Undifferentiated institutional orders are more difficult to change because institutional relations are overlapping, and any group seeking to present an innovation or change in institutional relations, such increased separation of political and religious relations, must legitimate and gain the affirmation of the new relations from within most

members of the community. Force can and is often used to impose change, but we are considering consensual change and institutionalization of more differentiated institutional relations, such as increased separation of kinship and polity, or, religion and polity. Change created by force is often unstable and fails to become institutionalized (Parsons 1977: 25; Durkheim 1984: 310-322).

One reason that undifferentiated institutional relations are not easily changed is that an innovation toward increased institutional differentiation requires major reorganization of fundamental institutions such as kinship, religious world view, political relations or economic organization. Most peoples are reluctant to change kinship organization or religion without good reason. For example, in the Iroquois case, where economy and polity are closely interrelated with family-clan relations, Iroquois and missionaries who introduced innovations, such as democratic government modeled after the U.S. government, encountered considerable opposition from many Iroquois who preferred to live by the traditional patterns of clan elected political leadership and organization (Donaldson 1892: 2, 34-44; Fenton 1956; Hauptman 1981: 9, 179). In such cases, clans, kinship groups and religious leaders will have vested interests in resisting the formation of a government which formally excludes their historical interests and cultural prerogatives from political organization and decision making. Such groups will consider their traditional rights and interests threatened and will not accept a new more differentiated arrangement as proper or legitimate. Consequently, unless there are extenuating conditions or situations, such groups will strongly resist change. Whether they are successful in resisting change may depend on their political power and social-cultural influence for upholding and maintaining the traditional institutional order (Eisenstadt 1967: 444; 1978: 32-34, 66; Alexander & Colomy 1985:13-16; Colomy & Rhoades 1994)

Both differentiation theory and Weber's cultural theory of change provide tools for understanding institutional and cultural conservatism among American Indian societies. Both theories, however, pay relatively little attention to indigenous societies and their cultural and institutional uniqueness and variation. Nevertheless, it is possible to borrow concepts and ideas from

both theories that help improve understanding of the institutional and cultural patterns of Native American conservatism.

Native American world view and conservatism

There is not one American Indian religion or world view, but rather hundreds of religions with their own creation stories, rituals, sacred objects, and particular relations with the sacred. For each of the hundreds of Indian cultures there are associated beliefs, cultural norms, and understandings. For example, the Hopi creation stories of people rising from the earth through three underworlds provides for a very different moral order than the Tlingit creation stories based on the culture hero Raven. Although the specific content of Native American cultures varies considerably, there are many fundamental similarities when compared to world religions, especially Weber's view of Protestant Calvinism (Weber 1958). Weber argues that the doctrines of Calvinism provided cultural motivation for the rise of the capitalist spirit, and, more generally, modernity, with its emphasis on change and progress. Consequently, the features of Calvinism that motivated orientations toward change should be absent or differently ordered as to have an opposite effect in a traditionalistic culture. Some features of Weber's argument that might be compared with Native American cultures are: the radical dualism of this-worldliness and other-worldliness, emphasis on other-worldliness, denigration of this-worldliness, emphasis on domination of the earth, predestination of God's will, individual salvation, and guilt and sin. If American Indian cultures foster orientations toward preservation of the social and cultural order, then we can expect to find those doctrines and differences expressed when compared with Weber's analysis of Calvinist doctrines.

There are many interesting comparisons that can be made between American Indian religions and Christianity, but here we are interested only in those aspects of cultural orientation that motivate change and innovation, or orientations that motive strong commitment and maintenance of a cultural order. One aspect of Christianity, and more specifically Calvinism, that

fosters orientations toward accepting change in political and economic institutions is the radical dualism of sacred and profane. While most cultures emphasize sacred and profane situations or places, in Calvinism the entire earthly existence is profane. The world is a profane place full of sin, death, hunger, disease and suffering. This-world is a place of trial, and the real world is heaven, the sacred place where individual salvation is obtained. The view that this-world is an evil and corrupt place, and that heaven is the real world, has some implications of understanding possibilities for accepting change. If this-world is evil, then there are no injunctions against changing the world and transforming it; also, the institutions of men are not divine, but rather are man made, temporary institutions, and therefore inherently imperfect and subject to improvement. The Christian God commands the faithful to populate the world, subdue its raw materials, and make the world Christian. Even though people are to work according to God's divine plan while on earth, the perfect world is in heaven, and it is God's will that people work to make a more perfect world, a world that more completely reflects the true sacred world of heaven. Inherent in this idea of a corrupt this-world is the implication that this-world is and must be changed for the better. The idea of utopian societies is derived from the belief that the good society is possible. No good Calvinist can accept the current moral and institutional condition of the world, but must strive to make it better.

Native American world views do not exhibit Christianity's radical dualism or its denigration of this-world. For most Native Americans, this-world is the primary world, and it is a gift of the Creator, a benevolent gift giver. While there is pain and suffering in this-world, earthly existence is not seen as a corrupt and evil travail. Rather Native American religions view the world as a great gift, full of great power and sacredness (Hultkrantz 1979: 10; Beck *et alii* 1992: 3-44). Since this-world is a gift and sacred ordained place Native American religions do not condone orientations that threaten to change fundamental characteristics of the world order. To change the order of the given world would challenge the wisdom of the Creator, and upset the sacred balance and order of the universe. A people who renounced the sacred ceremonies that gave thanks to the

creator for health, harmony, victory in war, good harvests or good hunting, would thereby forfeit the favor of the Creator and lose divine protection and aid. Such an immoral people would find divine retribution in this-worldly misfortune such as death, disease, sickness, bad hunting and bad harvests, losses in battle and other injuries. The Creator universe is composed of beings who have will and are capable of retaliation against any abuse perpetrated upon them by people. If people live in ritual harmony with the other beings of the universe, as the Creators decrees, then the Creator will favor and reward the people. Ceremonies underscore the thankfulness and respect of the Indian people toward the Creator and many other beings who are significant in their environment. While people must kill animals and collect plants to live, they show their sorrow and respect for the spirits of the plants and animals through ceremony (Loftin 1994: 648-658). Ritual balance and harmony are preserved through the ceremonies which honor the beings who are killed so that people may live. Only those animals and plants that are necessary for the subsistence of the people are harvested, for to take more would show disrespect for the animal spirits, and invite their retaliation through poor hunts, poor harvests, or disease. The universe is composed of powerful beings, which can harm or favor people (Morrison 1994). Respecting and honoring the beings of the universe is the surest means of maintaining harmony, order and well being among people. Similarly, in social group relations, respect and honor of traditional rules, values, and institutions are the means to ensure harmonious social relations (Loftin 1991: 76-77). Consequently, there are strong incentives to uphold traditional law, sacred law, and community norms, because upsetting existing social arrangements jeopardizes the group harmony and invites divine retribution upon the entire community for failure to maintain sacred law and proper ceremonies. Upholding the traditions and ceremonies leads to harmony and order in the community and with the beings of the universe, while breaking of tradition and disrespect for non-human beings invites individual and collective this-worldly disaster.

Pain and suffering is experienced in this-world, and in comparison to Christianity, there is much less emphasis on rewards in the other-world (Hultkrantz 1979:136). Indians do

not have a view of guilt and sin, but rather emphasize relative states of ritual purity. A person who has broken a sacred rule is ritually impure, and therefore potentially dangerous, and must be restored to purity and harmony through ceremony.

In many Indian societies, the very institutions of society are seen as given by the Creator or one of his intermediaries. For example, among the Tlingit, the clan-moiety system and the *potlatch* ceremonies are believed to have been given by Raven, a being who manifests the Creator's will. Consequently, Tlingit clan and ceremonial order is considered divine and therefore not changeable under normal circumstances (McClellan 1954: 83-86, 96). Similarly, among the Iroquois, the demigod Deganawida, as the spokesperson for the Creator, decreed the sacred law of the Iroquois Confederacy and gave the Iroquois the organization of the Confederacy through families and clans. Hence the ceremonies, organization, constitution, and law of the Confederacy are considered divinely sacred and therefore not subject to change (Wilson 1959). Any significant change in the organization of the Confederacy, without divine approval in some way, was a transgression of sacred law, and bound to lead to misfortune, such as social disharmony, sickness, death, poor crops or losses in war. Analogous examples are readily found among the Creek, Hopi, and Cheyenne (Powell 1980, 1981; Loftin 1991: 3-61; Champagne 1992).

Since in many Indian societies institutional orders are sacred and many aspects of nature are sacred and therefore must be respected, Indians are not motivated to dominate, control, or change this-worldly ceremonies, institutions or the organization of nature (Weber 1963: 269; Campbell 1976: 5-6, 106, 190-192, 449). To do so would challenge the divine will, and lead to this-worldly misfortune (Stanley 1977: 237-242). Among Hopi conservatives, it is believed that the ceremonies must be performed each year and according to exact tradition, otherwise the fourth world of Hopi will be destroyed by flooding caused by a water monster (Loftin 1991: 78). Many Indian conservatives believe that the Indians have covenant relation with the Creator, who sustains and gives the order of the universe, while people are to respect the world and perform ceremonies of respect and thanksgiving. Failure to perform the ceremonies may cause the Creator to destroy the world (Stanley 1977: 237-242).

The Indian view of accepting the world as a sacred gift and therefore not transformable was reflected in their attitude toward managing and preserving the ecological resources in their environment. Most Indian peoples did not kill more animals or take more plants than was needed for their traditional needs. Animals were to be respectfully treated after they had been killed in the hunt and thanked for their contribution to preserving the lives of the people (Loftin 1994). By such ceremonies and signs of respect Indians ensured a ritual balance of relations with their food, and within their world view ensured that the animals were reborn and would continue to offer themselves for the sustenance of the people (Campbell 1988: 234).

During the colonial period, European traders were baffled over the economic ways of the Indians who did not conform to their expectations. When the Indians were induced by the traders to bring in more furs by lowering the price of trader goods relative to furs - the traders gave more goods for the same number of furs - the Indians brought in fewer furs. The Indians needed only a limited bundle of trade goods, and, after they secured the required goods, they stopped hunting furs to trade. If the needed trade goods could be gained with fewer furs, then the Indians needed to hunt less (Rich 1960; Ray 1974: 68). This is the same traditional labor ethic that Weber describes (Weber 1958: 59-65). Indians did not exhibit capitalist or materially acquisitive economic orientations even during the colonial period, and in the few cases where Indian entrepreneurs emerged, as among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Creek, the economic values were borrowed from European traders and were not derived from Indian cultures (Champagne 1992).

Some anthropologists argue that the *potlatches* of the Northwest Coast peoples, where large quantities of wealth are accumulated for giveaways in exchange for future gifts and acknowledgement of rank, are similar to capitalist accumulation. The goods exchanged in the Northwest Coast *potlatches* are not reinvested into means of production according to the demands of the market place, and therefore do not fit the definition of rational capitalism. There is no formally free labor or exchange value markets among the Northwest coast peoples, and hence

they are not economic capitalists. Among the Tlingit, the *potlatch* is a ceremony of material exchange, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it is a ceremony for honoring and remembering the clan ancestors. In many ways the Tlingit *potlatch* is an ancestor cult, within which honor and prestige are gained through giving away of goods as a sign of love and respect for the clan ancestors. The material object is given to the living recipient from another clan and moiety, but the spirit of the object honors the departed clan ancestors. The more a Tlingit clan-house gives away in the *potlatch* the more respect and prestige it earns for dutifully honoring the clan ancestors (Swanton 1908: 343; 462-463; de Laguna 1954: 185-191; McClellan 1954: 80).

In general, Indian cultures view the world as holistic, this-worldly, benevolent, sacred, with an approachable Creator being through ceremony and respectfulness, and a place where harmony must be preserved through ritual and ceremonial action. Primary human action in this Indian world view is aimed at upholding the sacred social and universal order and working to maintain or restore ritual balance with human and non-human beings. Preserving social order, social and cultural institutions and ceremonies leads to harmony and well being, while changing social, cultural or religious norms and ceremonies invites disorder, harm, and in some cases world destruction. There are strong religious and cultural reasons for Indian conservatism, since Indian religions and world views strongly emphasize preserving traditional ceremonies, institutions and preserving harmonious relations with the spirit beings of the universe. Indians do not see the world as being in need of change, since it is the sacred gift of a benevolent Creator. The sacred order cannot be changed without risk to the individual or community. Since social and religious ceremonies and traditions are sacred, they are not in need of change, but must be preserved as a sign of respect and honor. Efforts to dominate and transform the world will cause retaliation and harm from powerful beings. Indians do not see themselves as having a mandate to control, dominate or transform the world or their own social-cultural institutions, but rather as powerless beings who can best assure their wellbeing through learning to live harmoniously and respectfully with the

other beings of the universe. Humans are not central to the purpose of the universe, and people cannot know the Creator's purpose or plan. Humans must accept their ordained role in the universe, and learn to accept and play out their part in the Creator's divine plan.

Conservatism and undifferentiated cultural elements

An additional method for analyzing cultural conservatism is drawn from differentiation theory, and refers to the relative autonomy among major cultural features such as religion, morality, causality, art, and ceremony. In societies where there is a relatively high degree of differentiation among major cultural elements - religion, causality, art, morality and ceremony - each forms a relatively independent activity relatively insulated from the influence of the others. For example in the West since after the Renaissance, secular culture emerged and religion became increasingly separate from ceremony, artistic expression, and science. For many people in Western societies, science provides an explanation for causality to the empirical world, and religious interpretations of the origin of the universe or of historical development are not believed by most people. In a culture where religion, morality, art, causality, and ceremony are fused together, then most cultural activity such as artistic expression, ceremonies, moral actions, and even causal interpretations of events or the order of the universe are given religious meaning and interpretation. For example, among the Navajo whenever a person is sick, they seek out a shaman who can perform ceremonies that will restore the patient's health by reestablishing relations of harmony with the sacred universe (Campbell 1988: 244-248; Beck *et alii* 1992: 267-289). The cause of many illnesses in Navajo culture is the breaking of moral rules. This view is different from the Western germ theory, which is a scientific theory distinguished from a religious or moral cause. Since in Navajo culture illness is caused by the breaking of moral rules, ceremonies must be performed to reestablish the moral relation of the patient to the sacred world order. To restore health, the shaman creates a sandpainting, a representation of sacred beings and the order of

the universe, and performs ceremonies in order restore order, balance, and health to the patient. After the ceremony, the sandpainting is destroyed since it was not an art object or an object of beauty as in Western culture, but rather a sacred object with spiritual power capable of helping restore sick people to health. When the ceremonies are over, the painting has served its purpose. The Navajo healing ceremony illustrates the close interrelation of religious belief, morality, the causes of illness and health, the religious context for the performance ceremonies, and the religious and causal purpose of art. The undifferentation of cultural elements such as religion, morality, art, ceremony, and causality fosters conservative orientations because such cultural relations inhibit change owing to the necessity to change multiple relations among cultural elements. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s some Navajo started selling sandpaintings to tourists, who regarded them as art objects in the secular Western sense. Other Navajo argued that it was not proper to sell sandpaintings since their purpose was religious. The sellers of the sandpaintings replied that they made purposely mistakes in the marketed sandpaintings and consequently the paintings did not possess sacred power, and therefore there was nothing wrong with selling them. Nevertheless, the selling of sandpaintings was highly controversial among the Navajo, because sandpaintings were seen by many as sacred helpers in ritual healing, and not secular art objects for market. Shamanistic practices, which are universal among the indigenous peoples of North America, testifies to the general presence of undifferentiated cultural elements within Indian cultures. As in the Navajo sandpainting example, inherent within shamanistic beliefs is the understanding that ritual ceremony has causal effect, and that the breaking of sacred rules is a cause of illness and misfortune.

In comparison, Weber describes Calvinism with a predestined will for God and therefore ceremony, prayer, and confession of sins could not change or influence history or one's prospects for salvation (Weber 1958: 103-106, 168-169). In the Calvinist view, religion, causality, ceremony, and morality were relatively independent, and therefore Calvinists had a relatively secular view of everyday mundane life and of the causes of history and this-worldly activity. Such a secular world view was a

precursor to the more ubiquitous secularism of contemporary modernity.

The argument that undifferentiated cultural elements fosters conservatism relies primarily on the structural relations of the cultural elements: in Indian cultures they are interrelated and interpenetrate one another. Cultural change is more difficult in undifferentiated than more differentiated structures because several elements of culture must be changed simultaneously, where in a more differentiated arrangement of cultural elements groups might be willing to change fewer features of cultural organization than change all elements of a tightly undifferentiated cultural complex. As in the Navajo sandpainting case, there was resistance to the selling of sacred objects and its redefinition as secular art. Indian communities will be reluctant to deconstruct and secularize religious ceremonies, or put aside belief in the causal effects of ceremonies for healing, and belief in the religious or sacred underpinnings of art and morality.

The argument of undifferentiated cultural elements appeals only to the structural relations among cultural elements, and not to the content and meaning of cultural world views. If we combine the arguments from above - the conservative emphasis in Indian world views with the undifferentiated relations of Indian cultural elements - which reinforce each other, we find a plausible explanation for conservative orientations within Indian cultures. The conservative world view expressed in Indian religions is included within the undifferentiated culture elements, and serves to reinforce the undifferentiated relations among art, morality, ceremony, religion, and causality. Both the content, or the purpose and meaning found in Indian cultures, and the undifferentiated structural relations among cultural elements, combine and interpenetrate to foster conservative orientations among Indian peoples.

Conservatism and societal differentiation

Most hunting and gathering societies in North America are characterized by decentralized local band organization with little

centralized political or ceremonial organization. Many of the subarctic hunters and gatherers such as the Athapascans, and many Algonkian speaking nations such as the Cree, Montagnais, Ojibway are generally characterized as decentralized and with undifferentiated or segmentary cultural, political, economic and community relations. The Paiute and Ute of the Great Basin are similarly organized as were the migrant Athapascan such as the Navajo and Apache. The hunters and gatherers usually live in small kin-based bands or villages with local political and religious leadership. The hunting and gathering nations of the Northwest Coast are materially and culturally rich, but their social, economic, and cultural orders are based largely on family and clan relations, with little political centralization beyond villages (Drucker 1965). The horticultural societies of the east, southeast and southwest are organized much differently, and have more role differentiation, but relations among cultural, economic, community and political institutions are relatively undifferentiated. For example, Hopi religious, ceremonial and political leadership is organized by kinship groups within villages. Although the particular way in which Hopi institutions are constructed is unique to them, a pattern of undifferentiation is observed among them because religious, political, economic and kinship structures are tightly interrelated and interpenetrating. Because of this pattern of undifferentiated institutional relations, the Hopi will be reluctant to consider institutional innovations, such as change in political relations if such change requires major reorientations in creation stories, religious ceremonies and kinship relations. When multiple institutional relations are required for accepting an institutional innovation, then there is great likelihood of strong resistance to change since people are generally reluctant to change fundamental features of social organization without extreme cause. The conservatism of the Hopi and their resistance to political change such as an Indian Reorganization Government is quite apparent in their history (Loftin 1991; Clemmer 1994). The Hopi case behaves according the predictions of theory.

The Indian nations of North America show considerable ethnographic diversity when comparing relations among economic, political, cultural and community institutions. In each nation or tribe, the specific ways in which economy, polity,

culture and community are interrelated is unique, and forms a holistic entity. These variations are essential to understanding each culture on its own terms, and will provide clues, causes, and insight into the ways in which particular Native American societies changed, adapted, and persisted during the colonial period. Since there are so many unique religions, cultures, and institutional orders among American Indian nations, it is an oversimplification to categorize them all as one particular type of society, such as undifferentiated. On this occasion, however, it is only possible to note Native American cultural and institutional diversity, and point out that they have predominately decentralized and/or relatively undifferentiated institutional relations of one or another degree. Societies with undifferentiated institutional relations tend to have conservative orientations toward change since any particular innovation for increased institutional specialization requires change in multiple fundamental institutional arrangements, which often engenders more resistance than when fewer institutional arrangements require change.

Native American conservatism

Native North American conservatism is a product of world view, culturally undifferentiated cultural elements, and relatively undifferentiated institutional orders. The combination of conservatism in world view and relatively undifferentiated societal orders accentuates and complements orientations toward preserving traditional institutions and ceremonies, and ways of resisting assimilation and institutional change imposed by colonizing nations. Since many American Indian groups retain much of their culture, world view, and social order, they will continue to emphasize community and cultural preservation. This argument is based on cultural and normative views, and does not imply that Indians are culturally or racially incapable of change, but rather that their social and cultural views place great and explicit emphasis on cultural preservation. All cultures are changeable and must be maintained through continuous compliance and commitments from its adherents. Culture is learned, and changing circumstances, new generations, and

variations in socialization all contribute to small changes in differing interpretations of culture. Indian cultures are not different in this regard from other peoples. During the past 500 years Indians were exposed to extensive changes in economic, political, and cultural conditions, and many adapted and changed according to circumstances. Some individual Indians culturally assimilated into U.S. or Canadian society, but many have not fully assimilated, and many others prefer to retain as much of their traditional cultures and institutions as present conditions permit. The continued and persistent Indian emphasis on cultural retention and preservation is inherent within Indian world views and is complemented and accentuated by conservative orientations generated by relatively undifferentiated cultural and institutional relations.

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Summary

Native American peoples are often considered to be conservative or traditionalistic and to have over the past five hundred years strongly emphasized retention of cultural identity, community organization, and social-cultural institutions. The conservative orientations found in Native American communities are inherent in their cultural world views, their cultural organization, and sociocultural institutional orders. Working from Weberian and contemporary sociological theory, three mutually complementary and supporting explanations are given for American Indian conservatism. American Indian world views are interpreted as emphasizing preservation of the sacred social and natural order. The relations among Native American cultural elements - religion, art, ceremony, causality, and morality - are undifferentiated and inhibit cultural change. The relations among cultural, political, economic and community institutions in American Indian societies, while varying greatly, tend toward undifferentiation and also inhibit change in social and cultural relations. All three arguments are mutually supportive and point toward inherently and powerfully conservative orientations for Native American community members and culture bearers. The combined arguments help to explain the persistence of Native American communities and identities after five hundred years of colonialism. Studies of change or cultural traditionalism among Native Americans must take into account their inherently conservative cultural orientations and cultural and institutional relations in order to arrive at more holistic and complete understandings of Indian life, change, and preservation.

Sommario

Gli Indiani d'America sono spesso considerati conservatori o tradizionalisti per avere fortemente enfatizzato negli ultimi cinquecento anni la conservazione della loro identità culturale, dell'organizzazione della comunità e delle loro istituzioni socio-culturali. Gli orientamenti conservatori riscontrati nelle comunità degli Indiani d'America sono elemento intrinseco al loro retaggio culturale nel modo di porsi nei confronti del mondo, alla loro organizzazione culturale e al loro assetto socioculturale. Partendo da teorie sociologiche contemporanee e Weberiane si riescono a dare tre spiegazioni complementari e mutualmente esaustive dell'atteggiamento conservatore degli Indiani d'America. I loro modi di porsi nei confronti del mondo sono interpretati come una conservazione enfatizzata dell'ordine sociale e naturale, entrambi sacri. Le relazioni tra elementi culturali quali religione, arte, rituale, causalità e moralità sono inalterate ed inibiscono un rinnovamento culturale. Le relazioni tra istituzioni culturali, politiche, economiche e della comunità nelle società degli Indiani d'America pur variando in misura notevole, tendono ugualmente ad una certa immutabilità che inibisce un ricambio in relazioni sociali e culturali. Tutte e tre le argomentazioni si rafforzano a vicenda e si indirizzano verso orientamenti fortemente conservativi sia per i membri della comunità sia per coloro preposti a preservare l'eredità culturale. Questa combinazione di elementi aiuta a spiegare la continuità delle comunità degli Indiani d'America e delle loro identità dopo cinquecento anni di colonialismo. Studi riguardanti possibili mutamenti o continuità nelle tradizioni culturali tra gli Indiani d'America devono prendere in considerazione l'elemento inerentemente conservativo presente nei loro orientamenti culturali e nelle loro relazioni istituzionali e culturali in modo da arrivare ad una maggiore e più completa comprensione della vita, dei mutamenti e della conservazione degli Indiani d'America.