

Unfolding The Dialogue: Where Transnational And Native American Studies Meet

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Convinced that Transnational and American Indian scholars are talking about the same thing when they consider colonial statecraft processes and the US' assimilationist policies, the author explores how the two disciplines might dialogue with one another. Where and how might one apply Transnational theories of migration, borders and identity in the context of American Indian Studies? How might American Indian Studies' focus on distinguishing categories of sovereignty, identity and place inform Transnational Studies' analysis? The article discussion considers indicators of transmigrant experience as applied to the indigenous peoples of North America and how expanded intersectional analytics in both disciplines can support more nuanced understandings. Using a focused review of foundational texts, the author considers the connections that both American Indian and Transnational Studies have to developing Settler Colonial Studies discourse and scholarship supportive of decolonization.

“...A colleague asked how transnational theory fits... I am not sure yet but ‘border crossing’ seems relevant. In AIS, we discuss the experience of simultaneous, regular maneuvering multiple worlds, realms. Surely, there are borders crossed between multiple worlds...? Even if nebulous... if you have to squint and tilt at an odd angle—there those borders are defining movement, access. I can't be the only one who sees that...”

This is an entry from my “scholarship notes”—my journal of random insights, spontaneous inspirations and grand ideas of an academic nature—was written before beginning serious academic consideration of the impact of sex, gender, and ethnicity on migratory experience and vice versa via coursework on international migration. My American Indian Studies¹ colleagues didn’t understand—and, at the time, I was ill equipped to explain—how my work would benefit. Fond of a puzzle, I took the adventure to see where the jagged edges met.

Transnational and Native Studies are newish disciplines which, according to each field’s established theorists, regularly reach redefining crossroads impacting critical disciplinary questions. Considered transdisciplinary, both have benefitted from a myriad of other scholarly perspectives, disciplinary insights and social realities.² To date, there has been little effort to put both fields’ conceptual foundations in dialogue. This is a theoretical exploration of where such dialogue might be fruitful and likely areas where the conversation(s) may unfold.³

Relevant Foundations

Transnational Study in Brief A scholarly focus often associated with late 20th century concepts of globalization, Transnational scholars concern themselves with experiences, observations and impacts—individually and systematically—of heightened interconnectivity between cultures, economies and Nation-States.⁴ Glick Schiller, et. al considered

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1. A note about terminology—as I use it here Native American Indian, American Indian and/or Native Studies is an interdisciplinary field which examines the history, culture, politics, issues and contemporary experience of the Native, Aboriginal, First Nations and/or Indigenous peoples of North America. Indigenous Studies often looks at the perspectives and experiences of indigenous peoples globally. For this text, I will use AIS or Native Studies to generally indicate the former. I also abbreviate the name of the field at times to maintain the necessary brevity.
 2. This is generally the ability to use multiple techniques of analysis from multiple fields simultaneously.
 3. The styles of addressing the foundations of both disciplines are purposefully not symmetrical, as there are still differences in their disciplinary approaches that need to be honored in how one talks about the work.
 4. See generally Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, 1992. “Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 645: 1-24.

social fields created by late 80's/early 90's migrants simultaneously maintaining links to their origin countries and at least one other place of settlement in their daily life, defining transnationalism as exploration of "fields of action and meaning...operating within and between continuing nation-states and [reacting] to the conditions and terms nation-states impose."⁵ ⁶ This seminal work insisted on a multi-layered analytic aware of the impact of race, ethnicity and nationalism within a capitalist system where globalizing forces operate and wherein identities are developed, understood/read, influenced, and redesigned.⁷

The boundaries of Transnational Studies were stretched further by scholars pushing against what Briggs, et. al. described as persistent expectation that "transnational" originates with/privileges one perspective/locality, such as the assumption that transnational work is "done in the United States by US American scholars" and serves "the goals of the US."⁸ ⁹ They point out that even *if* US nation-state or multinational corporate desires are the assumed goals, through a transnational analytic the possibilities, understandings, and histories are multiple and malleable. Far from "pure," transnational analysis is firmly rooted in specific time, place, and experience – regularly accepting some meanings and displacing others while highlighting contested meanings and friction-creating contradictions disruptive to social flows and networks. In that vein, Luibhéid demonstrated nation-state influence on sexual identity and activity by (re) identifying migrants via border enforcement.¹⁰ Brennan moved away from geographical constraints, charting transnational experience embodied by those that do not transgress borders but remain in a place heavily influenced by the economic privileges and expectations created in transnational

5. Ibid, 1-2.

6. Ibid., 19.

7. Ibid, 18.

8. Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way, 2008. "Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis." *American Quarterly*. 60 (3): 625-648.

9. Ibid, 626.

10. Eithne Luibhéid, 2002. *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

social fields, contact zones, and landscapes.¹¹

Around the same time, growing consensus within Migrant Studies was to push beyond analytics singularly focused on host-country perspectives and assumptions to consider how geographical negotiation shifts self-identification, including the experience/influence of gender and sex.¹² Mahler and Pessar questions exploring “how and why gender relations are negotiated in transnational contexts and also how gender organizes them” guide the discourse by encouraging exploration of how gendered bodies are assigned and accept status, experience gendered agency shifts while traversing geographies, and subsequent social/geographical impacts.¹³ Extending the conversation of how identities are reaffirmed and/or reconfigured across transnational spaces to include sexuality, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*’ special issue, *Thinking Sexuality Transnationally* was a critical turning point for Queer/Sexuality Studies.¹⁴ Manalansan, working in both Queer Theory and Migrant Studies, suggested that a dual notion of sexuality, including the intersection of other social identities and the queer studies-derived “sexual,” provides insight on sexuality’s “constitutive role in the formation and definitions of citizenship and nation” within transnational analytics.¹⁵ His observations of the “situatedness of

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11. See generally Denise Brennan, 2004. *What's Love Got to Do With It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*, (Durham: Duke University Press) for a discussion of how the transnationalist gaze sees the impact of globalism in bodies without the option to move as well as the movement of bodies and transmigrant experience embodied by more than those who travel great distances.
 12. See generally Peggy Levitt and B. Nadya Jaworsky, 2007. “Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends”. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33 (1): 129-156 for an overview of progress in Migration Studies.
 13. Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar, 2001. “Gendered Geographies of Power: Analyzing Gender Across Transnational Spaces.” *Identities : Global Studies in Culture and Power, Special Issue-Gendering Transnational Spaces* . 7: 441-460. Generally see the entire issue, but especially page 441 for Mahler and Pessar’s questions.
 14. This references identities as experienced through shifting gender relations and ideologies interacting. See generally Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, special eds., *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Special Issue: Thinking Sexuality Transnationally*. 5 (4): 1999. I am especially grateful to Dr. Eithne Luibhéid for discussion around this insight and leading me to GLQ.
 15. The Queer Studies derived sexual analytic goes against normative heterosexual institutions and practices. See Martin F. Manalansan, 2006. “Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies.” *International Migration Review*. 40 (1): 224-249. For discussion of its constitutive role, see page 224.

sexuality” and the role of migration in “the creation of a variety of sexual identity categories and practices that do not depend on Western conceptions of selfhood and community” informed understanding of the distinct challenges of queer settlement and assimilation.^{16 17}

Levitt and Jaworsky later noted agreement within Migration Studies to “move beyond thick description, single case studies, and quantification” to address themes and questions more relevant to the experience of shifting migration trends.¹⁸ If spaces were to be conceptualized as bounded by the perceptions of the people in them and how those people defined themselves, then methodological understandings, spatial categories and definitions, assumed impacts and consequences needed to change both within and outside of these physical and psychological borders. Manalansan, as well as Luibhéid and Buffington, recognized the central role that gender and sexuality plays in the decision to migrate.¹⁹ Manalansan indicated growing discussion that disciplinary analysis benefitted from a specific, positional perspective as well as a more general consideration of how each identifier is impacted by geographical understanding.²⁰ Luibhéid and Buffington demonstrated that none of the disciplinary factors of analysis alone provide effective scholarly insight into the motivation for or experience of migration or how migration reconfigures the experience and definition of individual genders and sexualities.²¹ These insights generally answer to and subtly underlie the positive influence of Gender Studies, Queer Studies, and presumably other similar disciplines, in transnational thought.

16. Ibid, 229, citing Weston, 1998:168–173 on the situatedness of sexuality. There see also discussion of concepts of selfhood and community not dependent on Western conceptions.

17. Ibid, 236.

18. Levitt and Jaworsky, *Transnational Migration Studies*, 142.

19. Eithne Luibhéid and Robert Buffington, 2011. “Gender, Sexuality, and Mexican Migration,” in Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, ed., *Beyond La Frontera. The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*. New York: Oxford University Press: 204-226.

20. The disciplinary analysis of the intersectionality of gender, class, ethnorace and sexuality is enhanced by analysis of place.

21. Disciplinary factors of analysis, meaning economics, gender or sexuality.

Native American/Indigenous Study in Brief While some see AIS as a recent result of 1970's in-your-face political activism, its roots are the progressive, intellectual, middle-class Society of American Indians, established around 1912.²² Like the discipline's forbearers, AIS currently focuses on Native rights, policy, identity, and cultural preservation, prioritizing the multiplicity of Native voices, perspectives and experiences.²³ The goal of this focus is to advocate for decolonization and indigenous political autonomy as well as alleviating contemporary problems facing indigenous peoples.²⁴ Two concepts anchoring AIS are indigeness and sovereignty.^{25 26} Understanding Native experiences requires viewing social and historical phenomena from multiple perspectives. AIS fosters this through reliance on balancing the general and specific—in perspective, analysis, and theory.

Generally, AIS scholars consider the overall impact of federal Indian policy and law, which has severely marked contemporary Native identity and expression by tearing asunder North American indigenous people and their homelands, keeping each separated for centuries, and denying at least one generation their language.²⁷ Native philosophical understanding of the interrelated, inter-independent connections between

21. Disciplinary factors of analysis, meaning economics, gender or sexuality.

22. Clara Sue Kidwell and Alan R. Velie, 2005. "Introduction" *Native American Studies*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press:1-19.

23. Ibid, 14.

24. Sara Heitshu and Marshall, Thomas, 2007. *Native American Studies A Guide to Reference and Information Sources*. Libraries Unlimited, Inc.

25. That is, indigeness as defined in culture, geography, and philosophy. My reference to sovereignty here is as legally and historically defined.

26. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, 1997. "Who Stole Native American Studies?" *WICAZO SA Review*. 12, no. 1: 9-28, pg. 11.

27. This forced disruption of Native living on Native homeland negatively impacted Native connection to both tradition and spiritual practice. For more on the interconnectedness of place, tradition and spiritual practice see generally Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, 2003. "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies." *Wicazo Sa Review*. 18 (1): 7-24. A seminal article in the field, the authors develop an overarching theoretical paradigm specific to the experience of Indigenous people which explains the matrix that differing Indigenous peoples use to signify identity or peoplehood. The Peoplehood Matrix, as it is commonly called in the field, has four interdependent, interpenetrating elements—language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle (religion), and land/place/territory—accounting for the particular behaviors of people Indigenous to particular territories and recognizes components that all Indigenous communities turn to when developing (communal and individual) identity.

all beings and the necessity of diversity for existence are keystones of AIS work to decolonize Native and non-Native thinking on interactions in the current, larger nation-state.^{28 29} As in Transnational Studies, the glue is consistent consideration of colonialist statecraft in interactions with Native peoples—from targeted sexual violence to commercialized, industrial resource depletion.³⁰

With such a large analytical umbrella, one could ignore the disciplinary focus on *peoples*, falling into Pan-Indianism.³¹ Doing so ignores the specific diversity and histories vital to the Native philosophical approach as defined by Cordova.³² It also white washes various past statecraft efforts to redefine specific Native identities into one vision molded into the current white supremacist social structure and allows for containment and control based on what is deemed safe within the borders of its ideal citizen.^{33 34 35} Specificity allows AIS analytical consideration of sociohistorical phenomena within the intersections of tribal identity and location as well as the analytical considerations of other disciplines. It allows us to consider the impact of 19th century Cherokee/ US negotiations when

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28. See generally V. F. Cordova, and Kathleen Dean Moore, 2007. *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press for a fuller discussion of this perspective in comparison to a more Western European philosophy which she characterizes as “static,” indicating that the world comes from noting and is not necessarily interconnected.
 29. See generally Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
 30. See generally Andrea Smith, 2005. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press for a discussion of how these and other common practices which begin as violence to individual Native women connect and lead to larger, genocidal injustices against Native communities in general.
 31. Pan-Indianism is the movement and/or practice of identifying all Native American traditions, practices and understandings under the one label of Native American.
 32. See generally Cordova and Moore, *How It Is*.
 33. This is meant to invoke Safety/Danger Zone Theory as used to shape and redefine Native tribal identity. See generally K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, 2006. *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. New York: Teachers College Press for a discussion of this theory as it applies to the US Native American Boarding School experience and US Native American education policy.
 34. See Cordova, *How It Is*, 102 for understanding of why reducing Native identity to the singular imposes philosophical violence on Native worldviews.
 35. See generally Andrea Smith, 2008. *The Lives of Indigenous Women in a ‘Post-Racial’ and ‘Post-Feminist’ World*. Academic & Community Organizing, University of Texas. Retrieved September 10th, 2012. < <http://www.archive.org/details/ZGraphix-TheLivesOfIndigenousWomenInAPostRacialAndPostFeministW817-2>> for discussion of the role of capitalism, colonialism and orientalism in the maintenance of a white supremacist nation state.

we read about the Cherokee Freedmen in 2011.³⁶ Additionally, specific worldviews stretches our concept of resistance—which looks different depending on traditional community identity as traders, agriculturalists, warriors or nomads. Specificity encourages AIS to recognize diverse responses as valid rather than unexplainable exceptions to ignore. It supports the AIS analytic search for interconnected, inter-independent balance central to Native ideology and methodology.

Where the Two Meet

Both Transnational and Native Studies are attentive to borders developed in the process of statecraft and used to define desirable and undesirable citizenship. Transnational Studies considers work at nation-state borders, particularly those that are militarized, while AIS considers US assimilative policies and practices meant to break down cultural borders, ignore sovereign rights, and define territorial ones, sometimes via militarization.³⁷ The idea that border study theories only apply in discussion of international borders falls flat against Brennen's example of external (transnational) expectations in one community redefining the relationships which influence the real, everyday, gendered, and sexed internal opportunities of another.³⁸ Brennen observed how the German imaginary of a Sosúan sexscape fuels the work reality such that all area Dominican women there were assumed sex workers. Similarly, the US imaginary fuels visions of tribal councils run by Pan-Indianesque, Hollywood actors in headdress rather than suited Native Chief Executives. Borders need not be territorial for embodiment of regulations separating "us" from "them"—they just have to exist.

36. The impact of 19th century Cherokee/US negotiations ended in the forced removal of the Cherokee Nation from their homelands.

37. An example of Transnational focus on militarized nation-state borders is the discipline's consideration of the US/Mexico border. And, comparatively, Native sovereign rights and privileges can be understood as legal borders.

38. In Brennen's example, Germany, Canada and, eventually, parts of the US serve as external communities which influence the internal opportunities of Sosúans in Sosúa as well as in other parts of the Dominican Republic. See generally, Brennan, *What's Love Got to Do With It?*.

Conversely, AIS focus on sovereignty and self-determination can broaden transnational analysis of colonialist statecraft impacts on (re) defining gender, ethnorace and sexuality. Examining historical contact and prioritizing Native perspective, the mechanisms of and extent to which nation-states have imposed hegemonic cultural norms to assimilate diverse traditions and identities via elimination of kinship, family, gender and sexuality concepts is particularly salient. Additionally, the US's self-portrayal as a human rights proponent is questionable considering its internal statecraft activity around territorial boundaries, throughout social circuits and across reservation borders. Here, the US veil of state of exception thins.³⁹

Both also provide excellent theoretical opportunity to prioritize specificity as a means to really understand the inner working of larger general ideas. They resist centralizing scholarly attention cast as “modern” or “forward” thus excluding the “traditional” and “backward” within a colonialist framework.⁴⁰ Doing so problematizes production of history as well as absolutes assigned to identity and experience markers tied to specific historical understanding. Oswin's geographical decentering highlights how territory is perceived and transgressed while rethinking border relevance when considering specific, localized transmigrant experience.⁴¹

Where the Conversation Might Unfold

A quick, comparative review of relevant theories about Native and transmigrant identity formation and redefinition indicates that the places where Native and Transnational Studies meet are multifold. Returning to sexuality's “constitutive role in the formation and definitions of citizenship

39. The state of exception is a legal concept concerning the sovereign's transcendence of the rule of law for the sake of some public good. See generally Giorgio Agamben and Daniel Heller-Roazen, 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

40. This is meant to evoke Natalie Oswin, 2006. “Decentering Queer Globalization: Diffusion and the ‘Global Gay’”. *Environment and Planning, D, Society & Space*. 24 (5): 777-790 and her discussion of the relationship between the “West” and “non-West” in global queer studies. AIS's heated discussions about indigenous/non-indigenous can similarly decenter the conversation from a Western dominated perspective to a more localized indigenous one.

41. This concept of territory could be understood as cultural and/or physical territory.

and nation,” the intersection of ethnorace, gender, and sexuality is a natural site for dialogue between Transnational and Native Studies.⁴² In reviewing “queer settlement,” Manalansan points to migrants’ innovative reconfiguration of non-normative, personal/kinship networks and hybrid cultural arrangements to negotiate mainstream stigma and ostracism.⁴³ Similarly, Natives migrating in and out of Indian Country often develop kin and social networks in both communities. Maintaining familiar cultural ties aids in adjusting to new surroundings and behavioral expectations as well as to hostile responses garnered as the new lived, racialized identity acquired by simply crossing reservation lines. Unlike many communities explored in transnational study, relocated Native peoples are often cooperative, multi-tribal communities to a greater degree than many tribally, geographically specific communities of origin. However, general shared experiences and understandings create lasting linkages similar to kinship networks previously besieged by US assimilationist policies.⁴⁴

Looking more closely at gender, pre-contact Native gender and sexuality as well as corresponding sociocultural roles were specific to tribe and varied by region, or possibly by band.⁴⁵ Roscoe and Schmidt note both specific roles assigned to genders, considered dissident now, as well as the fact that these roles were not specifically connected to sexuality until imposition of Western norms.⁴⁶ Similarly, Zavella documents both shifts in gendered expressions and impact of place on gender and family roles for transmigrants in Santa Cruz, noting that transgressing cultural borders by physically crossing into the US initiated different understanding.⁴⁷

42. Manalansan, “Queer Intersections”, 224.

43. For a description of those lasting linkages from Transnational perspectives, see Manalansan, *Queer Intersections*, 236.

44. See generally Intertribal Friendship House (Oakland, Calif.) and Susan Lobo, 2002. *Urban Voices: The Bay Area American Indian Community*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.

45. It is commonly understood that, globally, numerous Indigenous communities had multiple masculinities and femininities. Native North American communities were no different.

46. See generally Will Roscoe, 1998. *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. New York: St. Martin’s Press and Johanna Schmidt. 2001. “Redefining Fa’afafine: Western Discourses and the Construction of Transgenderism in Samoa.” *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*. 6, August 2001: 19-31.

47. Patricia Zavella, 2011. *I’m Neither Here nor There: Mexicans’ Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Although sexual autonomy was not necessarily defined by gender, there is evidence of variance in normative pre-colonial Native sexuality—even if not among newly neighboring settlers.⁴⁸ Since then, US normative sexuality have shaped depictions of Native identity and, by contrast, US ideals about appropriate kinship for its citizenry. These tensions have been central to ongoing struggles over the character and contours of Native Peoplehood.⁴⁹ Rifkin offers a genealogy of Native peoples’ insertion into Euro-American sexuality discourses and, I would argue, the cultural borders historically erected around reservations and “Indianness.”⁵⁰ That and Western stereotypes used to define and elevate “civilization” have created two seemingly contradictory Native sexual ideals—the romanticized, spiritual, sexless Native and the wild, sexy, usually-drunken Native—which persist in popular non-Native-created images.⁵¹

These images and US colonialist context contribute to several factors troubling Native communities today. Smith and Deer have shown that the treatment of Native peoples, especially women, was a systematic, colonialist effort defining them as sub-human, evoking Agamben’s concept of bare life and Williams’ dark, sexy Savage.^{52 53 54} This, combined with

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48. Discussions about Haudenosaunee acceptance of divorce and the proper treatment of women in marriage in the early days of New York women’s suffrage comes to mind.
49. Generally see Mark Rifkin, 2011. *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York: Oxford University Press. He explores the complex relationship between contested U.S. notions of sexual normality and shifting forms of contemporary Native American governance and self-representation.
50. Ibid.
51. See generally Robert A. Williams, 2012. *Jr. Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
52. Supra footnotes 30 and 34 for relevant scholarship from Smith. See generally Sarah Deer, 2009. “Decolonizing Rape Law: A Native Feminist Synthesis of Safety and Sovereignty”. *Wicazo Sa Review*. 24, no. 2: 149-167; Sarah Deer, 2004. “Federal Indian Law and Violent Crime: Native Women and Children at the Mercy of the State”. *Social Justice: a Journal of Crime, Conflict & World Order*. 31, no. 4: 17 and Sarah Deer, 2010. “Relocation Revisited: Sex Trafficking of Native Women in the United States”. *William Mitchell Law Review*. 36 (2): 621-683, 150.
53. Bare life is life that can be taken, even with impunity, and not sacrificed. Taken from his interpretation of Greek political philosophy—that there is bare life (zoe) and (bios) political, morally qualified life which is the life of the community—Agamben argues that at its origin, the political is made possible by an exclusion of bare life from political life that simultaneously makes the existence and continual exclusion of bare life a condition of politics. In particular, I am thinking of Agamben’s definition of bare life as “life exposed to death,” especially in the form of sovereign violence (88). See generally Giorgio Agamben and Daniel Heller-Roazen, 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
54. See generally, Williams, *Savage Anxieties*. See especially Chapter 7.

state-encouraged appearance of lawlessness, no doubt developed a specifically ethnoracialized, gendered group also deemed rapable and deportable (back to the reservation) by the nation-state. Similarly, US immigration laws and attitudes towards Mexican migrants create another group deemed sub-human, objectified at the border via classification, ethnoracialization, sexualization, and eventually classed as rapable and deportable.⁵⁵

Further, Native communities' reluctance to discuss sex/sexuality in Western ways has often been labeled backwards, contributing to an academic reputation as "difficult."⁵⁶ Informed by Decena, Native sexuality discussions may be more apparent once the conversation is recentered on Native rather than Western standards.⁵⁷ Then there is room for a tacit sexuality, which is unspoken, "neither secret nor silent" and serves several purposes—involving protection, sacredness, and identity.^{58,59} Maintaining tacit knowledge has helped many languages, cultural traditions and sacred stories survive the worst US assimilation policies. Surely it could help keep beliefs about human sexuality intact as well.

Potential for dialogue also exists around migrant and Native experiences of socially regulated sexual, affective, and emotional attachments. The nation-state defined "exceptional landscape" melds values to territory based on proximity to itself. Thus, evolution requires epicenter proximity—within the nation-state's physical and conceptual borders. More physical and conceptual epicenter distance equals less civilized. This has been the case for several millennia.⁶⁰ Beyond distinguishing backward from modern

55. For discussion of women classed as rapable at the US/Mexico border, see generally Sylvania Falcón, 2001. "Rape as a Weapon of War: Advancing Human Rights for Women at the U.S.-Mexico Border," *Social Justice* 28 (2): 31-50 for her discussion of border rape as a militarized weapon. Supra footnote 5 for discussion of women classed as deportable. Also, generally see Erica Rand, 2005. "Getting Dressed Up," in *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press: 66-106.

56. It is worth noting that this reluctance may be for very good reasons considering the Native communities who have experienced ancestral burial site disturbances, outside/Western researchers' misrepresentations or misuse of Native biological and natural resources.

57. See generally Carlos Ulises Decena, 2011. *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

58. Decena's work focuses specifically on queer sexuality, but in the context that may not be necessarily so.

59. Ibid, pg. 19.

60. See generally Williams, *Savage Anxieties*.

or civilized from not, Stoler sees these socially regulated sexual, affective and emotional attachments also supporting the creation and reification of colonial categorical difference though which categories of status/power operate.^{61 62} The language of modernity, the goals that become dreams, the negotiations of desire, what behavior is acceptable where and by whom all define which colonial differences grant power and how that power should/ can be used. In addition to learning these categorical differences and how their boundaries are maintained via observations in the home, the statecraft involved here also supports additional categories based on intimate relationships and potential progeny.⁶³

Stoler contends that the intimate was absolutely central to imperial politics, just as I contend that migrants and Native peoples use the privacy that Decena observed to negotiate conflicting expectations and value systems. By invoking the power of privilege that escapes many people of color, Decena's sample created a tacit sexual identity—often explicitly discussed or indexed under very specific circumstances, understood by a privileged, diverse set of social actors and requiring ongoing cooperation of the networks within which they exist.⁶⁴ Through images, oral tradition, and a similar invoking of privileged knowing, Native peoples similarly create privacy around culturally specific sexual identity by which the individual and her/his community can resist statecraft recalibration.

There are other means by which Native peoples resist nation-state pressure to recalibrate identity. Ong describes how Chinese transnationals—far from passive, agency-compromised subjects—manipulate “global schemes of cultural difference, racial hierarchy and citizenship” to shift how they are “differently imagined and regulated” transnationally.⁶⁵ This

61. The dichotomy of backward vs. modern is often alluded to in literature and observation of migrant discussion of their experiences. The dichotomy of civilized vs. not is often alluded to in historical and legal literature on observations about Native existence.

62. Generally see Ann Laura Stoler, 2002. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

63. Generally see Ann Laura Stoler, 2006. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

64. Thus becoming tacit knowledge for their surrounding communities.

65. Aihwa Ong, 1999. “The Pacific Shuttle: Family, Citizenship, and Capital Circuits,” in *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press: 110-136, 265-270.

sounds remarkably like Native nations building infrastructure through Native Nation (re)Building or Native anthropologists reworking past scholarship on their tribes. Like Ong's transnationals with flexible Chinese citizenship, those working and living both in and outside Native communities are manipulating identity defining "options" in a globalized context to move outside of a racialized, gendered, sexualized construct of passivity.

Where This Theoretical Play Takes Us

From the beginning, some have recognized that the discussion about "strategies of survival, cultural practices and identities within the worldwide historical context of differential power and inequality" begins by recognizing the binding impact of a global capitalist system.⁶⁶ And while statecraft issues are elemental to transnational analysis—just as with analysis of gender and sexuality—it has not always been integral to the conversation. Consideration of Native experience offers transnational theorists opportunities to see those impacts and multiple resistances over centuries, which recognizes a longer trajectory of bi-national, bi-cultural flows present in transnational activity and a wider comparison field.

Native Studies frequently addresses colonialism, but often only from the perspective of a sovereign-within-a-sovereign, keeping the conversation circling within the colonial structure that created it. Chances that pre-contact people discussing their sovereign rights are as likely as pre-contact peoples discussing themselves as Indians—in other words, nil. Let's move the conversation to what Native and non-Native peoples do to decolonize their thinking instead. Transnational insights and trends in both Native North American and transmigrant communities can get AIS thinking differently about what supports colonial statecrafting and the ways that Native and migrant peoples resist through flexible everyday citizenship.

66. Supra footnotes 4 and 8.

It might be fortunate for both disciplines that there is a “new kid” in academia—most probably the loud, activist daughter of Transnational Feminist and Native/Indigenous Studies. Her name is Settler Colonial Studies and, in the vernacular, she is a piece of work. According to Cavanagh and Veracini, as a global, transnational phenomenon, settler colonialism is simultaneously past and present and “there is no such thing as neo-settler colonialism or post-settler colonialism because settler colonialism is a resilient formation that rarely ends...settler colonialism is not colonialism... they remain separate as they co-define each other.”⁶⁷ These scholars are intent on discussing sexuality, especially queer sexuality, as a place of settler colonialism and an important lens through which Native community can decolonize itself for many of the reasons discussed earlier.⁶⁸ This examination has had interesting results.

Rifkin’s examination of how US policies supporting Native self-determination shifts our view using the work of queer Native writers is one of them. These writers’ queer representations of sensation challenge the US imaginary’s “Native identity,” articulate linkages between straightness and empire then question the role/impact of imposed Western sexual categories.⁶⁹ Are these writings queer because Western society has deemed them so, or because they are true expressions of Native writers’ “reimagining” Indianness outside of Western oppressive norms, or because they are recognizing Native ways of nuancing/asserting practical sovereignty in everyday life?

67. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, 2010. “Definition of Settler Colonialism” *Settler Colonialism Studies Blog*. Retrieved December 5th, 2012 from <http://settlercolonialstudies.org/>. This popular and scholarly blog, as well as the online scholarly journal are provided at the same link.

68. See generally Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian J. Gilley and Scott L. Morgensen, 2011. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press. There is also amazing work coming out of The Biidwidam Indigenous Masculinities (BIM) Project in Canada. You can find more information this group at <http://www.indigenoumasculinities.com/>.

69. Mark Rifkin, 2012. *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

In other work, Rifkin closely reads US Supreme Court decisions affecting/creating federal Indian law highlighting “peculiar” and “anomalous”—invoking Agamben’s “state of exception” and noting that Native sovereignty functions less to designate specific powers “than as a negative presence, as what Native peoples categorically lack, or at the least only have in some radically diminished fashion” managed by the US.⁷⁰ Rifkin expands Agamben’s discussion beyond biopolitics (sociopolitical state power over life, including the population’s physical and psychological bodies) to include geopolitics (the sociopolitical impact of human and physical geography) to effectively address Native peoples’ situation.⁷¹ Rifkin thus elevates Native sovereignty out of a specific colonial context to statecrafting, opening up other resistance and decolonization possibilities. Releasing the framework of colonization also means letting go of zones of indistinction produced by and within sovereignty as well as the states of extinction produced by nation-state designated sovereignty—a placeholder with no defined place to land, built on exception and peculiarity. Notions of Native peoples as a peculiar gendered, racialized, sexualized community mirror political distinction as a peculiar sovereign, which leave Native people dependent on a colonial mirage.

At the intersection of Native and Queer Studies, other Settler Colonialism scholars have considered the imperial biopolitics inherent in Western paradigm’s queer sexuality becoming what Puar

70. Mark Rifkin, 2009. “Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the “Peculiar” Status of Native Peoples”. *Cultural Critique*. 73 (1): 88-124. For discussion of Native sovereignty as a negative presence see particularly page 89.

71. This Foucauldian concept, connected to his ideas about sovereignty and discipline, governmentality and surveillance, is loosely defined here. It includes biological processes, (state sanctioned or created) regulatory processes and population control. (See generally Michel Foucault, 1978. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. New York: Pantheon Books or Michel Foucault, Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, François Ewald, and David Macey, 2003. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador.) Originally intertwined with his concept of biopower (the application political power to manage populations and the subsequent impact on all aspects of human life), later theorists discuss biopolitics as subversive to biopower (see generally Maurizio Lazzarato, 2002. “From Biopower to Biopolitics”. *Pli The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*. 13 (1): 99-113.) as well as connected to the state of exception referenced earlier in this text (see generally Agamben and Heller-Roazen, *Homo Sacer*, 1998.)

calls “queer as regulatory” over other, queered populations to which they also exert terrorizing control.⁷² Morgensen’s settler homonationalism links settler biopolitical colonialism and sexual colonization, especially of Native peoples—via terror and resistance within a settler sexually hegemonic system.⁷³ Unsettling this system means decolonizing imposed sexual, ethnorace, and gendered identities by recognizing the relational distinctions of “Native” and “settler” contained in “queer” status and the meaningful difference indigeneity makes within settler society.⁷⁴ Similar AIS multilayered, general and specific analytics and transnational situated, intersectional analytics, the interconnectedness of nation, race, gender, and sexuality and the potential for effective interconnected places of resistance is key.

What This Means in the World

While theorizing can help us understand the inner workings of social phenomena, Transnational and Native Studies always returns to real, lived experience. Smith discussed the lack of survivor solidarity/self-identification within Native communities as a symptom of 1) forced choice between two identities presented as mutually exclusive and 2) the connection between this choice and coerced identity reformation via the Indian boarding schools.⁷⁵ She also identified mutual recognition among equally colonized groups as a more effective, viable, liberatory option than recognition from groups differently located in the accepted social

72. For a discussion of the Western paradigm’s queer sexuality see generally Scott L. Morgensen, 2010. “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism Within Queer Modernities”. *GLQ*. 16 (1-2): 105-131. See particularly, page 105.

73. Morgensen defines settler homonationalism as an effect of U.S. queer modernities forming amid the conquest of Native peoples and the settling of Native land. *Ibid.*, 106. Biopolitical colonialism is essentially a system dependent on an imagined disappearance of Indigenous people and the sustained subjugation of all racialized peoples who inhabit the “New World” after colonialism ensures a progressive future for white settlers, as discussed by Morgensen in a number of works.

74. Scott L. Morgensen, 2011. *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

75. Andrea Smith, 2008. *The Lives of Indigenous Women in a ‘Post-Racial’ and ‘Post-Feminist’ World*. *Academic & Community Organizing*, University of Texas. Retrieved September 10th, 2012. <<http://www.archive.org/details/ZGraphix-TheLivesOfIndigenousWomenInAPostRacialAndPostFeministW817-2>>.

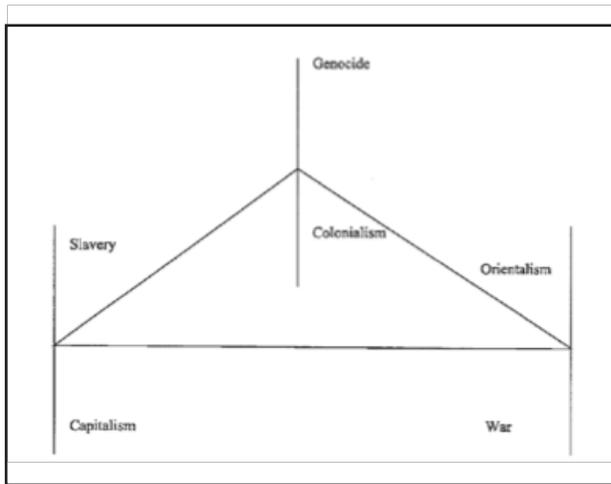


Figure 1: Three Operational Pillars of White Supremacy

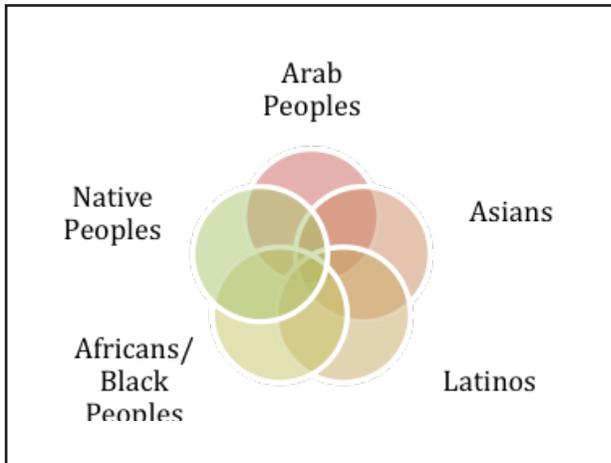


Figure 2. Common, Intersecting Areas of Oppression

hierarchy. Focusing on the problem of white supremacy (as multiple operational pillars, in Figure 1) rather than the behavior of the oppressed (Figure 2) problematizes the latter as nation-state surveillance encouraging fighting from within categorical “rightful place.”⁷⁶ Did we, in Native or Transnational Studies listen?

76. The three pillars are as follows: Anti-black racism, wherein capitalism is anchored—blackness relegates one to group property status and the degree of ownership is dependent on complexion. Genocidal oppression, wherein colonialism is anchored—labels an ethnorace as “vanishing” land occupation is acceptable and unquestioned because the group is deteriorating. Orientalism, wherein war is anchored—designates a group as eternally “a foreign peoples” seen as a consistent threat to security.

Finley called all scholars, AIS scholars particularly, to “...bring ‘sexy back’ to Native Studies” in two ways.⁷⁷ First, discuss gender disident peoples within precolonial Native communities and examine heteronormative framing of Native communities via Queer Theory. Second, fully examine gendered colonialism and colonialist queering of Native peoples by specifically queering settler colonial analytics. Again, how many of us listened?

However many of us didn’t listen then, we can nuance understanding now through dialogue between the two disciplines. Links between lateral/sexual violence and state surveillance as well as between physical bodies and state territorial concepts which reach beyond physical borders are real. Real people cross borders, creating and being created in the images that reign there. The only way to fully appreciate what that means is to expand our perspectives beyond the colonist boundaries demarcating parameters. Further, to bridge the gap between our academic coffee-klatch discussions and the change we hope to see in the streets is to answer Smith’s, Finley’s and multiple others’ calls. We do that by acknowledging situated identities maneuvering through the social networks, kinship ties, ethnoracial categories and transnational realities that we shape and are shaped by. We do that when we ask relevant questions, question our assumptions, and use our disciplines to dialogue, watching the explanations unfold.

77. Chris Finley, 2008. “Decolonizing the Queer Native Body: Bringing ‘Sexy Back’ and out of Native Studies’ Closet” (paper presented at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference, Athens, Georgia, April 12, 2008) as cited in Andrea Smith, 2010. “Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism”. *GLQ*, 16, no. 1-2: 41-68, pg. 41.

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