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Culture for Sale? An Exploratory Study of the Crow Fair

Thomas D. Bordelon, Marie Opatrny,
Wendy G. Turner, and Steven D. Williams
University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, Indiana, USA

This paper describes an ethnographically-oriented participant-observation study conducted during the annual Crow Fair, held in south central Montana. Data collected included audio-recorded interviews with participants, participant observations, photographic and video recordings. Narrative interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison method. Multiple data sources improved the veracity of this study through triangulation, and four themes emerged from the data: commercialization, alcohol abuse, spirituality, and community. The researchers discuss these themes and their conclusions regarding the "selling" of Native American culture as a form of cultural transmission. Theme analysis revealed the researchers recognized that the principal researcher had changed his view of the Crow Fair as being frivolous to having a deeper purpose and meaning to participants. Key Words: Native Americans, Crow Tribe, Culture, Commercialization, Qualitative Research, Ethnography, and Grounded Theory

Approximately 2.5 million Native Americans reside in the United States. This is a marked increase from the estimated 225,000 of just over a century ago. Over half of all Native Americans live in the western portion of the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Historically, U.S. governmental policy decisions are remarkable for the upheaval of Native Americans from their geographical and social environments, and in many instances their families of origin (Dawes Severalty Act of 1887). Forced relocation of Native Americans to unfamiliar and in many instances arid and unfertile lands in the western part of the United States is blamed in part for contributing to disproportionately high rates of unemployment, poverty, and a host of social ills among Native Americans (Duffy & Stubben, 1998).

In addition to the enforced disbanding of longstanding Native American communities, governmental policies (Dawes Severalty Act of 1887; Indian Reorganization Act of 1934) contributed to the disintegration of the family unit and its respective longstanding system of values, customs, and traditions (Duffy & Stubben, 1998). This is the very fabric of society that had for centuries provided a sense of pride and identity for Native Americans. With the goal of assimilation of the Native Americans, programs to ensure the enculturation of dominant American societal values were established. The Carlisle School, established in 1879, became a model for educating and acculturating Native Americans in the cultures of the Euro-American settlers (Anderson, 2000). Native American children were forcibly removed from their families and peers and were placed in boarding homes far from their communities and familiar environment. With threats of corporal punishment, they were prevented from speaking their native tongue, adhering to their customs, and were forbidden to interact with family and members of their tribal society (Anderson, 2000).

Today, Native Americans continue to experience substantially lower incomes and higher rates of poverty and unemployment than Caucasians in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Additionally, Native Americans experience diminished opportunities for accessing quality education, job training, and healthcare. Economic and social problems such as high infant mortality (Grossman, Baldwin, Casey, Nixon, & Hollow, 2002), low rates of school completion, and a high rate of alcohol abuse (Akins, Mosher, Rotolo, & Griffin, 2003) continue to plague Native Americans throughout the United States.

The Crow are a Native American tribe located in south central Montana. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 75% of the Crow People live on reservations and 80% of them are unemployed. Many of the same social and economic issues that are evidenced in the wider Native American population are also apparent among the Crow People. Issues of poverty, unemployment, lack of education and a variety of social ills continue to impact Native Americans and the Crow People. However, despite past attempts to permanently disrupt and extinguish tribal ties, values, and traditions, there remains an ongoing sense of cultural pride, strength, and resiliency demonstrated by members of the Crow Tribe (Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, 2010).

This phenomenon may be explained by understanding interactions within their primary groups of family and peers (Longres, 2004). Community and spiritual worship groups provide the transmission of culture (Blumer, 1969; Germain & Bloom, 1999; Mead, 1934) and profoundly influence the development of a "common spirit" and a set of cultural values that emphasize fairness and service to others (Longres).

Symbolic interaction may provide an additional perspective for understanding the retention of originally instilled cultural values and practice. Blumer (1969) reported that an individual's mind or intellect develops in terms of the social situations wherein it receives its expression and import. It is through the interactions with others and the storing of personal experiences that individuals order their experiences and create meaning in their lives (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, 1994; Saari, 1991; White & Epston, 1990). In keeping with this perspective, it has been through the cultural sharing of common and revered symbols, language, customs, and traditions that enduring meaning systems were woven into the developing self-systems of Native Americans.

Additionally, this line of reasoning may have utility for understanding how the Crow, in particular, utilize socialization, such as interaction with family and community members and with members of non-native society, to communicate and transmit their cultural values and traditions. In a number of instances, members of the Crow who had been living on the "outside" have retained the system of their culture. Many have returned to their families of origin, and report that the resumption of participation in family and the community, including the customs and traditions of their culture, has provided them with a profound sense of meaning in their lives (Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council Meeting, 2004).

Knowledge of one's culture can also be a contributing factor in the selection of economic activities, as an individual may select an economic activity that fits within his or her cultural tradition (Cornell, 2000). These cultural attributes underscore the importance of supporting greater attention to cultural identity in economic development of Native Americans (Duffy & Stubben, 1998). Such opportunities to experience one's

culture are essential to the maintenance of a society, and today, the Crow Fair is an annual event that also provides the Crow People with economic opportunity. Although opportunities for tribal members to make money in the dominant society are difficult on the reservation, some members of the Crow Tribe have creatively utilized earlier developed knowledge and skills and are creating and selling art, crafts, music, and stories symbolizing their shared sense of culture and identity as members of the Crow Tribe.

Thus, the Crow Fair may be conceptualized as an event that stands at the intersection of cultural and economic imperatives. While opportunities to experience and appreciate one's cultural heritage may exist within the reservation, opportunities for economic gain do not. Conversely, while economic opportunities exist within the surrounding society, cultural identity is difficult to maintain. A critical question then presents itself: is commercialism necessary for the Crow Tribe? Is it possible, that is, that such commercialization serves a crucial cultural function in itself, aiding in the maintenance and transmission of cultural traditions for Crow and non-Natives respectively? If so, the easy dichotomy of culture vs. economics begins to blur, and the term "commercialization" must be understood in a different manner.

It is in the realm of culture (including religion) that commercialization is often viewed with distaste: the sensory assault of gaudy Christmas decorations in shopping malls in October; the struggling but authentic artist who "sells out" to the demands of the marketplace. In the wider American society of omnivorous capitalism, this might be greeted with resignation. The idea of Native American cultural "displays" or "fairs" also constituting sites of monetary profit should not be surprising. Why, then, should the principal investigator of this study be initially repelled by such a discovery? Certainly the commodification of Native American imagery has a lengthy history from Winnebago motor homes to the "tomahawk chop" of Atlanta Braves baseball fans. Yet among non-Native Americans there is also a strong desire to believe that somewhere "out there" in New Mexico or Montana a pristine Native culture still exists; simple, honorable, exotic, and untainted by the forces of modernity. Thus, while it is easy to accept the selling of tee shirts, souvenir spoons, and refrigerator magnets at Colonial Williamsburg or Mount Rushmore, similar commercial activities at a Native American fair can feel vaguely unsettling. Good field work not only contributes to the social stock of knowledge, but compels the researcher to examine his or her own preconceptions and emotional reactions. In this case the principal researcher was induced to examine the reasons for his initial aversion to one of the most ubiquitous of American pastimes: making a profit.

Method

This study was conducted during the 2003 Crow Fair, an annual Native American powwow. The research methods included the use of participant observation and interviews with members of the Crow participating in the Fair. The lead author of this study, who served as the principal researcher, collected the data. Two of the other authors assisted in the data analysis and manuscript development. The fourth author was a peer debriefer who also edited the manuscript. The authors are not Native Americans but social workers and a sociologist with desire to understand the meaning of the Crow Fair from the perspective of the tribe's own members. There are a large number of articles on the subject of culture in the social work abstracts, 1,230 in past 28 years alone.

This is because social workers are concerned about culture as it identifies shared attributes of groups of people such as language, history, socioeconomic conditions, and politics (Singh, McKay, & Singh, 1998). To understand culture is to understand the context and meaning of human experiences from the perspective of individual members of the culture.

The principal researcher approached the Crow Fair from an epistemological perspective that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed through verbal interactions and direct experiences that one has with others. While the lead author had extensive interaction with many members of the Crow tribe in the past, and at least some (admittedly less than enthusiastic) experience with fairs in general, he nonetheless made a sincere attempt to enter the study from a perspective of functional naiveté regarding the subjective meaning of the Crow Fair for the individuals involved. After all, the crucial question of empathic understanding, of *verstehen*, is not "what did the individual do," but rather "what meaning did the action have for the individual?" (Weber, 1949). Thus, a position of "not knowing" in this particular sense also acknowledges the importance of being open to research methods that would allow him to develop an in-depth understanding of multiple aspects of the Crow culture as told by individual members of the Crow.

His decision to use a qualitative design that included exploratory methods of direct observation and unstructured in-depth interviewing was in keeping with Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Crotty (1998) who stress the importance of selecting a methodology and specific methods based upon the purpose(s) of the study and the nature of the research questions.

In the nine years he had worked with Crow Tribal members as a clinical social worker, the principal researcher had never attended the Crow Fair. As a non-Native American, the principal researcher developed the close relationships with members of the Crow Tribe that inevitably result from providing individual, group, and family therapy as an employee for a local regional health center. The principal researcher was able to use knowledge of the Crow culture to develop relationships that were based on mutual trust and a sincere desire to learn more about one another. An example of this engagement and trust building process is illustrated in the following example:

> I was apprehensive about working with Native Americans when our regional health center set up a clinic at the Crow Indian Reservation. Did I know enough about Native American customs to be helpful to them? Was language going to be a barrier to understanding my clients' needs? How would my clients see me? I wanted to participate in the community as much as possible. I wanted to become competent in the way in which the Crow People understand themselves and their environment. I, too, wanted them to understand and to accept me.
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> I started my education by sitting in the waiting room of our clinic and talking to the clients and their family and friends as they came in for their medical appointments. Naturally, when clients appeared to talk to me, we went into my private office. Yet I found that family and friends

> accompanied my client to our sessions. I quickly recognized the interconnectedness of the individual to his or her community. To my delight, my clients and their family and friends happily shared their community with me. They invited me to, and I attended, a buffalo feast, ceremonial dances, and rituals such as smudging (using the smoke of burning sage and grasses to cleanse and purify objects, the body, or a place).
>
> I have fond memories of talking to the elders in particular. I spent many hours talking to a small group of elderly women who taught me to say Crow words and phrases. They always giggled at the way I would stumble and mispronounce words, but they were also very kind and patient when teaching me their language. They told me about how they sew elk teeth to dresses, learned to dance, and how they raised their children to care for one another and to be proud of their family. From both the male and female elders, I learned about how to ride horses, to have courage and to face adversity with dignity, which is especially challenging when living on a reservation where there is such poverty. From the wise elders I also learned the importance of keeping the Crow Heritage. If the culture is not transmitted from one generation to the next, it withers and at worst, it is lost forever.
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> I also spent many hours learning from the medicine man not to become a medicine man myself, but to understand his learning and techniques. I was impressed not only with the thoroughness of his education and his years of training to become a medicine man, but also with his broad fund of knowledge. He had a sophisticated understanding of natural and supernatural aspects of healing, but also the history and beliefs of his people. We sometimes worked together. More accurately, I asked him to join me in sessions where clients wanted to examine treatment choices to determine if they were congruent with the cultural beliefs of the Crow People.
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> For example, the medicine man was exceptionally helpful in offering therapies that worked in conjunction with clinical social work treatment methods. If we were helping a client to stop drinking alcohol and I suggested attendance to Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, for instance, the medicine man would explain the Medicine Wheel and discuss how sobriety restores balance to the client's life. Alcohol treatment, then, is physically, emotionally, and spiritually restorative, and Alcoholic Anonymous meetings can help the client achieve this balance.

The principal researcher believed that working with the Crow People at this level of intimacy provided a sufficient experience to come away with an in-depth understanding of what is held important to the culture. Previous opportunities to attend the Crow Fair had been refused, based on the erroneous assumption that its social

function and general content were parallel to the fairs found in the wider non-Native culture. As a youth, the principal researcher spent one summer working at a county fair as a musician. The fair seemed to be noisy and crowded with people who, aside from what appeared to be small groups of friends, were strangers seeking frivolity. Interspersed between fast food vendors were displays of calves and goats. Not far from the concession stands was the bustle of horses and riders being prepared to run in the horse races. Fast food, carnival rides, racehorses, 4-H tents, and farm animals comprised the county fair. The principal researcher suspected the Crow Fair was little different from the county fair with the exception that the type of merchandise sold by vendors would be Native American products. This assumption highlights an important theme of this study, that of community. Inherent in the term "county" fair is the assumption of shared space, both physical and social. The prospect of interaction with friends and neighbors is part of the traditional appeal of this institution. In the 21st century, however, the majority of these events have become standardized and homogenized; the same rides, the same foods, the same games erode the distinctiveness of place. This, combined with the growing general anonymity of American society, have rendered the contemporary county fair simply another example of *gesellschaft*. The Crow Fair, however, as the principal researcher eventually discovered, maintains a greater sense of social cohesion for its participants and thus might be legitimately considered an example of *gemeinschaft* (Toennies, 1957).

Seven years and several hundred miles removed from the Crow Tribe, the researcher questioned his decision to avoid the Crow Fair. While teaching primary school children about Native American pictographs at an archeological site, the researcher became aware of how he was “selling” Native American culture. The principal researcher was trying to convince children of the importance of understanding Native American culture using their symbols, the pictographs, as selling devices.

It then occurred to the principal researcher that previous invitations to attend the Crow Fair may have represented a desire on the part of the Crow People for the researcher to better understand their culture. The experiences of the researcher of providing counseling services, while certainly important and a means of gaining social insight, could hardly provide the immediate visceral experience of cultural observation and participation. The researcher uses his knowledge of this culture within the social work classroom. Since he was using Native American symbols and artifacts to persuade, to educate, in essence to “sell” cultural knowledge to students, perhaps the various forms of more literal selling that occur at a fair might serve a similar purpose. The link between teaching and selling needed to be explored. Thus, the researcher began to consider the fair as an opportunity to see another dimension of the Crow Tribal members, a side of them that interacts with the communities outside of their own. An interplay and perhaps an enhanced mutual understanding between Native American and other cultures may be facilitated by the Crow Fair functioning as both a cultural and commercial event.

The principal researcher approached the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university where he is employed with a plan to attend this cultural-commercial event. The researcher was granted permission to conduct individual interviews with the Crow and to record the events and conversations, analyze the data, and report the findings. In meetings with the IRB prior to the trip, the researcher discussed (in panel and in written

form) the composition of the semi-structured open-ended interview questions and received written approval to proceed with the qualitative interviews. Specifically the written application submitted to and approved by the IRB included the following statement,

> Qualitative analysis will be conducted with the use of semi-structured interviews with all consenting Crow Nation members. The responses to each question will be voice recorded and later transcribed

Since the Crow Fair is a public event, the IRB decided no additional permission was necessary to openly make audio and video recordings of its public proceedings nor did the IRB preclude the publication of any such results obtained from the analysis of data collected at the Crow Fair. The researcher sought and obtained written permission from all of the individuals who participated in personal interviews (each of whom signed a written informed consent form prior to being interviewed). The IRB made no suggestions that the approval of the Crow Fair organizers should be sought and the researcher did not consider obtaining permission to attend the Crow Fair to be essential to the research design.

The Crow Fair

The Crow Fair is the annual event of the Crow Native American Tribe of south central Montana. For the past 85 years, Crow Tribal Members have begun the event with a parade and highlighted such events as powwows, tests of equine skills, rodeo, and costume pageants. Although most participants belong to the Crow Tribe, some are participants from nearby tribes and a few travel from one Native American Fair to another, entering its competitions and selling their wares. The Crow Fair is a five-day event held in mid-August.

Procedures

Tom, the principal researcher, collected the data from five days of fieldwork. These included audio-recorded interviews with Native American participants as well as participant observation. Data included photographic and video recordings, which were used by Wendy and Marie as a form of visual notes that supplemented the principal researcher's notes. All of the still images and video recordings were carefully studied, catalogued, and coded. Tom's notes were read, and coded into meaning units (as discussed later in this section). The careful study of these visual and written documents allowed the other researchers to visualize the Crow Fair. For example, through the photos and videos the researchers who did not attend were able to see the scenery, the environment, the costumes, and some of the events, such as the parade.

The most frequently used measurement instrument in qualitative research is the human researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The principal researcher was the instrument of data collection, and it is through his interviews, notes, photographs, and videos that the other researchers, whose involvement was limited to data analysis and writing, were able to experience his perspective of the Crow Fair. Although Wendy and Marie are not

Native Americans, they expressed to Tom their desire to learn more about Native American culture. Both Wendy and Marie are social workers, and they brought to this study their professional interests in learning about culture as well as their social work skills. Stephen was later added as a peer debriefer in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. Both Wendy and Marie are colleagues at the same university as Tom, and the collaboration on this project was facilitated by a proximally convenient and professionally amicable working arrangement.

Wendy and Marie were invited to participate by Tom because they each brought a different set of strengths and expertise to the research project. For example, Wendy has a background in understanding the link between humans and animals. Tom felt this scholarly interest would be useful in exploring the relationships between Native American events, as many of them feature horses. Marie has the experience of having attended a Crow Fair, which gives her an "eye" for seeing the significance in the conversations and events Tom shared with the Crow Tribal members when he attended the Crow Fair.

As the instrument for data collection, Tom made decisions on which events to photograph and who to interview based on his estimation of what data could be mined. For example, when a rodeo was the primary event, Tom made the assumption that attending this event would provide the greatest source of data at that time. Tom used his field notes to record his thoughts and feelings during events and interviews, and returned to them in the evening to consider what might be a productive approach to take the next day. In the following field note, for example, the researcher decided to interview an elderly male member of the Crow Tribe.

> There is a curious referencing to others in the tribe, even though I get the feeling that the person I'm talking to has the answers. I don't know if it is humility, but there does seem to be respect shown for the elders in the Crow Tribe—especially towards the men. Today, I asked a young man about the history of the tribe. He seemed eager to tell me such things as important events and beliefs, but when I asked him if I could jot down some things I didn't want to forget, he stopped me. "No, you better not, I'm not sure about things. You'd better talk to him (moving his head in the direction of an elderly man sitting in the shade across the road). He knows a lot more than I do." [This movement seemed indicative of showing respect for a knowledgeable tribal leader, an interpretation supported by observations of the general deference paid to elders at the fair.]

A simple but effective technique in judging where to gather data at the Fair was to simply follow the crowds. Where more people gathered, more opportunities existed to speak with people and record their interpretations of events. Tom judged it important to gather not only a visual record of the fair through photographs, but to capture the event's sounds as well. The sound of the Crow language, although not understood by the researcher, gave the events the "feel" of being special to the Crow participants. The sound of drumbeats at a distance while people were participating in dancing competitions

attracted the ear of the researcher. Naturally, there is a limit to how much any researcher can capture, and the principal researcher had a technological limit of capturing three hours of sound and video, and 500 still photographs. Therefore, the researcher's handwritten notes were also essential in the data collection.

In qualitative research, in-depth interviews are considered as purposive conversations that aim to develop detailed descriptions, integrate multiple perspectives, describe a process, and learn how events are interpreted (Weiss, 1994). Although these interviews are frequently unstructured, they contain a greater degree of purpose than that of a casual conversation. The interviews in this research were unstructured and audiotape recorded. The researcher used availability sampling in order to select participants for the interviews since a random sample is not necessary or even useful in qualitative research. Availability sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which the researcher collects information from persons to whom he or she has access. Tom approached potential participants who appeared receptive to him and interviewed those who agreed to participate. Seven individuals permitted the audio recording of interviews lasting from about ten minutes to two hours. At the conclusion of those seven interviews, the researcher stopped approaching individuals as he believed he had reached a point of saturation. Saturation is the point at which the data collected is redundant and the researcher is not uncovering new information.

The second method of data collection came from participant observation through ethnographic-oriented fieldwork. If ethnography indicates a long-term immersion in the total "way of life" of those being observed, this study cannot be strictly defined as such. However, the line between participant-observation and ethnography is not a qualitatively distinct one; the former constitutes a tool by which the latter may be reached. Participant-observational studies may be relatively brief and oriented towards specific, narrow goals. Participant observation is an interpretive approach in which the researcher records his or her observations while engaging in various degrees of participation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998).

In this case, Tom was at times strictly an observer who carefully watched the events at the Crow Fair. At other times, the researcher was a participant-observer engaging in activities with Crow participants. An example of the latter role occurred when the researcher took part in setting up a teepee with some Crow men. He was not actually a member of the Crow tribe; however, he was permitted to engage in a Crow activity with other tribe members in order to observe with more depth. As he participated with these men setting up their teepee, the Crow men seemed to enjoy the interest Tom was showing towards them and their customs. He did not live with a Crow family, did not work communally toward long term goals, and did not intimately share a way of life. He was, however, immersed in an intensive five-day cultural event that was geographically and, to only a slightly lesser extent, socially isolated from the surrounding culture. Thus, if the current study does not constitute a "true" ethnography in an anthropologically orthodox sense, it does represent a level of participant-observation research that is oriented strongly to a spirit of ethnography.

In the initial categorization of photographs, a student worker independently named images and wrote brief descriptions of each photograph. Downloading and naming the images was a technical task performed by the student worker to enable the researchers to work with the images. However, the theme of commercialism was one that

the principal researcher had something of a predisposition to recognize, as indicated in the introduction to this study. Nevertheless, whether described as commercialism, entrepreneurship, or the influence of the surrounding culture of capitalism, the evidence of "selling" at the Crow Fair is strongly evident. Independent of one's judgments regarding such activities, the principal researcher believes that any observer would be hard-pressed not to see economic activity in abundance at the fair, and thus feels justified in counting commercialism among the themes evident in his data. Interviews were unstructured and many Fair participants volunteered comments regarding selling in its various forms as well as the importance - to some - of economic gain.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the elements that encompass the essential features of qualitative research, including the important task of establishing trustworthiness. Qualitative research does not assume, nor desire, the objectivity that quantitative research requires for validity and reliability. However, qualitative researchers emphasize trustworthiness to enhance the readers' confidence in the researcher's findings. Trustworthiness includes the following four objectives: truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. These are also sometimes referred to as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba).

One of the techniques used for improving credibility is triangulation. This technique involves gaining and utilizing information from a variety of sources (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). At the Crow Fair, Tom used three methods for data collection: interviews, participant observation, and visual (photographic and video) recordings. He began to notice certain themes, such as commercialization, during the participant observation portion of the study. He was then able to further investigate those themes during the individual interviews. For example, he could ask the participants questions regarding the financial opportunities at the Crow Fair. In addition, he was able to use his camera to record physical evidence of events that were later recognized as themes, such as photos of some of the vendors' booths.

A second technique for improving trustworthiness is the reflexive journal. A reflexive journal is a place for the researcher to record all information about "self and method" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). A reflexive journal should contain a log of the researcher's activities, logistics of the study, the researcher's insights and reflections, and a methodological log. The principal researcher in this study, Tom, maintained a reflexive journal throughout the process of data collection. In this journal, he kept details of the events of the day, the activities he observed and in which he participated, and insights into those events. He also recorded information about people with whom he spoke and his personal reactions to those conversations. This record of his daily experience enabled Tom to recall pertinent information from his experiences. For example, in just reading the transcripts of the interviews the researcher did not detect the level of emotion that one participant had expressed. In reviewing his journal, he saw that he had noted how that participant had become tearful in discussing some issues in the interview. In addition, the journal provided an affective context for the other two researchers when reviewing data gained from the transcripts. Thus, the reflexive journal was an important means of interpreting the day's events and conversations. The following is an excerpt demonstrating how an event was interpreted.

> I put the video camera on its tripod alongside the road. I wanted to capture some footage of me helping the guys setting up a teepee. I wanted to remember the steps we took to set it up and to see how it looked at various stages. This proved important because we set it up wrong and had to wait for an elder to come by and give us direction. Anyway, while I was setting up the camera I heard a car driving along next to me. When I looked up, I noticed the car was full of young women—high school age I suspect. I thought I heard what sounded to be a profanity, but do know I heard "get your ass outta here white-boy." I didn't pay too much attention to this at the time because one of them spit on the camera as they drove by. Funny, but they didn't drive off in any kind of a hurry.
>
> I was dazed. I was surprised. On the one hand, I was invited to participate in an important event - setting up a teepee with the men. On the other hand, I felt the victim of a racial attack. I wasn't bothering anyone, wasn't doing anyone any harm, and yet I was attacked for just being me. It felt lousy, but I went back to work on the tent and didn't indicate to the guys anything had happened. In a way, I just felt kind of embarrassed. I sort of felt at fault, but knew I wasn't. I also knew I couldn't take the event personally. I'm sure the young women must have felt the way I do. Maybe something like that happened to them and it is a way to "get back" at someone or something.
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> It was really only at that moment that I realized I was different. I wasn't there as a professional as I had been when working with the Crow Tribe before. I didn't have the protection my professional status provided me, I was just a fair-goer. I really haven't looked at myself that way until this incident. Not everyone is going to appreciate me. They will have preconceived notions of me as I do of them - some more flattering than others.

This journal entry demonstrates how the principal researcher critically examined his experiences at the Crow Fair. The entry describes an event that occurred during the day, how Tom reacted to it at the time in which it occurred, and how he thought about the event while writing the journal entry the evening following the event. When reading the journal event with Wendy and Marie, Tom realized that professional roles can give one special access to other people, especially as a social worker who is consulted for helping individuals and groups solve problems. The professional and client assume certain traits in each other such as a desire for mutual understanding and willingness to collaborate. Without the veil of professionalism, Tom found himself vulnerable to the vicissitudes of interacting with people on an ordinary basis. It is impossible to know with certainty the degree to which race played a role in the comments of the young women, but a critical reflection on the encounter with the aid of temporal distance may at least lead the researcher to consider a variety of data interpretations. This is especially critical in qualitative research and may be considered the primary function of a reflexive approach. To practice reflexivity is not to delude oneself into the belief that either perfect

objectivity or an absolute exhausting of interpretations has been accomplished; it is, rather, a means of returning to data with a perspective that incorporates a kind of personal dialectic. If Tom felt a particular emotional response at the time, that response will be different/attenuated later when analyzing data in the university setting. However, retaining the original insights through the reflexive journal allows the incorporation of both perspectives, perhaps leading to a more enhanced, holistic sense of the encounter.

An additional method for contributing to the trustworthiness of the study is the use of peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that peer debriefing is a technique in which the data is presented to a knowledgeable peer who is not invested in the research project. One of the main purposes of peer debriefing is to assist the researcher in recognizing his or her biases in interpretations. It also provides a more objective look at the feasibility of the methodology.

In order to use peer debriefing in this research study, Tom gave all of his notes, transcripts, and other sources of data to the other two researchers who reviewed the data thoroughly and noted themes. Wendy and Marie were not involved in the data collection, but were integral to the data analysis and the manuscript development. They were able to serve as peer debriefers because they did not have the same ownership of the research project as did the principal researcher. Yet as social workers, both believe in the value of understanding Native American culture. The co-authors reviewed all of the principal researcher's collected data. As they read and looked at photos, they each recognized common ideas that were present in the data. They wrote these ideas and highlighted text and photos that supported those ideas. Tom, Wendy, and Marie each analyzed the data separately coding the data, categorizing it into themes, and then sharing these themes with one another. The detailed process is discussed in the Data Analysis section of this paper.

When analyzing the data, the researchers did not fail to detect a note of disapproval experienced by Tom on the first day of the Fair. The following example demonstrates that the researcher felt embarrassed and naive as a non-Native observer on at least one occasion.

> The arena began filling to capacity. Many people set up canvas chairs in front of the bleachers obscuring my view. They left the chairs, and I noticed that they had the family name written conspicuously on the back of the chairs. It seemed that all of a sudden there were more folding chairs set up in front of the bleachers allowing a greater seating capacity than the bleachers. A breeze developed about an hour before the Powwow, and it felt like turning a blow-dryer onto your face at a low setting. Given the fact that there was no breeze earlier, it felt good. I came to the arena a couple of hours early so that I could get a good seat. I wanted to catch the powwow on video, but now I can barely see because of all the folding chairs sprouting in front of me. I'm just not "in-the-know."

Contrasted to the field notes on the last day of the Crow Fair, Tom was putting into perspective the events of the Crow Fair in a more positive light.

> I think that is the message I had gotten from the participants: the Crow Fair is a place for friends to see one another year after year. It makes community. Families have special places where teepees are set up, families grow, and families join other families. There are rules to live by, elders' experience to respect, and the insight of children.

The fourth technique used to improve the trustworthiness of the study was the use of thick description in reporting. When used in reporting the results of qualitative research, thick description can assist the reader in drawing conclusions about the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By using extensive detail in describing events and situations within a study, the reader is more capable of evaluating the conclusions drawn by the researchers (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). Throughout the report, the authors have attempted to include vivid detail concerning the data that is presented in order to assist the reader in understanding the data. The researchers have described in great detail the physical setting of the Crow Fair, the activities that took place there, and the people from whom data was collected. Thick description can set the scenes and, in essence, paint a picture for the reader; it is thus used in this study in order to improve trustworthiness.

The sources of data include four key events: teepee construction, the powwow, parades, and pageants. It was at these events the researcher encountered informants and recorded observations. Teepee construction takes place prior to the scheduled events. Tom arrived a day early to observe this process and possibly take part. The researcher's first encounter with a family setting up their teepee ended with his inability to pay a "watching fee" (he was not carrying sufficient cash at the time). This was an early and unexpected encounter with the theme of commercialism. In the surrounding culture, paying to watch work being done is relatively rare. At the Crow Fair, however, it seems some participants recognize teepee setup as a cultural activity which may have "value" to non-Native observers. Fortunately, only a few feet away the researcher found three men who were just beginning to set up a teepee. They invited him (without requesting payment) to videotape not only the process, but to join them in setting up the long pine poles that support a canvas shell.

The Powwow is the central event of the Crow Fair. A hundred or more men and women enter the open arena wearing colorful traditional garb. It first appears to be a solemn ceremony, with an introduction made by the master of ceremonies and prayer chanted by the Medicine Man in the native tongue; however, the Powwow is essentially a dance competition. Perhaps to some observers the dance competition is a solemn experience, yet to the researcher, the vibrant colors worn by the dancers, the loud music, the energetic, high-stepping dance moves, and the prominently displayed black lettering emblazoned on white cards attached to the traditional costumes of all participants seemed to indicate a competition was being held in a festive attitude. Men, women, and children compete with one another in a dance that is mimicry of the prairie chicken. The ancient dance begins with the women forming a large circle followed by men competing with one another. Women watch as the men who are wearing brightly colored feathered costumes bob up and down, double-stepping with each foot. With all their feather accouterments and energetic dance movements, the men have the appearance of a small bird found in the Plains States doing its mating dance. The dance continues until a judge in a nearby observation post announces a winner of the competition.

Although competitions are a part of each event, the Crow Tribe seems to handle winning and losing with equanimity. As a youth noted to Tom during the powwow, "it really doesn't matter who wins and loses. If you represent your family well, then that is all that is important. Then everyone wins."

Parades mark the official beginning of the events of each day, as they have done for the past 85 years. Horses and riders, all wearing ornate costumes and pulling wagons filled with exuberant families, cull an archetypal image of the Plains Indians. Four-wheel drive and other motorized vehicles are interspersed with buckskin-clad youths riding horses bareback, and young girls riding ponies. The parades are anachronistic. They present an odd blend of the past and the present, and yet everything appears at it should. After all, as another onlooker of the parade noted, "we live in both worlds."

At the Crow Fair, pageants are expressly for the purpose of competition. Every competition is a display of each family's honor through the costume and poise on horseback of individual family members. Whereas some Europeans tout their family pride on a coat of arms, these Native American participants exhibit their value of family in the clothes they wear, the intricate beadwork in which they adorn themselves, and the skill with which they handle their horses as they parade in front of the judges.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process of sorting data in order to identify common themes (Tutty et al., 1996). Historically, this analysis has been done in a variety of ways, from cutting and pasting quotes onto note cards to mapping large diagrams on poster board. Although these methods are effective, they are also known to be slow and cumbersome. In recent years, the move in qualitative analysis has been towards utilizing computer-assisted qualitative analysis software programs. The researchers in this study used a combination of both traditional and computer methods in analyzing the data.

The computer program NVivo was employed as a means to store and catalogue recorded audio and video, still images, field notes, and transcribed interviews. NVivo was helpful to the researchers for its heuristic ability to locate and retrieve specific information queried, but was not capable of identifying thematic material in the data. The computer program served as an aid to the researchers due to its ability to link media with words. For example, if one of the researchers typed the word, "powwow," every instance of the word and its location would appear. In addition, every image and sound that was coded with the word "powwow" was immediately retrieved.

The verbal data sources were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison method recommended by Padgett (1998). The method of constant comparison was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the method for developing grounded theory. Their method of data analysis involved developing theory that was grounded in observation, by making constant comparisons within the data.

Harry, Sturges, and Klingner (2005) use a six level method of constant comparison which takes data from open codes to categories to themes and finally to theory with additional steps of testing and explaining the themes. The researchers in this study used a similar approach in their data analysis. By reading and rereading the transcripts, reflexive log, and other sources of information, the researchers began making

the constant comparisons demanded of this method. Each researcher reviewed the data independently before beginning the process of coding. After locating codes within the data, each researcher began organizing the various codes into categories. The researchers shared their categories with one another and discussed how to develop themes from the categories. This was a very dynamic exercise as it involved conversation between the researchers. Each researcher verbally expressed the ideas he or she had regarding potential themes based on the categories of data that each had logged. There was a high level of consensus among the researchers regarding these themes. Often, a category identified by one researcher independently related to themes noticed by the other two, which led to the creation of themes based on multiple categories. For example, the researchers had noted categories of selling goods, earning money through competition, and charging for photographs. These were some of the categories that were merged into the theme of commercialization.

This portion of the data analysis involved a great deal of discussion and consultation; however, there was very little disagreement or need for compromise. The researchers agreed to merge their categories into four themes that emerged from the data: commercialization, alcohol abuse, spirituality, and community. These themes were highlighted in various colors within the transcripts, the reflexive journal, and field notes. This action permitted the researchers to locate exact quotes from the data to support each theme thereby enhancing the thick description of the data.

Themes

Commercialization. The most frequently occurring theme identified by the researchers was commercialization. This was a disappointment to the researcher, as the first opportunity to study the commercial aspect of the Crow Fair was immediate and Tom was not prepared to pay fees once admitted to the Fair. The researcher first encountered commercialism when he walked toward the Crow Fairgrounds and over to a family setting up their teepee. In his reflexive journal, he writes:

> On my way there, I walked by what appeared to be a family setting up their teepee. I approached the man who appeared to be directing the construction and asked if I could videotape them setting up their teepee. He went on walking about giving directions, but said I could film him if I paid him. An older woman (I assume to be his wife) and a young woman (I assume to be his daughter) giggled and smiled at me. I therefore thought he was joking with me.
>
> I asked him how much he charged, and he quickly replied, "15 dollars." I said, "And if I don't have 15 dollars?" and he quickly replied, "Then you don't film us." The women stopped giggling, and they, observing his strict continence, indicated that he was not joking. I thanked him and walked off.

In addition to working as a clinical social worker with Crow Tribal members, Tom has also worked as a mental health therapist with a broad range of people. In his

experience, he observes that families sometimes react as if there is an inside joke to be perceived by family members only, and sometimes family members think there is an inside joke where none exists. Based on the above journal entry, Tom was unable to verify whether the male who appeared to be the father of what the researcher assumed to be a family was joking or serious in his request. The giggling seemed good-natured, and Tom did not indicate in his journal any suspicion that he perceived malice on the part of the man or his assumed family members.

On later readings of the journal entry, Tom considered it to have been an event demonstrating that the man wanted to engage him in a business proposition. With a small group of men setting up their tent within eyeshot, Tom did not linger to consider if offense was meant to be taken by the failed business transaction. It seemed to him that the man and what appeared to be his family really expected money to be exchanged for a service. Tom simply moved along in the manner a fair-goer might when moving on to the next exhibition.

Commercialization was also observed at the Crow Fair along the paths lined with vendors and in some of the competitions. Tom noted in his reflexive journal that "[T]he Crow Fair is indeed a commercial venture. It is not very different from going to a country fair, with judging on dressing, dancing, drumming, singing, and horsemanship. The dancing competitions go late into the night." The fairgrounds featured an arena at the center capable of seating hundreds of observers. Surrounding the arena in all directions were vendors selling everything from cold drinks and Indian fry bread to Native American jewelry and paintings. The temperature hovered at 100 degrees Fahrenheit at midday, so small groups of patrons milled about the vendors' tents, seemingly looking for shade.

There were trash receptacles strategically placed next to stands selling food, but they were all overflowing and trash littered the fair grounds towards the end of the first day. Unfortunately, there did not seem to be a system in place for the removal of garbage from one day to the next. Diners had to push used paper plates, napkins, and cups under bleachers so they could sit down and eat in the arena. Despite the appearance and smell of garbage strewn about, vendors continued to sell their wares and events took place as though this was a natural feature at the Fair. On the last day of the Crow Fair, an announcement was made on the public address system asking the fair participants to stop tipping over the portable toilets as, "The Elders are upset by this. They want it stopped."

This description of the fairgrounds is intended to provide the reader with a visual representation of the environment in which commercial transactions were made. It would seem that the aversion to filth goes across any social class distinctions as clearly the Crow Tribal members found it to be a problem worthy of asking for assistance on the public address system. Yet Tom was surprised to see that no arrangements seemed to have been made to anticipate or remediate this problem. It is a striking anomaly of the Crow Fair to have contrasting visual representations of the grounds. For example, less than one hundred yards away are flowing hills covered in yellow grasses, a pristine river, and a clear blue sky.

It is this contrast and others that make the Crow Fair a unique experience in fair going. When driving to the Crow Fair, Tom felt almost alone on a sparsely traveled interstate leading to the fairgrounds. The countryside was dotted with cattle, yet could

easily have been bison if only a little more than one hundred years before - that is how little the landscape seemed to have changed. There were wide-open spaces with few signs of human habitation until the sign appeared for the turnoff to the Crow Indian Reservation. On those fairgrounds, hundreds of people seemed to appear suddenly. The consumption of novelty foods from the vendors and the subsequent trampling of the waste into the ground provided such a juxtaposition to the pristine wider geography, it was tempting to believe that fair-goers were not cognizant of the naturally beautiful surrounding landscape.

Naturally, the fairgrounds were crowded with people ambling from one event to the next in the extreme heat of an eastern Montana summer. The temperature exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit each day of the fair, and no rain had fallen for a couple of months. White teepees peaked above poplar trees and beside them, Native American families and friends sat under shaded structures made from tree branches and leaf canopies. Still, amongst the Native American hosts and the non-Native American visitors were strewn empty beer bottles, food wrappers, dirty plastic diapers, and paper cups. The Crow Fair is an interesting contrast of unspoiled beauty and the positive and negative effects of commercialism. On the one hand, people are interacting with one another at the fair, on the other, people are sidestepping piles of trash, horse dung, and tipped portable toilets. One Crow said "...it is stuff like this that reflects badly on us."

One of the participants interviewed was an artist, "Bill," selling his paintings at the Crow Fair. He informed Tom that the Fair was an opportunity to make money and had taken his artwork to the arena to attract buyers. Bill had been an executive at a leading software manufacturer, but had made a decision to leave the "White man's world" to find his cultural roots. He attempted to make enough money to survive while discovering his cultural heritage by traveling to the Crow Fair and other Native American events and participating in the dance competitions.

> I was hoping to win; I was hoping to be there to dance. That was all I wanted to do. Everything took a back seat, jobs, everything else. I just took my car on the road, just traveled all over the country. Next thing you know I knew that I need to do something besides dance. I started making crafts, beading shields. My shields did pretty good, I was selling them all over the place. First I sold them for sixty, then I sold them for eighty. One guy bought one and said I wasn't selling them for what they were worth and gave me $100. After that I started selling them for $180. Started selling shields and dance sticks. Next thing you know I started selling paintings. My first painting sold for $250. After that I decided that's what I wanted to do. The painting wasn't very big, and it took me two months because I couldn't figure out what to paint on it.

Bill went on to describe other ways in which he discovered he could earn money while engaging in cultural activities.

> I went to Crazy Horse National Monument to sell my paintings, but nobody was buying. I went and put on my dance outfit and stood around. People started taking pictures of me, and my friend told me that I should

> start charging them. So I started charging people. They were paying $5, and I was making over $200 a day. Pretty soon after that I said that's enough for me, and got back to what I was supposed to be doing, which was painting. I had $7.00, a half a block of cheese, four slices of bread, and my oil light was blinking - I had a quarter tank of gas. I started to dance, and was dancing hard. I set up my paintings; people took a couple and put them up here and there. People bought some staffs and shields I made, but they didn't do well. I thought I'd at least get fifth place in a dance competition, maybe fourth, but no, I got second place and $400.00.

Bill suggested that the powwow is an example of change, even when he started participating several years ago. "The powwow is more like modern day now. Back then, all they did was war dance and victory dance. Now it has gotten more 'contest-ier' - more commercial." He suggested that the dances held at the Crow Fair are, "Just kind of for the tourists." There are interpreters of the dance and "Sometimes when they do the powwow they'll get into talking about tradition, but not a lot." Bill said that dancing is passed on by parents to their children, but lamented that not enough of this training was now taking place, "the kids are always distracted by video games and hanging out." Some dances are passed down from generation to generation, but the powwow at the Fair does not celebrate war or victory, just a person's skill as a dancer.

Bill's thoughts on dancing as being "kind of for the tourists" were echoed by eight other bystanders of an evening powwow the researcher attended. Though noting that dancing has an appeal for tourists, it also seemed to appeal to participants who received cash prizes (up to $3000 for the first-place winner). When asked if any of the ancient dances were known to any of the dancers, the bystanders said the significance of certain dances remains, but the actual dance movements have been lost. Though supported by other Crow Tribal members, Bill's discussion lent credence to the commercial aspects of dancing. He had spent many years traveling to Native American fairs and actively participating in them as a Native dancer and commercial artist. Bill's experience is also of note regarding the melding of economics and culture. In his previous occupation, Bill could have continued a successful career but chose the economic uncertainties of artistic expression in a more personally meaningful cultural context. Bill did not choose between commercialism and culture, he chose to "sell" culture.

Alcohol abuse. The second theme involved alcohol abuse at the Crow Fair. Problems related to alcohol abuse are particularly prevalent late at night. Tom interviewed a Crow member, "Joe," who discussed what he saw as an alcohol problem at the Crow Fair. Joe said that people go from one tent to the next drinking hard liquor, usually without causing problems, but sometimes people get too intoxicated and out of control and fights break out. To prevent serious injuries, the Crow Tribe police pick up the boisterous revelers and put them in a "lockup teepee" until they get sober. For the $50 fine, getting picked up can be a source of pride to some, embarrassment for others, and for some simply a safe place to sleep.

One participant who was interviewed described his own struggles with alcoholism.

> I was a wino a long time ago. After I got sober I ended up speaking at lots of treatment centers and high schools. Talked about sobriety and how it affected me. You don't want things clouding up your mind. You can't help but notice that, you know what you're talking about. You said that you know the alcohol is a big problem with kids today. It's not other drugs, it's mostly alcohol. It's the cheapest - it's easy to get a hold of.

Alcohol problems were evident at night, and as Joe noted, "The Indians drink when the visitors are gone. It's the way it is - drinking, especially with the men, is a part of the Fair. I see the problems it causes. People are rowdy and fight and take from each other. It's not what you want others to see, but a lot of men come here to drink. Maybe that is why the Parade starts late in the morning - too many men are sleeping it off."

Aside from the delay in starting events, there were no apparent problems with alcohol consumption during the day. No alcohol was sold, and no intoxicated persons were visible. Alcohol abuse seems to be a prevalent problem on American Indian reservations and with Native Americans who leave the reservation. The researchers noted the repeated incidence of alcohol abuse as important, but to explore fully this theme is beyond the scope of this paper. Numerous studies have established alcohol abuse as problematic for Native Americans (Beals, Spicer, Mitchell, Novins, & Manson, 2003; Berkowitz, Smith, Taylor, & Brindis, 1998; Cameron, 1999; Frank, Moore, & Ames, 2000; Mancall, 1998; May, Van Winkle, Williams, McFeeley, De Bryn, & Serna, 2002).

The themes found by the researchers are interconnected, as there was support for each in the still photograph, video, and written records. As in the example above, alcohol abuse problems were prevalent at the Crow Fair to the extent that a special "lock-up" teepee was deemed necessary. This contingency is planned in advance of the Crow Fair, demonstrating the Crow Tribe's recognition of alcohol abuse as a problem. The well-established scholarship earlier identified clearly demonstrates the serious concern Native Americans have for alcohol problems. Researchers repute alcohol abuse accounts for much of the misery Native Americans experience on reservations, yet also report advances in treating the disorder.

The consumption and more than occasional abuse of alcohol, then, was a consistent aspect of the experience, occurring alongside the dancing, rodeo, painting, and drumming. It was not *the* experience and certainly not the experience for everyone, but it was pervasive and important when observed by several Crow Fair participants and at least one key informant.

Spirituality. Spirituality was another important theme that emerged from within the data. One participant talked about what participating as a contestant in the powwow meant to him, stating "Something spiritual about it happens to you." He described this sense of spirituality in the following passage:

> It's the development of faith, believe me that. It's the synchronicity. When you know you're doing the right thing, you're in the right place at the right time, that feeling comes to you. It's like this is where I'm

> supposed to be, right here at this spot in time. Meeting the right people, saying the right things, not because that's what I want, but that's what comes out of me, and that's what's asked of me. I answer questions honestly and go from there. After a while that's what took place. So when I went to Powwow, it felt great. It was the best feeling in the world. Not just to dance, but to hear the music, the songs, feel it in your heart, and meet really wonderful people. And by the end of the powwow you get that bittersweet feeling. You don't want to leave these people you just met, but part of you knows you will see these people again somewhere, if not in this life, then in the next life…very powerful.

The artist, Bill, explained that non Native Americans can learn to appreciate spirituality in his art work. Pointing to a painting, he said, "I title it *The Coming of the Red World.* It means the red world coming out on top, and people started looking at our spiritual ways, and that's where they found the beauty." He said the Crow Fair is a way to experience the "red world," and see the strength and skill of his people. Bill openly expressed his spirituality stating, "My daughter was sitting on my shoulders and she felt my face. She felt the tears running down my face, and she said 'Why are you crying?' I said, because of what I'm feeling. Some day you'll understand when you are away from the culture and you come back. Something happens and it's beautiful."

Bill said it was the absence of these feelings when he was living in the "White world" that drew him back to his Native American heritage. "I always felt there was something missing. When I'm here, I feel full. I know that I need to show everyone that the Native ways are good ways, and you can get that from my paintings." Unexpressed and unrecognized when Bill was away from his cultural heritage, Bill's spirituality seemed dormant. The Crow Fair is a place to accept oneself, "to open up to everyone" and to "sell stuff" participants need. His paintings are symbolic of his self-discovery and emergence in the "red world."

Community. The final theme derived from this research was that of the importance of community. A number of the participants repeated references to the value of "letting everybody know the Indian culture." The Crow Fair is meant to be inclusive: "They call it intertribal, and you can dance, you can participate, you can go out there in the arena. That's a chance to kind of learn and kind of understand our ways and stuff."

One participant described the importance of this theme in the following interview excerpt:

> Especially the kids, the young ones coming up you know. Keeps the tradition going. This is one of the few tribes that still speak the same the language. You know regularly, everyday, day-to-day. A few tribes are starting to lose it, but there has been a resurgence in the Crow Tribe. Actually, it's more…I don't know how to say it…but it's something you don't see too often, that they use their language on a daily basis.

Near the Crow Fair is a casino owned and operated by the Crow Tribe. One informant, "Bob," talked about how the casino affected Crow culture, and concluded that

it had no great effect at all. Since the Crow feel that they are secure in the knowledge of their culture, they have been able to help other tribes. In referring to another tribe with a casino, Bob said, "They hired Dale (a Crow Tribal member and local history teacher) to go down there and basically teach them how to be Indians. They are a tribe that just got lucky and they are so phenomenally rich now. They didn't know what to do. So they contracted Dale because he's an educator, and he's the one that if you talk to him he could tell you what he's learned as a kid to what's been passed on to him."

Bob said that Dale was a visible member of the Crow Tribe for his work with an inter-tribal association. Dale has told Crow Tribal members about the problems other tribes experience, especially when making business deals that affect the entire community. Bob said that Dale knew the "old stories" of the Crow Tribe, and used them to instruct members of his own tribe in addition to members of other tribes. These stories often retell the dangers of working with people who are not Native Americans.

Bob said that money makes people selfish. Rich people want to engage in an affluent lifestyle, and wealth puts distance between the wealthy tribal members and the majority of the tribe who have very little. Bob seemed to think that an affluent lifestyle that is not shared by all isolates individuals and families from the tribe. These wealthy individuals leave the reservation or squander their money in front of others causing a lot of bickering among the tribal members. Although he said that casinos have made some tribes wealthy, he indicated that the money seemed to fall into the hands of a few and that the money is often mismanaged and taken by "outsiders." "When they have too much money," Bob said, "they forget how to be Indian."

On the other hand, Bob indicated he had no problem making a little money participating in the Crow Fair. He said that winning competitions gave participants just enough money to attend the next fair or Native American event. Selling various items supported the purchase of the raw materials needed to produce more items to sell at the Fair. It seems probable that Bob, and perhaps others who share similar experiences, is acutely aware of the "dangers" of excessive profit. If economic activity facilitates further cultural participation, then commercialism is engaged in for a purpose, which seems alien to many in the surrounding culture. The selling of culture in this instance in not engaged in for the goal of personal wealth, but for the opportunity to travel within the Native culture; simultaneously it disseminates such culture in the form of artistic creation.

Some aspects of the Crow Fair have changed over the years, such as "The powwow is more like modern day dancing now. Back then, all they did was the War Dance, Victory Dance, Sun Dances, and stuff like that." Some of the symbols have changed, "The drum in some cultures, not so much in this one, represents thunder and the bells represent lightning," and the contests are "Now, it's a competition in which you are showing off your family's belongings." Still, there is a tradition at the Crow Fair to which participants adhere. One participant stated, "If you look at some old photos of the Crow Fair, not much has changed in the way the camps are set up. If you look at a picture taken, you know, sixty years ago and compare it with ones today it's almost the same identical type of setup. Other powwows you see a lot of pup tents, you see a lot of RV's, but the thing that we try to keep instilled is the old traditional teepee building like our ancestors did."

Speaking to the importance of how the Crow Fair transmits the culture from one generation, one participant stated:

> I've done it for years with my grandfather. [We] talk about the early days when they would get together…have contests on everything. Farming, livestock, baked goods; you know, cooking, contests on every. All the tribes were always there, mostly Crows, but other neighboring tribes would come to compete in foot races, arrow tournaments, and horseback riding. Now you know it's progressed into a rodeo. There is what they call the teepee creepers, 10-K run, golf tournament, and three-on-three basketball. All the competition stuff is kind of modernized now. But the one thing that still goes on today is the dancing.

Now that the Crow Tribe is not at war with other tribes and there is no need for a war dance, for instance, the Crow People seem to have adapted the dances to modern purposes. As war dances were sensible preparations made for battle, so too are competitive dances for preparing participants to engage in commercial competition. Excellence in dancing was linked to success in the past as it is in the present.

Discussion

Alcohol abuse, expressions of spirituality, competition, community, and commercialism form the fabric of a holistic experience at the Crow Fair. Dancing, rodeo, painting, and drum playing intertwine as they form the dynamic experiences composing the totality of the Crow Fair experience. This study is limited to the experience of one researcher's misgivings about the Crow Fair being a valuable experience to learn about the Crow Tribe, and subsequent realization that the Fair had much to impart in the way of understanding how Native American culture is sustained through this commercial venture. The conclusions made in this study do not generalize to other Native American Fairs or cultural events since this is a unique case, yet the researchers have demonstrated that commercialism has positive attributes in the context of the Crow Fair. The benefits of commercialism impart the culture of the Crow People to the Fair participants, and strengthen the ties the Crow People have to their tribal members.

The researchers do not know the dollar amounts involved in the sale of Native American goods and services, but the awards for each of the first and second place winners in all of the competitions reach a few thousand dollars. One of the artists interviewed reported selling individual paintings in the hundreds of dollars. He said that he sold several paintings each day. The researchers did not define dollar value or other measures of commercial success placed on the number or price of items sold at the Crow Fair. It seemed important to note that commercialism occurred without making judgments on how prices were regulated, if at all, whether buyers received good value for their money, or how much money actually changed hands.

Activities at the Crow Fair suggest that commercialization of the Native American culture is a vehicle for cultural transmission as tribal members sell their culture as compensation for teaching non-tribal members. Commercialization, in part, keeps ancient tribal ritual meaningful to modern society. With some modifications to serve modern purposes, traditions are sustained through profit when all tribal members have a

share in it. It was Tom's first inclination to walk on the grounds of the Crow Fair and despair at the rampant commercialism he saw about him. Scrupulous and unscrupulous vendors hocking mementos, t-shirts, Indian Fry Bread, tacos, paintings, and jewelry crowded the arena and trash littered the fairgrounds.

Seeing the Crow Fair in the light of the results of this study, the researchers came to see that more than merchandise was being exchanged. For Tom, he saw that the Crow Fair provided an opportunity for the Crow community to join as an extended family to share enjoyable experiences together. The Crow Fair strengthens their community while providing non-Native people an opportunity to share in the experiences. Tom was able to see the Crow People as not only people he previously worked with as a clinical social worker, but as a people who wanted to show another side of themselves - a public side that celebrates their heritage. For Wendy and Marie, they learned about the Crow Tribe, a people they may not have encountered in their professional experience. This experience has deepened their interest and commitment to learning more about Native American culture.

Through participation and studying his reflexive notes, the principal researcher changed his views regarding the Crow Fair when he became more sensitive to the ways in which the tribal members keep their culture alive for themselves, and educate spectators. The principal researcher came to recognize that the Crow Fair was a very different experience from attending a county fair. The Crow Fair changed his prejudice about fairs as being frivolous activities. Studying the reflexive journal each evening prepared the researcher to examine his experiences in a new light. The journal served as a written record of his struggle to challenge his preconceived notions with new experiences. Without awareness of his original bias against fairs, the researcher would not have been available to estimating the value of the Crow Fair.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers conclude that the Crow Fair is an important vehicle for informing the public about Native American customs and traditions; in particular, the importance of longstanding values and beliefs held by the Crow People as represented by the parade, powwows, and other events that make up the Crow Fair. Whether non-Native members of the public are truly educated is difficult to measure, but as the principal researcher discovered, many members of the Crow tribe at the Fair were willing and often even anxious to explain the cultural significance of events to an interested observer. Doubtless a certain proportion of non-Native observers will appropriate only a shallow understanding of Crow culture from their attendance, whether or not they purchased any art or craft work. Some may even leave the event with a negative impression, focusing on litter or evidence of late-night intoxication. However, it seems clear that at the very least the potential for a deeper appreciation and awareness of Crow culture is inherent in the Fair.

Through their analysis of the themes, the researchers recognized that the principal researcher had changed his view of the Crow Fair as being a frivolous event like a county fair, to having a deeper purpose and meaning to the participants. Indeed, one might assert that the typical non-Native county fair also "sells" culture. The concept of culture includes material and non-material aspects, and in a wider sense, culture is *always* for

sale. Members of the dominant social group seldom see the relativity of culture, thus the county fair seems simply the normative "baseline" of what a fair is. It is difficult to deny, however, that it is part of an American cultural tradition, regardless of one's level of appreciation. Yet one may also posit the argument that the typical non-Native county fair has been emptied of much of the cultural resonance it once contained. For many 21st century Americans it most probably resembles a combination of anachronistic ritual and undisguised commercial greed. The cultural significance of the county fair now feels locked away in a mythological social construction of mid-1950s Americana; as salient to many as a Frank Capra film or Norman Rockwell painting. Most non-Native Americans still derive their image of Natives from the distortions of popular culture, particularly television and Hollywood film. Whether from the exaggerated violence portrayed in mid-century film or the romanticized "noble savage" representations of more recent offerings, the image is almost invariably one taken from the mid-to-late 19th century. Native Americans are thus depicted as existing in a perpetual past. The Crow Fair provides an opportunity to see an image of that past on display, but it also, inevitably, is a representation of who the Crow are now. The incorporation of contemporary capitalist principles is not complete, but neither are the cultural activities of the Fair pristine examples of a "timeless tradition." Culture never sleeps, and non-Native observers of the Crow Fair, like the principal researcher of this project, may "purchase" an insight into a cultural tradition that is evolving in a unique and vibrant manner. Culture for sale is capital that sustains itself.

Nostalgia notwithstanding, the county fair tells us less of importance about contemporary American culture with each passing decade. The question that presents itself in this light, then, is whether the Crow Fair should be judged in a similar manner. The researchers conclude that it should not. While the non-Native county fair becomes increasingly irrelevant as a unique or central manifestation of core cultural values, the Crow Fair retains this primacy.

Further study is warranted to investigate how the events of the Crow Fair represent the values held by the Crow Tribal members. For example, this study suggests that members feel it is important to compete with grace and poise whether an event is won or lost, and to proudly display family honor seems to be a deeply held value of the Crow Tribal members. More research into these values would provide a better understanding of how the Crow Tribal members transmit their beliefs to fair goers. In addition to providing financial incentives for Crow Tribal members, the members benefit from renewed kinship bonds for the periods of engaging in friendly competition such as dancing and equestrian skills.

Is "Culture for Sale" as the title of this paper asks? Yes, insomuch as there is an exchange of money for services and products offered at the Crow Fair. The researchers find there is a price to pay for an education, and educators should expect to be compensated for sharing the benefit of their experience and efforts to those who wish to learn. All the experiences talking to Crow Tribal members about their culture - their attitudes, beliefs, language, and customs, for example - are valuable commodities worthy of export. Whether culture *per se* is intended to be sold, as in the case of Bill the artist, or whether it is simply a latent function of interaction with non-Native observers, the fact remains that culture is transmitted. It is shared between members of the Crow tribe; it is

shared with members of other Native tribes; and it is shared with non-Natives. It thus serves the critical social function of enhancing group solidarity and cultural identity for a people surrounded by a much more powerful and pervasive cultural tradition. Yet no cultural traditions exist in complete isolation.

The Crow Fair has been unavoidably "commercialized," at least to the extent that it bears a passing similarity to the aspects of non-Native county fairs that the principal researcher finds "trivial" or distasteful. The crucial difference lays in the simultaneous maintenance of cultural traditions that would inevitably be lost with the process of assimilation. Culture is not autonomous from economics. Indeed, a strong case may be made that cultural transformation flows from changes in the economic sphere. In this light, the Crow Fair may be seen as a pragmatic adaptation to the influence of American capitalism. Crow Tribal members may sell tacos at the fair's vending booths, but more authentic cultural "artifacts" are also available for purchase and appropriation. If Native culture is indeed a kind of "commodity" which contains intrinsic worth, it makes perfect economic sense to charge a "watching fee" to observe teepee construction. The incorporation of capitalist practices in this context serves a richer cultural function, if not necessarily a greater profit, than casino gambling.

The immersion in a cultural context with different normative expectations is one of the great rewards and challenges of field work in the social sciences, and one of its primary functions is that of encouraging researchers to face their own normative biases. If the principal researcher of this study was repelled by certain aspects of the Fair: its lack of cleanliness, its instances of alcohol abuse, or its "commercialism," the opportunity exists to examine these reactions in a reflexive manner. Certain aspects of Crow cultural norms should provide a social mirror by which our own expectations are revealed. The degree to which much of social life is lived in a public rather than private space, for example, may account for the reactions of some non-Natives to evidence of intoxication, a state that in non-Native culture is expected to exist only in very particular settings.

In non-Native American society it is relatively easy to live in the "now" of the commodity. The uncomfortable aspects of where products come from (strip mining, deforestation, sweat shop labor) and where they end up (land fill sites, sewage treatment plants) are all hidden from view and thus (unless a positive effort is made) also from consciousness. At the water park, the baseball game, or the county fair, someone always picks up our trash; usually when we are not there to see it happen. But the Crow Fair is not Disneyland, and the presence of garbage is unsettling in at least two ways. First, it is an uncomfortable reminder of the staggering amount of waste we produce every day. Second, from a non-Native perspective, it violates the romantic image so many have of what Native culture "ought" to be. They are not "using every part of the buffalo," they are simply tossing away their trash just like "us." Whether or not such a reaction is manifested in any particular participant or researcher at the Fair, it is also possible that the sight of excessive trash (and indeed of alcohol consumption) may trigger a response of guilt in the non-Native observer. However, the eventual response to this issue at the Fair is also intriguing, and perhaps encouraging. The problem of excessive garbage (as in the tipping of portable toilets) was addressed not with a threat of punishment or reminder of formal legal guidelines. Rather, the power of and respect for family was invoked: "the Elders don't like it." It is difficult to imagine a parallel authority at the county fair, highlighting again the importance of community at the Crow Fair.

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Authors' Note

Thomas D. Bordelon, Ed.D., is Associate Professor of Social Work and Assistant Dean of the Bower-Suhrheinrich College of Education and Human Services at the University of Southern Indiana. He teaches graduate level social work micro practice courses. His research interests include service-learning, group work, and program evaluation. He can be contacted through email at tbordelon@usi.edu

Marie Opatrny, Ph.D., LCSW, is an Associate Professor and Director of Field Education in the Department of Social Work at the University of Southern Indiana. She teaches courses in human behavior, clinical social work theories, and applied social research and has over 25 years experience in community mental health. Her current interests include issues that impact underserved populations. Dr. Opatrny has participated in interdisciplinary applied research on topics of generational poverty, homelessness, and suicide. She can be reached at mopatrny@usi.edu

Wendy G. Turner-Frey, Ph.D., MSW, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Southern Indiana where she teaches primarily research methods and macro practice courses at the graduate level. Her scholarly pursuits center around Global Social Work practice, and she developed her department's undergraduate and graduate global social work courses which involve taking students to developing countries to learn and work. She can be contacted through email at wturner@usi.edu

Steven D. Williams received his Ph.D. from Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada in 2000. He is currently Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Gender Studies at the University of Southern Indiana. His teaching and research interests include social theory, popular culture, gender studies, and studies in race and ethnicity.

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