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Indigeneity, Art as Meditation: A Contemporary Case Study from Urban Indigenous America

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Author
Hill, Rachel Eta

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Indigeneity, Art as Meditation:
A Contemporary Case Study from Urban Indigenous America

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Masters of Art in American Indian Studies

By

Rachel Eta Hill

2015
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Indigeneity: Art as Meditation

by

Rachel Eta Hill

Master of Art in American Indian Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Duane Champagne, Chair

This thesis will test the sociological theory of social and cultural differentiation in the urban American Indian community of Minneapolis, Minnesota in order to examine the ways in which five prescribed, sociological elements of culture are organized, and for which previous sociological research would suggest, should remain nondifferentiated in contemporary Indigenous societies. Relying upon previous academic literature, independent research collection, photographic imagery, and a personal interview with artist, Mario Enriquez, a Nahua and Mayan Indigenous artist, this scholarship will test the theory of social and cultural differentiation utilizing a contemporary case study from 2015. This scholarship serves to increase our knowledge of contemporary Indigenous mural art, urban Indigenous societies, contemporary Indigenous culture, sociological theory and analysis in the present century.
The Thesis of Rachel Eta Hill is approved.

Carole Goldberg

Peter Nabokov

Duane Champagne, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015
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For my children, and all those who would dare to dream.
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INTRODUCTION

Indigeneity, Art as Meditation: An Contemporary Case Study from Urban Indigenous America was born from the desire to explore the ways in which Indigenous visual artists are contributing towards the materialization of Indigeneity in America. While there are more than 560 Indigenous and Alaska Native communities presently acknowledged by the United States government, there are also Indigenous peoples in the United States who compose non-federally recognized American Indian tribes, and still there are other Indigenous peoples who exist throughout the world. Each nation and community has its own unique and distinct histories.

This particular piece of scholarship utilizes the science of Sociology by which to test the cultural and social theory of differentiation in an urban American Indian community of Minneapolis, Minnesota in the modern era. A mural site that was constructed in the summer of 2015 will serve as the location for this case study by which, the theory of social and cultural differentiation will be tested. Previous sociological research on Indigenous societies suggests that there are five basic elements of culture within Indigenous societies that can be classified as undifferentiated, in many cases. These five elements are, “religion, morality, art, causality and ceremony.”¹ Let us pause here for a moment to define the term undifferentiated herein, which is synonymous with nondifferentiation. The words nondifferentiation or undifferentiation, in this essay, are meant to signify that a society has overlapping institutional relations within its design. To expand further, this means that when the institutional relations of a society are found to

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be *undifferentiated*, or overlapping, for example, the elements of culture being examined therein are constructed, organized, or maintained inter-connectedly.\(^2\) No other publish academic research or literature has ever before tested the theory of social and cultural differentiation in the American Indian community of Minneapolis, Minnesota by which to examine and understand contemporary Indigenous mural art in the modern era.

Considering such, this work stands alone as highly unique, original and cutting-edge in the field of the arts and sciences. The case study appearing herein is taken from Minneapolis, Minnesota and occurs at a predominately urban American Indian housing complex known as Little Earth of United Tribes. The use of case study herein serves to increase our knowledge of contemporary Indigenous mural art, urban Indigenous societies, sociological theory, and its analysis in the twenty-first century. This thesis, therefore, supports the development of future empirical scholarship and case studies on urban Indigenous societies and Indigenous mural art in the modern era.

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\(^2\) ibid: (40).
METHODOLOGY

When I first took on this project, I felt that a necessary component had to be the inclusion and collection of original Indigenous voice. Little did I know at that time that one of the most tedious and lengthy processes I would have to undertake in order for that to become a possibility would be the task of obtaining IRB approval to conduct and include interview for this work. Indigeneity, Art as Meditation has found its way to paper as a result of two-year of study in American Indian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. From the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2015, I spent my time taking classes at the UCLA School of Law, UCLA Dept. of Gender Studies, UCLA Dept. of Political Science, UCLA Dept. of Anthropology, UCLA Dept. of History, UCLA Dept. of Sociology, UCLA Dept. of Art History and the UCLA Dept. of World Arts and Culture.

An important component to this research was uncovering the ways in which Indigenous peoples have utilized art in the past. My mentor and Thesis Chair, Duane Champagne, Professor of Sociology at UCLA, member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa wrote Social Change and Cultural Continuity Among Native Nations (2007). In his book, he explains how Indigenous art has been utilized in the past to contribute towards social balance and harmony in Indigenous communities such as the Diné (Navajo) who have constructed sand paintings for health and healing.³ Champagne has utilized the theories of social, cultural and institutional differentiation to explore the ways in which Indigenous art is connected, even inter-related with Indigenous culture. From this sociological perspective, research suggests that

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Indigenous societies will often employ an overarching and interconnecting formation of, “religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony.” This paper therefore, will utilize the theory of social and cultural differentiation to explore the ways in which such cultural elements of, “religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony” are interconnected, separate, and/or absent from one case study appearing within this manuscript.

The ways in which an artist understands his or her world is a reflection of worldview. For Indigenous peoples, worldview is often tied to cultural elements of religion. Within this manuscript, worldview, from an Indigenous perspective will be tested against a mural site to determine whether or not this aspect of culture is present in the art appearing therein. Taking this approach makes it possible to determine whether or not this sociological cultural element of religion, remains undifferentiated from the art appearing at one mural site. In order to properly test this theoretical element, it becomes necessary then to first lay forth what Worldview is from an Indigenous perspective. Chapter one, therefore, will provide two examples of worldview. In the first example, Worldview is provided from a larger understanding of what an Indigenous perspective, in many cases, encompasses. In the second example, Worldview is provided from an Ojibwe perspective. Utilizing an Ojibwe example for Worldview in this chapter will prove to be especially useful when later testing the cultural element of religion to the case study appearing in this manuscript. The reasoning for utilizing an Ojibwe example in Chapter One occurs as the

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4 ibid: (38-40).
5 ibid.
predominant American Indian population represented in the case study that will be explored is, geographically speaking, Ojibwe.6

This manuscript reflects a global perspective of Indigeneity, which, in part, has been influenced by my experience as a former exchange student for the American Field Service (AFS). During 1999-2000, and at the age of seventeen years-old, I embarked to Quito, Ecuador, where I embraced a new idioma7. This idioma ushered in a very different perspective of the world that was swaddled in a new existence of life, and a new understanding of culture, family and education. Therefore, I must acknowledge that the American Field Service has partly formed and informed my understanding of what it means to be Indigenous, what it means to be human in global terms.

Yes, I was born both human and Indigenous. I am an Anishinaabeg–iquay8. In saying this I acknowledge that part of my origins are tied to the Anishinaabeg, and part of my origins, I am told, are also tied to German and Irish ancestry. I want to acknowledge all of my humanness herein. I acknowledge that this manuscript is therefore, also influenced, and impacted by my identity, and life experience as an Anishinaabeg-iquay, as a, “mixed-blood” with German and Irish ancestry, as a human being, and as a female. With that said, Misi-zaaga'iganing indoonjaba, gekino Awaazisii indoodem9. And, it is possible, I will acknowledge, that this manuscript was, in part impacted by my own understanding of the world. Yes, this Anishinaabeg-

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7 idioma is the Spanish word for language.
8 Anishinaabeg iquay is the Ojibwe phrase for Ojibwe woman.
9 Misi-zaaga’iganing indoonjaba, gekino Awaazisii indoodem is an expression in the Ojibwe language. In English, this could be translated as: I am from Mille Lacs Lake, also of the Bullhead clan.
iquay’s worldview, this mixed-blood’s worldview, this part German’s worldview, this part Irish’s worldview, this human being’s worldview, this female’s worldview, her life experiences, her education, her teachers, her family, her communities: all of it.

Approaching the collection of research for this work was three-dimensional, hands-on, and in-person, whenever possible. I had to see, touch, feel, talk and interact with the art, the communities, locations, and people, in which this project so attempts to thus capture. For my research, I made trips to various mural sites that Indigenous artists had completed in the Los Angeles, California and Minneapolis, Minnesota areas. I spoke with site directors and staff members at these locations. From these visits, I collected photographic imagery that was then developed into three portfolios and utilized during my interview with mural artist, Mario Enriquez on July 15, 2015. For use in this manuscript only one of these photographs will appear. The reasoning behind this is that only one photograph is needed to complete the present case study. And, this photograph was randomly selected. Utilizing this image, and relying upon the Enriquez interview, this project will then test the theory of social and cultural differentiation.

This study is significant in that it provides ways by, which to explore the ways in which social elements of culture occur within contemporary Indigenous mural art in the present era. The results of this study will take one of two courses. I hypothesize that the results of this study will either remain in alignment with previous sociological research findings of the same manner, or that the results will vary in some factor or degree. If that is the case, then it will become necessary to understand why such findings thus occurred. If, however, the findings of this study determine that the aforementioned Indigenous cultural elements are nondifferentiated, this would suggest that, institutionally speaking, the case
study must exhibit a tendency of preservation of institutional cultural elements directly from the site location. Given these range of possibilities herein, the results of this study remain highly significant in numerous ways. This study will increase our understanding of art in contemporary, urban Indigenous societies, and may aid in our understanding of inter-cultural and cross-cultural institutional relationships and exchanges in the modern era. Additionally, it serves to aid in a contemporary exploration of sociological theory, analysis and academic scholarship in the present day.
WORLDVIEW

Worldview is an important component of Indigenous society in the twenty-first century. For many Indigenous peoples still, worldview remains inter-connected and inter-related to other social and cultural institutional orders and relationships within society. In Western culture and society, for example, institutional order and relationships are most often differentiated or separate from religion and worldview.10 An Indigenous worldview is, more often than not, distinct from that of a Western conception. Worldview, from an Indigenous perspective, therefore must be discussed in this essay because, for Indigenous peoples, the world is not understood in the same way as it is in Western culture. In The Beginning: An Indigenous Perspective speaks to worldview, as understood in Indigenous terms. The following section, Worldview: An Ojibwe perspective is more exploratory of a distinctive Anishinaabeg worldview.

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10 For example, separation of Church and State in Western cultures equates to a differentiation of the institutional order.
In The Beginning: An Indigenous Perspective

For Indigenous peoples, space, time, and being are not constructed in the same manner that Western society envisions the world. For the most part, Indigenous peoples view the world, the universe, and all of creation as part of a larger “Circle.” An Indigenous framework views life as a “Circle,” encompassing everything and everyone. It understands that all beings are interconnected and inter-related: Earth, Sky, Stars, plants, animals, people. It views life in cosmic terms, which includes not only a physical terrain but also a spiritual one. In The First Skin Around Me: Contemporary American Tribal Poetry (1976) Eddie Benton Banai, an Ojibwe scholar, poet and activist describes this vital, yet distinct worldview. While Banai utilizes the syntax of “Anishinabe” people to identify his relationship to others, in cosmological terms his description of placement to other beings in the universe, such as “earth,” “sky,” “moon” and “stars” impedes Western constructions. It also demonstrates the Indigenous capacity of relationship in universal terms, which includes all of creation. It must be said, however, that not all tribal nations or Indigenous peoples have the same creation story, neither exists among Indigenous peoples one universal Indigenous religion. However, an Indigenous worldview embraces reciprocity in creation, which is a universal concept for many Indigenous peoples around the world. For this reason, let us pause here, and consider a brief description of worldview, as understood through an Indigenous lens, presented by Banai in his 1976 poem, which he decided to remain

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untitled. He says: “I sing the songs of earth, sky, moon and water, for the earth is my mother and the sun is my father.” The “songs” Banai sings in these lines are prayers that he “sing[s]” for his mother, his father, his brother, his sister: “earth, sky, moon and water.” These beings, for Banai, form a cosmic progeny of family. Responsibility is reciprocal and circular. Banai says: “I am woven into the sacred circle of brotherhood. I am nephew to the stars, keeper of old wisdoms…I am cousin to the wind.” Banai’s description of life generating throughout “the sacred circle” connects every life force, and every being, which speaks to a universal construction of family, represented by Banai’s word choice in, “brotherhood.” Banai understands himself as, “nephew to the stars” and also as, “cousin to the wind.” This is an Indigenous perspective. In deed, even “the stars” become more than just gas and mass, they are “keeper[s] of old wisdom.” Banai’s description of the world, is truly Indigenous, and as such interrupts a Western understanding of the origin of man, and interrupts the archetypical hierarchy of a Western envisioned society of existence.

Presenting an analysis of Indigenous peoples within academic literature should provide room for a discussion of the accompanying, distinctive and unique ideologies and worldviews of Indigenous peoples. As a general note, these areas tend to fall outside the measure of mainstream America’s understanding of the world. This is said herein, not to shame, not to blame, but to provide room for future discussions, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, academics and otherwise, to thus occur.

NOTES

14 ibid.
15 ibid.
16 ibid.
17 ibid.
18 ibid.
Worldview: An Ojibwe Perspective

The *Anishinaabeg* understanding of the creation of this world, and belief in a subsequent flood is more specifically the primary and causal reasoning behind present day *Anishinaabeg* worldview orientations held within this society today. The nineteenth-century *Ojibwe* Historian, William Whipple Warren was raised “among the *Ojibways of Lake Superior and the Upper Mississippi*” in the early 1800’s.19 Warren has discussed at great-length the worldview orientations of the *Anishinaabeg* in his book, *History of the Ojibway People*, which was first published in 1885 and then reprinted in 1984. According to Warren, the information in his book reflects the histories of the *Anishinaabeg* from pre-contact, circa 1380 to 1880 and was “obtained from the lips of the…old men and chiefs who are the repositories of the traditions of the tribe.”20 According to Warren, the *Anishinaabeg* “do not pretend, as a people, to give any reliable account of their first creation.”21 The origin of the *Anishinaabeg* has been described as being, “spontaneous.”22 There is a distinction, however, that is made from the beginning of time, or the origin of man, to a time in which a “new earth” was thus created. This occurs, for the *Anishinaabeg*, after a major flood.23

An *Anishinaabeg’s* “code of moral laws” is interconnected with the religious order he or she has committed him or herself to.24 For example, while it is largely known

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20 ibid: (26).
21 ibid: (57).
22 ibid.
23 Ibid: (55-56).
24 ibid.
today that one of these societies is the Grand Medicine Society, this is not to say that this was or is the only religious society of *Anishinaabeg* people. I would compare the varying branches of religious societies to present day variations of Christian denominations. And like Christianity, with the variations in denominations, the exact understanding or interpretation of the “code of moral laws”\(^{25}\) may in fact slightly vary, there are, however, fundamental and over arching beliefs held in common by all of the denominations. This is the best way I can describe traditional and contemporary *Anishinaabeg* religious organizations existing in the past and today.

The organization of the “Dodaim” or “Totem” is a reflection of *Anishinaabeg* religious and DNA comprised structures that are connected to a, “code of moral laws,” beginning after this major flood.\(^{26}\) This “Totem” structure was originally comprised of the following five clans: “A-wause-e, Bis-in-aus-e, Ah-ah-wauk, Noka, and Monsone, or Waub-ish-ah-e.”\(^{27}\) It is said today, however, that from these original five clans more have been created, with variations and subdivisions occurring thereto.\(^{28}\)

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**NOTES**

25 ibid.
26 Ibid: (41-42).
27 Ibid: (44).
28 Ibid: (44-45).
URBAN AMERICAN INDIANS: PRESENCE AND RELOCATION

The information provided in this chapter is a contextual introduction to the case study that will appear in the next chapter. It is intended by which to provide a context by which to understand American Indian migration, movement, relocation and continuity in urban areas, such as Minneapolis, Minnesota.

American Indian Relocation

I first heard about the American Indian Relocation Program from the stories of my parents who were program participants. My father, an Anishinaabeg, was born on the Mille Lacs Lake Indian Reservation in the year 1938. My mother, an Anishinaabeg, German and Irish “mixed-blood” was born in Cass Lake, Minnesota that same year. As young as I was when I first heard those stories, I didn’t quite grasp the historical, economic or social context in which those stories took place. Like my parents, there exists other Native peoples in the United States who were also program participants and who, too, have stories. Part of what I have found throughout my time as a graduate student is that while not all stories are the same, this program still remains part of our histories: as both Indigenous, and U.S. history. While this essay will not speak directly to the experience of my own parents, as that is outside the scope of this essay, this chapter will however, include a brief history of the Federal American Indian Relocation Program in order to provide a basis by which to understand American Indian culture, identity and history as it applies to metropolitan, urban areas in the United States. That is to say, it is included here to more specifically provide a context by, which, to understand American Indian migration and movement to geographic urban centers like that of Minneapolis, Minnesota.
This Was Indian Land

I want to acknowledge herein, that there exists a continual Indigenous presence within many metropolitan urban centers such as Minneapolis, Minnesota. While the Federal American Indian Relocation Program brought American Indian peoples from different tribal communities to urban centers, a presence of Indigeneity in many cases predates this program.

The Numbers and Accompanying Context

And, so this story begins. The year is 1952. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Office opens its doors. Just two years prior, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded that the average income for an American Indian, composing a one-person household in North Dakota and South Dakota in the year 1950 was $950. For the Yankton Sioux, in this same year, a one-person household brought home, on average only $730. In comparison, the average national income for whites, composing a one-person household in the year 1950 was $4000. African Americans in a one-person household earned, on average nationally, $2000 in the year 1950. While the Federal American Indian Relocation Program was initiated in the 1950s, it continued well throughout the 1970s. It brought American Indian peoples to urban cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco or Minneapolis, Minnesota. And thus, American Indian peoples began to populate major cities. This at times presented access to higher institutions of learning.

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30 ibid.
31 ibid.
32 ibid.
33 ibid.
34 ibid: (38).
or the economic means by which to provide for oneself and one’s families during this period. Now, it must be said that the perspective of American Indian peoples coming from various reservations to life in the city most certainly underwent an experience of shock, and this shock befalls the Indian from contrariety in a new periphery. That first sight, the first glance of the city, makes the Indian’s stomach go queasy, makes the Indian heart almost stop beating. Land, space and time was never so this way. As an Indian, you become lost in the background. City life feels jarring. You are removed from your family, from your kin, from the familiarities found in the comfort of an Indian’s backyard. The Indian begins to miss the familiar sounds of home, of nature. It’s not just about relocation, but how the Indian sees the world. The prospect of meeting a new life in the city in the 1950’s and throughout the 1970’s was, no doubt, an experience that was highly contrasted to life on the reservation, life back home. This is not to say, that Native peoples don’t love the city life too. But, the juxtaposition that a reservation Indian found him or herself in during the period of relocation cannot be highlighted more so than this.

Author, Reyna K. Ramirez, a Winnebago/Ojibwe scholar wrote Native Hubs: Culture, Community and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond (2007), which in part, describes the Federal American Indian Relocation Program. Ramirez explains that the Federal American Indian Relocation Program took place during an era in which the termination of Federally Recognized American Indian Tribes was an avenue being taken by federal U.S. Indian policy. With American Indian federal recognition comes numerous rights, and protections that are distinct from those enjoyed by U.S.

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35 ibid: (47).
citizens. However, these “rights,” are founded upon the premise that American Indian peoples have existed as nations, distinct in culture, religion, language and history, and this predates the formation of the United States. Ramirez describes the Program of Relocation as follows: “After termination of their federal trust status, Indians were encouraged to move into the cities and find employment there.” As a result it was desired that, “urban migrants would adjust to the cities and assimilate” and that, “the reservation system would end.”36 It must be interjected, however, that while relocation was a program incorporated under a U.S. federal Indian policy of termination, today our U.S. federal Indian policy is posited under Self-Determination. We have come a long way from the 1950’s, yet the era of termination and the program of Federal Indian Relocation in our history is a reminder that dialogues between peoples and communities must and should occur.

For many of those who did make the decision to leave their reservations and home communities under the Federal American Indian Relocation Program and move to urban centers, experienced the constraints of gender norms, based upon Western ideological constructions of religion and patriarchy.37 Social and religious behaviors of program participants were thus expected to conform to mainstream American ideals that disregarded Indigenous religion and worldview. A system of rewards accompanied social constructions and worldview orientations of dominant American society.38

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36 ibid.
Indigenous ideologies, and orientations were subtly communicated as inferior. As a result, a racial, social and religious hierarchy thus developed, which limited American Indian access to higher education, and economic opportunity in the United States.\(^{39}\)

In 2012, Nicholas G. Rosenthal published *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in the Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Rosenthal’s scholarship demonstrates that American Indian “identity,” “community,” and “culture” also exists outside the demographic boundaries of American Indian reservations and trust land.\(^{40}\) “Indian Country,” as Rosenthal explains, includes the spatial terrain of urban areas such as Los Angeles, while also embodying a topography that includes, “towns, rural areas and reservations.”\(^ {41}\) While the focus of *Reimagining Indian Country* is centered upon the urban American Indian experience within the greater Los Angeles area, it is through examining metropolitan areas that, “larger, national patterns of Indian urbanization” becomes possible.\(^ {42}\) The American Indian is a complex, and fluid synthesis that has, in part, been impacted by both Native and American communal struggles, as well as by inter/intra-community relationships.\(^ {43}\) Through the federal American Indian relocation program and American Indian migration to urban cities, American Indian identity in the United States has been influenced and redefined in the twenty-first century.\(^ {44}\) Contemporary American Indian identity is thus a complex conceptualization of personhood, a collective adaptation that at times crosses borders, cultures, and

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\(^{39}\) ibid.

\(^{40}\) ibid: (2-4; 156).

\(^{41}\) ibid: (3).

\(^{42}\) ibid.


\(^{44}\) ibid.
In the twenty-first century, this includes urban, metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, California or Minneapolis, Minnesota. For a more detailed analysis of the Federal Indian Relocation Program and American Indian migration to urban centers, readers are encouraged to consult the scholarship of Nicholas G. Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth Century Los Angeles* or *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* by Renya K. Ramirez.

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**NOTES**

45 ibid.
INDIGENEITY, ART AS MEDITATION:
A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY FROM URBAN INDIGENOUS AMERICA

From a contemporary case study, this section will test the sociological theory of social and cultural differentiation. This case study is pulled from Little Earth of United Tribes. It relies upon photographic imagery collected in July of 2015, as well as a personal interview that was conducted with mural artist, Mario Enriquez during this same month. I first met Mario Enriquez at a Vegan restaurant in Culver City, California on July 15, 2015. On his shirt, blue and red letters composed the words, “YOU ARE ON INDIAN LAND.” This shirt, as Enriquez informed me was a newly released design by his NSRGNT clothing line. At this restaurant, Enriquez and I talked about our present projects, families, education, clothing and art. Enriquez, who identifies with his Maya and Nahua Indigenous roots, had just finished a mural project in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an area of particular interest to this case study. I told Enriquez about my thesis research and Enriquez so graciously agreed to help me with my project.

Enriquez’s mural site at Little Earth of United Tribes will be analyzed and tested for this case study utilizing the theory of social and cultural differentiation. This mural site was constructed in the summer of 2015.  

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47 ibid.
Minneapolis American Indian Center on E. Franklin Avenue and 15th Street in South Minneapolis. Founded in 1975, with the assistance of White Earth Nation and Ojibwe scholar, Ron Libertus, those who visit the Minneapolis American Indian Center today will also encounter the artistic endeavors of other Indigenous artists such as George Morrison, of the Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe, whose famous 1975 “Untitled Collage,” commenced the opening of this center.

Funding for the Little Earth of United Tribes summer of 2015 mural projects were, in part, provided by ClearWay Minnesota, an independent and outside research organization, known to this author to be separate from the University of California, Los Angeles. Through a partnership with the Native Youth Alliance of Minnesota, and Honor the Earth, this mural project’s mission was meant to, “develop leadership roles, utilizing art to reconnect the Native community with the sacred relationship to traditional tobacco.”

Relying upon academic scholarship, which has utilized the theory of social and cultural differentiation in the past, there are five sociological elements of culture that have previously been tested in order to determine whether or not the cultural organization of these elements, in fact, remain nondifferentiated when applied to Indigenous societies. These five elements are: “religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony.” After a brief background of the study site is

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52 ibid.
54 ibid.
laid forth, the following sections will then examine the aforementioned sociological cultural elements in one piece of mural art appearing at Little Earth of United Tribes. Names of artists and organizations have not been changed or altered for use in this study.
A brief background of Little Earth of United Tribes

Little Earth of United Tribes appears in the metropolis of Minneapolis, Minnesota upon a 9.4 acre block of land, just a 5-minute car drive from downtown skyscrapers like the IDS tower or capital landmarks such as the Minnesota Vikings stadium. Here more than 30 distinct Indigenous communities inhabit, “212-unit[s]” of the Little Earth of United Tribes housing projects, presently subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This community assumed the name, “Little Earth of United Tribes” first in 1974, and today is, “the only American Indian preference project-based Section 8 rental assistance community in the United States.”

As laid forth by Jessica Cattelino, Associate Professor of Anthropology at UCLA and author of *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (2008), “Indian preference is permissible under U.S. law because it is a governmental, not racial distinction.” Today, Little Earth of United Tribes serves approximately, “1000 residents, 500 of whom are under the age of 21.” 98 percent of residents of Little Earth of United Tribes are members enrolled in a federally recognized American

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58 ibid.
Indian tribe. They represent 32 distinct tribal nations, the majority being Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) or Dakota communities.

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61 ibid.
62 U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration: U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 U.S. Census Data. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government. Web. 8 March 2015; According to the U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). “Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.” Web. 13 March 2015: approximately 67.4% of the Little Earth of United Tribes community are composed of Anishinaabe or Ojibwe residents; the second largest Indigenous community represented accounts for approximately 23% of community residents and is composed of various federally recognized “Sioux” nations; in accordance with data provided by the US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration: US Census Bureau. (2012). “2010 Census Summary File 1” in 2010 Census of Population and Housing. Washington, D.C.: US Census Bureau. Web. 8 Mar. 2015: the terminology of Anishinaabe or Ojibwe is in reference to the following groups: the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe, the Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Lac du Flambeau, Lac Viewux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake, Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Tribe, the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, the St. Croix Chippewa, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Sokaogon Chippewa Community, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota, White Earth Nation, the Swan Creek Black River Confederate Tribe; ibid and the terminology “Sioux” is utilized here in reference to the following groups: Brule Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation, the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of the Crow Creek Reservation, the Dakota Sioux, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe of the Lower Brule Reservation, the Lower Sioux Indian Community, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux, the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation, the Pipestone Sioux, the Prairie Island Community, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation, the Santee Sioux Nation, the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, the Spirit Lake Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Teton Sioux, the Upper Sioux Community, the Wahpekute Sioux, the Wazhaza Sioux, the Yankton Sioux, and the Yanktonai Sioux.
Case Study: Little Earth of United Tribes, Photograph 1

University of California, Los Angeles

INDIGENEITY: ART AS
MEDITATION

Art work by Mario Enriquez et all. Photograph collected by Hill, Rachel.
Minneapolis, Minnesota: 7 July 2015.

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63 Artwork by Mario Enriquez et all. Photograph collected by Hill, Rachel. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 7 July 2015.
In Case Study #1: Little Earth of United Tribes, photograph 1 appears the Little Earth of United Tribes West side bridge that crosses Cedar Avenue in South Minneapolis. On the top of this bridge appears the mural art of Mario Enriquez, constructed in the summer of 2015. While another site of mural art appears at the bottom of this bridge, only the mural art constructed by Enriquez in the top section will be analyzed in this study.

While Enriquez was granted some autonomy in constructing this piece, which he explained in our interview, some of his art choices were ultimately impacted by discussions he had with youth and community members directly from Little Earth of United Tribes. In this manner, Enriquez’s mural art serves to reinforce social and cultural exchange through community dialogue within this Indigenous community. For example, Enriquez’s decision to place an Eagle feather on the hat appearing in this piece occurred as a result of requests that were made to him from youth in this community. According to Enriquez, it was important that the youth in this community could actually, “identify” with the image he was creating. For many Indigenous peoples, and including those in this Indigenous community, the Eagle feather is known to contain spiritual meaning. This is reflective of Indigenous religious orientations.

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65 ibid.
66 ibid.
67 ibid.
68 ibid.
A Test of Theory: The Artist’s Code

While many artists in the world today often attached their signature or name to their art pieces, Enriquez exerted the choice to reserve this right, as can be seen in photograph 1. According to Enriquez, this choice did not arrive as the result of the exertion of community or social pressure from the community of Little Earth of United Tribes for him not to sign his name, but arrived because Enriquez, as the artist and creator of this piece, believed in the spirit of, “selflessness.” In our interview, Enriquez explained that it was enough for him to know that those in this community knew who the artist of this piece was, and therefore he did not feel a need to sign his name on any of the pieces. “In the end, it’s not about me,” said Enriquez. “It’s about the message.” This brings up the question of whether or not Enriquez’s choice herein was impacted by his set of “moral codes” as an artist. Is Enriquez’s view that “selflessness” should serve a significant role to his creation of art, in any way a part of his, “moral code” as artist? I would argue that it is. And, if it is, then Enriquez’s choice herein bares a direct relationship to morality, to a set of “moral codes,” in an artistic sense. This is of course, something that should be contemplated within future research and scholarship in this realm.

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69 ibid.
70 ibid.
71 ibid.
A Test of Theory: The Tie of Causality to Cosmic Design

This section will examine the ways in which causality is revealed or directly presented as occurring interconnectedly with Enriquez’s mural in photograph 1. From this picture can be examined the cosmological presence of planets. And, human beings have theorized behind what force(s) or action(s) brought, created or employed the creation or beginning of our universe. There are, however, varying theories from science to culture and religion that have been constructed and/or exist by which to explain such phenomenon within our societies. One such theory or explanation, if it can so be called, is to turn to the traditional worldview of the predominant Indigenous group residing at Little Earth of United Tribes. One reasoning behind taking this approach derives from the information that Enriquez provided in our interview, in which he explained that discussions were held with this community prior to the construction of this mural.\(^73\) And, while this approach may not be the only definitive explanation or method by which we may examine or test the ways in which causality is or is not presented to be understood by this community, it is one method by which it becomes possible to explore and expand our understanding of sociological theory, Indigenous societies, and the contemporary employment and analysis of Indigenous art in the modern era.

According to information provided by the US Census Bureau in 2010, 67.4% of residents from the Little Earth of Untied Tribes community are Anishinabe or Ojibwe.\(^74\) Based upon this information, it will then benefit our study to examine the ways in which causality has been viewed and explained through past and present Anishinaabe or Ojibwe

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perspectives. It must be said herein that such an explanation stems, in part, from the reflection and documentation of past and present *Anishinaabeg* worldviews, and the documentation of past and present *Anishinaabeg* religious orientations. In Chapter One, Worldview: An Anishinaabe Perspective, the nature of the creation of this world from an *Ojibwe* perspective, was explained by William Warren. According to Warren, it was common knowledge to the *Anishinaabe* that this information was not something that their understandings would explain or entertain. Rather, however, Warren did provide the explanation that his discussions and research revealed, which was that the *Anishinaabe*, however, believed that their origins occurred, in a manner that was, “spontaneous.” From this information, *causality*, at least concerning the creation of cosmological planets and this Earth is not something that *Anishinaabeg* culture or religion gave an explanation to. Rather, the nature of that science or religion was left without an answer, which perhaps may be such an answer. For *Anishinaabeg* people, it was understood that man could not feasibly know such an answer. However, from the description of the manner in which the *Anishinaabeg* have understood they were created, which was described as, “spontaneous,” we see that causality, at least described in terms of the beginning of man, was linked to a manner of time, or beginning that occurred, which does not need explanation. *Causality*, however, at least moving forward from the creation of the universe, beyond the causality of cosmological planets or even the creation of the *Anishinaabeg* does, however, contain meaning and explanation. This explanation is linked

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**NOTES**

76 ibid.
77 ibid.
78 ibid.
to an Anishinaabe understanding of the creation of what has been called a, “second Earth,” and literature has documented the Anishinaabe belief that this occurred after a major flood. Causality then for the Anishinaabe, from this understanding, contains physical life and death consequences, not only for Man but for the continual existence of this Earth and other life forces. For what ever reason, the Anishinaabe believed that the actions of man prior to this major flood upset the forces that created or maintained man and that for this cause the Earth would be destroyed. At this point, while the Anishinaabe did not know what man had done to upset the forces of the universe, they did believe that it was not because man was inherently bad but rather because man had not yet been instructed in how the forces of the universe required of him to live in harmony and balance with the ultimate cause and design of the universe that is, again outside the scope and entertainment of man. For the Anishinaabe, causality here is linked to upsetting the ultimate cause and design of the universe, which design is unknown to man. The question then arrives: Does Enriquez’s mural capture or reflect an Indigenous understanding of causality? If we consider what the Anishinaabe understanding of causality has been, at least concerning the ultimate design or intentions of creation, the answer is yes. And as such, the presence of this mural serves to reinforce and cultivate traditional Indigenous viewpoints within the community.

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79 ibid.
80 ibid.
81 ibid.
A Test of Theory: The Cultural Ceremony of Artistic ritual

In this section we will examine whether or not Enriquez’ piece, in photograph 1, contains a relationship with an Indigenous culture of ceremony. It becomes necessary then to examine the meaning of this word, and we will do so utilizing the predominate population of Little Earth, which was stated earlier as being Anishinaabe. Therefore, we will turn to the traditional language of the Anishinaabe people in order to obtain further meaning and insight into ceremony. From John D. Nichols and Earl Byholm, who published *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* in 1995, we are able to obtain two words for ceremony in the Ojibwe language or Anishinaabemowin, if you will. These two words are, “manidooke” and “zagaswe’iwe.” The word manidooke, according to Nichols and Byholm is a verb, meaning, “conduct a ceremony.” From this word, we have much to learn about the meaning of ceremony, from an Anishinaabe perspective. The base word of, “manidooke” is manido. And, while spelling of this word various in form, its linguistic meaning is often recognized and understood by those who are predominately English speaking Anishinaabe people. Manido is the singular form of the word spirit. To be absolutely clear on this word here, I will emphasize that it implies only one spirit. Because, however the word for ceremony is not, in fact, the word manido but, instead, manidooke, we must examine manidooke in more detail. The ooke at the end of the word here, implies that its meaning is plural. Therefore, ceremony then must contain spiritual meaning, in the plural form, for more than just one spirit. And, from the second word provided by Nichols and Byholm, which is, “zagaswe’iwe,” we will learn even

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83 ibid.
more about the meaning of ceremony from an Anishinaabeg perspective, in the plural sense. The root word of “zagwe’iwe” is zaga which Nichols and Byholm describes as meaning to “fasten” or “together.”\textsuperscript{84} Additionally, moving farther from here, “zagwe” means, “give a smoke to” or “share a smoke with,” which contains an implied emphasis of the type of smoke occurring from, “a pipe in a ceremony.”\textsuperscript{85} But, as the word for ceremony is actually “zagwe’iwe” then the meaning of the word ceremony herein also implies that ceremony is not just the act of “giv[ing] a ceremony” but to, “convene a council” in that act of “giv[ing].”\textsuperscript{86} From here, we are now able to examine whether or not Enriquez’s art is a reflection of ceremony, in the Anishinaabeg sense. Because this project was funded by ClearWay Minnesota, whose intention was for, “art to reconnect the Native community with the sacred relationship to traditional tobacco,”\textsuperscript{87} in a sense this proves very fitting. I say this because in the same sense that one might reflect upon traditional forms of one’s “relationship to tobacco,” it is through the study and consultation of Indigenous knowledges, which proves helpful to include Indigenous languages, that our knowledge of cultural elements of Indigenous peoples and societies become more clearly ascertained and understood today. Considering the historical contextualization that has caused the decline of the use of Indigenous languages in the United States today, often times one’s inherent Indigenous language is not something that many Indigenous peoples have wide access to, and this proves unfortunate for human kind. In turning to traditional forms of knowledge, and knowing, for the consultation by

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\textsuperscript{84} ibid: (121).
\textsuperscript{85} ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} ibid.
which to understand culture, especially language, we have much to gain in many aspects.

While photograph 1, herein does not contain any visual element of tobacco, nor the element of holding “a council,” there are elements by which we can analyze the Anishinaabeg meaning of ceremony to Enriquez’s art. If traditionally speaking, tobacco is at the base root of the Anishinaabeg word for ceremony, then does this imply that tobacco is connected to ceremony, traditionally speaking? Yes. Concerning Enriquez’s art, however, there are elements by which we can examine whether or not ceremony, in any form, is presented as connected to his mural, even if it should appear in an altered or fragmented form. I use the words altered and fragmented here, because as time passes, culture does change, and that remains true for every society, even those that are Indigenous. Therefore, the act of holding, “a council” produces, in part, a mimic of a form of the traditional Anishinaabeg understanding of ceremony. To our knowledge, which arrives from the visual image of Enriquez’s mural, in photograph 1 and the personal interview provided by Enriquez in July of 2015, however, this does not necessarily include the inclusion of tobacco. While it may have been possible that during the “council” held with the community that tobacco use was encouraged, nothing obtained from this present study is suggestive of such. Therefore, even if it occurs in a fragmented form, there are connections of the cultural element of ceremony, in an Anishinaabeg sense, to Enriquez’s mural art appearing in photograph 1. The last question then to consider, from an Anishinaabeg perspective, is whether or not this mural art provides spiritual meaning for the community, in a plural sense. Consulting an

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Anishinaabeg worldview, to Enriquez’s art in this context would suggest, yes.

As a last thought on ceremony to photograph 1, the variation from the Anishinaabeg perspective on ceremony, perhaps can be explained as occurring not only as the result of the natural progress of society, in that as time progresses, societies often change, be that in some shape or form, but an additional explanation can be found in that not all members of this Indigenous community are Anishinaabeg. And the fact that the artist of this mural, being Mario Enriquez, who is not Anishinaabe, but instead identifies as Nahua and Mayan, reinforces the multiple identification of this particular Indigenous community, one that may in fact, embrace the multiplicity of human cultures and identities therein.
SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Academic research that has employed the theory of social and cultural differentiation to Indigenous societies in the past suggests that five sociological elements of culture (religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony), will, more often than be organized inter-departmentally, inter-connectedly, occurring as nondifferentiated\(^8\). Employing this sociological theory to the present day case study at Little Earth of United Tribes, it is determined that this theory proves to be true in the modern era. This can be examined from the ways in which Enriquez’s art, in photograph 1, contains a relationship with Indigenous culture in the realm of religion, in which an Indigenous worldview is reinforced and exhibited from the utilization of community dialogue that impacted artistic design to the choice that was made for the inclusion of an Eagle feather in this piece.\(^9\)

Additionally, Enriquez’s art, in photograph 1, also demonstrates a direct relationship with morality. This was examined from Enriquez’s artistic choice not include his name on this piece.\(^9\) Artistic design, herein, reflects to a certain degree the individual autonomy of the artist. As Enriquez, explained in our interview, he holds a deep affinity for the act of “selflessness” to his artistic work.\(^9\) This affinity may arrive, in part, as a set of “moral codes,”\(^9\) that are attached, to a certain degree to each and every individual artist. A set of artistic moral codes, so to speak.

Causality is exhibited to occur as a direct relationship with Enriquez’s art in

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photograph 1. This was examined utilizing the community’s predominate Indigenous view of *causality* through the documentation of previous scholarship existing on the *Anishinaabeg*. In this manner, *causality* is explained from a need to maintain a balance with the cosmic design of the universe, which, for the *Anishinaabeg*, was explained as being unknown to man.\(^94\) *Causality* is understood through very real, physical, life and death consequences. This was exemplified through the *Anishinaabeg* perspective that the world was at one time completely flooded, resulting from man’s disruption of the balance of the cosmic design of the universe.\(^95\) Enriquez mural, in photograph 1, demonstrates and reinforces a cosmic design. His placement of planets in the universe do not seem to appear disrupted, but rather reinforce that the laws of nature or that the laws of gravity therein exist. Perhaps even, we may say, that his murals reinforce a presence of the natural laws or cosmic designs of the universe, which as we examined earlier, the *Anishinaabeg* believe is unknown to man.\(^96\)

The sociological element of *ceremony* appeared to occur inter-connectedly with Enriquez’s mural in photograph 1. This was examined utilizing again, the predominate view of this Indigenous community, being *Anishinaabeg*. Relying upon a linguistic examination of the *Ojibwe* language, the word “*ceremony,*” from an *Anishinaabeg* perspective, was unpacked and examined against Enriquez’s mural in photograph 1. While the findings in this section suggested a slight departure from an *Anishinaabeg* perspective of *ceremony*, it was acknowledged that in all societies, even those of Indigenous peoples, culture is often found to change in some shape or form. This departure or variation from an *Anishinaabeg* understanding of *ceremony* can also be

\(^{94}\) ibid.
\(^{95}\) ibid.
\(^{96}\) ibid.
explained in the varying demographic of this community, including the varying demographic of the artist of this piece. At any rate, ceremony, even occurring as a slight departure is still found to be nondifferentiated with Enriquez’s mural in photograph 1. This was demonstrated by the ways in which community dialogues occurred prior to and during the construction of Enriquez’s piece. At times, Enriquez’s mural changed as the result of community dialogues and discussions with community members. And, at times, Enriquez’s made the artistic decision to hold true to his artistic moral grounds, which is demonstrated from his decision not to sign his name on this piece, although members of the community asked him to do so. This demonstrates that individual autonomy is also valued and respected. Ceremony, however, in this piece demonstrates a support for cultural and social continuity. This occurred through the act of holding “council,”97 which was found to be a core component of the meaning of ceremony from an Anishinaabeg perspective.

Employing the test of five sociological elements of culture (religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony) to this study, I find that religion, morality, causality, art and ceremony are in fact exhibited as occurring nondifferentially. This test therefore reaffirms the theory of social and cultural differentiation in a modern, urban case study. This theory has made it possible to explore modern urban Indigenous mural art, further our understanding of the social and cultural elements of urban Indigenous societies, and supports the advancement of additional empirical and case studies to occur in the future. From this study, it becomes clear that the consultation of linguistic Indigenous languages proves to be especially helpful when examining social and cultural elements

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of Indigenous societies. While this study has made it possible to test the theory of social
and cultural differentiation in an environment of contemporary urban America, there is
still room for future scholarship to explore or consider the additional community
demographics that this case study did not explore. Because, however, the predominate
makeup of this community was determined to be Anishinaabeg, which was concluded
from information provided in 2010 from the US Census Bureau, the theory of social and
cultural differentiation was tested primarily against this predominate community
demographic, and gave room to include, the artist and his work.
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