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Political Mavens: Ruth Underhill, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, Gene Weltfish, Ella Deloria, and the Politics of Culture

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Alessandra N. Link

Candidate

Department of History

Department

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Thesis Committee:

Dr. Cathleen D. Cahill , Chairperson

Dr. Margaret Connell-Szasz

Dr. Virginia Scharff

**POLITICAL MAVENS:
RUTH UNDERHILL, ERMINIE WHEELER-VOEGELIN,
GENE WELTFISH, ELLA DELORIA,
AND THE POLTICS OF CULTURE**

by

ALESSANDRA N. LINK

**B.A., HISTORY, COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS, 2009
B.A., ITALIAN, COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS, 2009**

THESIS

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Alessandra N. Link

B.A., History, College of the Holy Cross, 2009

B.A., Italian, College of the Holy Cross, 2009

M.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2012

ABSTRACT

The locus of my masters thesis, “Political Mavens: Ruth Underhill, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, Gene Weltfish, Ella Deloria, and the Politics of Culture,” centers on how female anthropologists shaped political discourses in the twentieth century. The anthropologist has long been considered the handmaiden of imperialism, made most apparent in Vine Deloria’s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969). Although partially true, my work seeks to complicate this association by examining how the publications and careers of four female anthropologists demonstrate both their ties to colonialism, and, in the case of Gene Weltfish and Ella Deloria, their scholarly attempts to critique the colonialist state or defend Native American communities. Inspired by the work of Catherine Lavender and Frederick Hoxie, my thesis investigates both the process of editorial translation that occurs during the development of ethnographic publications at a local level, and also the political implications of their ethnographies as productions of knowledge that influenced decisions in Washington, D.C. Their writings are evaluated in tandem with their careers as academicians, activists, and/or agents of the state.

Introduction

Summers in Indian Country

In the summer of 1933, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin drove out with her second husband, linguist Charles Voegelin, to Tüatalabal country in the Kern River Valley of central California. With her daughter in tow, Wheeler-Voegelin spent that summer in collaborative conversations about customs with Francis Philips and Estefana Salazar. Born in 1903 the daughter of a mining engineer, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988) would dabble in poetry and journalism before pursuing a career as an anthropologist. During her Tüatalabal summer, Salazar and Philips shared their histories of dispossession, acculturation, and survival with Voegelin. Her work with the Tüatalabal became the source base for her first publication, *Tüatalabal Ethnography* (1941). Twenty-three years after her Tüatalabal summer, Wheeler-Voegelin would chair one of the largest federally-funded research projects for the Indian Claims Commission.¹

In the summer of 1934, Ruth Murray Underhill (1883–1984) found herself far from her comfortable suburban upbringing in New York. A graduate from Columbia University's anthropology program, Underhill sought out government employment when her research funds dried up. Her colleague at Columbia, Gladys Reichard, had requested her assistance at a language school on the Navajo reservation. Her arrival marked the beginning of a thirteen-year career as an Indian Service employee within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).²

¹ Wheeler-Voegelin chaired the Great Lakes–Ohio Valley Research Project at Indiana University from 1956 to 1969. Biographical information taken from Helen Hornbeck Turner, “Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988), Founder of the American Society for Ethnohistory,” *Ethnohistory* 38, no.1 (winter 1991): 58–72.

² I elected to use the term *BIA* to discuss the Bureau of Indian Affairs, although the organization was formerly known as the Office of Indian Affairs until 1942. I made this decision for ease of reading.

Decades later, when Underhill was in her nineties, the Tohono O’odham and Mojave communities recognized Underhill for her service to their tribes.³

A year after Underhill began work on the Navajo reservation, Gene Weltfish (1902–1980) and her daughter, Ann, drove out to Pawnee, Oklahoma. Weltfish, born in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, worked her way through college and graduate school at Columbia University. She spent the summer of 1935 with Mark Evarts, an elderly Pawnee man who had recently lost his wife, child, and home. Together they reminisced about Pawnee life before removal to the Oklahoma reservation—Evarts sharing information with Weltfish about kinship and community on the Nebraska plains. Eighteen years later Weltfish, then lecturer in anthropology at Columbia University, would be brought before Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s Senate Judiciary Committee to be questioned regarding her alleged Communist Party affiliations.⁴

Yankton Sioux anthropologist Ella Cara Deloria (1889–1971), also known as Anpetu Waste Win (Beautiful Day Woman), arrived at the Navajo nation three years after Weltfish’s summer in Oklahoma. In the winter of 1938, the New York based philanthropic organization, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, hired Deloria to research the socio-economic conditions of the Navajo. She arrived at the reservation in the wake of a devastating federally backed stock reduction program. Deloria would later serve as a field agent for the Farm Security

³ Biographical information from oral history transcript, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, Alfred M. Bailey Library and Archives, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver, Colorado. For information on the Mojave and Tohono O’odham awards, see Alan Cunningham, “At 97, Underhill will return to Indians,” August 20, 1984, *Denver (Colo.) Rocky Mountain News*, copy in Clippings File, Ruth Murray Underhill, Denver Public Library.

⁴ For information on Evarts, see box 1, Gene Weltfish Pawnee Field Notes, 1935. The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. For biographical information on Weltfish see Ruth E. Pathè, “Gene Weltfish,” in *Women Anthropologists: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Ute Garcs, Aisha Kahn, Jerrie McIntyre, and Ruth Weinburg (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 372–76. For information on Weltfish’s interrogations, see David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI’s Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 110–14.

Administration, a member of the Committee on the Study of Wardship and Indian Participation in American Life, and an author contracted by the National Council of Churches' publisher, Friendship Press.⁵

These women shared a similar historical trajectory. As female anthropologists, they each spent summers in Indian Country at the start of their careers during the 1930s. In the following years, they associated themselves with organizations engaged in American politics. An interest in this relationship between women anthropologists' work in Indian Country and their careers as political activists and state-employed scholars fueled this project. As professional scholars, educators, public intellectuals, authors, and/or federal employees, Ruth Underhill, Ella Deloria, Gene Weltfish, and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin placed themselves and their scholarship within important political debates of their time. Each of them held positions funded by the American government: Wheeler-Voegelin received federal funding for Indiana University's Great Lakes–Ohio Valley research project; Underhill worked for the BIA for thirteen years; Weltfish published the controversial pamphlet “The Races of Mankind” thanks to funding from the Committee on Public Policy; and Deloria wrote and directed the Lumbee pageant, “The Life Story of a People,” while employed by the Farm Security Administration and she taught at Haskell, a federally-funded Indian boarding school. Collectively, these anthropologists also worked for non-governmental enterprises such as the Congress of American Women, Women's International Democratic Federation, and the National Council of Churches. Additionally, their research and publications varied in form and function: from small government pamphlets directed at Indian Service employees,

⁵ For information on the Navajo project see, *The Navajo Indian Problem* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1939). For information on the Lumbee pageant see Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Ella C. Deloria Project, Dakota Indian Foundation, Chamberlain, South Dakota. The Friendship Press funded her publication titled *Speaking of Indians*, in 1944.

to official reports submitted to the Phelps-Stokes fund, BIA, and Indian claims court. By placing their published work within the context of their careers, this thesis demonstrates how these women wove their conversations about Indian culture into political discourses on gender, colonialism, and U.S.–Indian relations. By analyzing their published work in relation to their careers as female anthropologists, these women’s own, distinct goals for their work shift into focus. It also displays how their motivations behind their cultural analyses produced mixed results for Indian communities. This project, therefore, advances the claim that, despite sex-based (and for Deloria, race-based as well) discrimination, these four female anthropologists utilized their experiences in Indian Country in political ways.

Historiographically, this thesis places itself within conversations on the history of anthropology, Indian policy, and print culture. Furthermore, it intends to weave together these parallel scholarly conversations on the history of anthropology and American Indians. As a result, a more dynamic relationship materializes between anthropology and the Native communities anthropologists worked with. Much of the initial scholarship on the history of anthropology drew from anthropologists exercising a self-reflexive critique of their discipline. In 1986, Ruth Behar’s and Deborah Gordon’s *Women Writing Culture* made an important contribution to the history of female anthropologists. Behar and Gordon, both anthropologists, provided an important feminist critique of the post-modern ethnographic revolution ignited by James Clifford’s *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986). Behar’s and Gordon’s collection of essays brought female anthropologists into the discipline’s larger critique of its relationship to colonialism, and it incorporated female anthropologists of color, an important contribution. The anthology sought to read Clifford’s *Writing Culture* against Cherríe Moraga’s and Gloria Anzaldúa’s

1981 women of color critique of second wave feminism in *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (1983).⁶ “The book’s purpose,” according to Behar, “was to make an incredibly obvious point: that anthropologists write. And further, that what they write, namely ethnographies—a strange cross between the realist novel, the travel account, the memoir, and the scientific report—had to be understood in terms of poetics and politics.”⁷ This critique of the field acts as the foundation for this project, as it seeks to analyze the inherently political nature of ethnography. While literary scholars have focused on ethnography’s “poetics,” this project addresses the politics of select ethnographies and ethnographers.⁸ Much existing literature on the history of anthropologists adds important theoretical analyses and/or biographical sketches to the discipline’s historical trajectory, but frequently neglects to historicize the scholars and their scholarship.⁹ When placing the lives

⁶ Ruth Behar, “Introduction: Out of Exile,” *Women Writing Culture*, ed. Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ For literary analyses relevant to this thesis, see, Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian in the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West in Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1981); María Eugenia Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González and the Poetics of Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Julian Rice *Deer Women and Elk Men: The Lakota Narratives of Ella Deloria* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); Julian Rice, *Lakota Storytelling: Black Elk, Ella Deloria, and Frank Fool’s Crow* (New York: Lang, 1989); Conan Kmiecik, “‘A Little Less Than Perfect Happiness’: Ella Deloria’s *Waterlily* as a Paracolonial Production,” (M.A. thesis: Winona State University, 2008); Mary Juline Couzelis, “Reconstructing Ethnic Identity American Indian Literary Nationalism in Ella Cara Deloria’s *Waterlily* and James Welch’s *Fools Crow*” (MA thesis: University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2008); and Patricia Mary Drunkenkiller, “The Writings of Ella Cara Deloria: Toward Revitalizing Culture and Language,” (MA thesis: Western Illinois University, 2008).

⁹ Female anthropologists Nancy Lurie and Nancy Parezo labored to put female anthropologists into print. Both have since called for additional scholarship on female anthropologists in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Nancy Oesreich Lurie, *Women and the Invention of American Anthropology* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1966); Barbara A. Babcock and Nancy Parezo, eds., *Daughters of the Desert: Women Anthropologists in the Native American Southwest, 1880–1980* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); and Nancy Parezo, ed. *Hidden Scholars: Women Anthropologists in the Native American Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993). For more biographical sketches see Don D. Fowler, *A Laboratory for Anthropology: Science and Romanticism in the American Southwest, 1846–1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000). Notice the regional emphasis on the Southwest. Female anthropologist Regna Darnell has done much of the theoretical and methodological interpretations of anthropology’s past, see Regna Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies: A History of Americanist Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001). For a history of the practice and method of anthropology, see George W. Stocking Jr., *Delimiting Anthropology* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).

and writings of Underhill, Deloria, Weltfish, and Wheeler-Voegelin within their historical context, a deeper valuation of the unique agendas behind their work shifts into focus.

Behar and Gordon's *Women Writing Culture*, along with anthropologist Nancy Parezo's *Hidden Scholars: Women Anthropologists in the Native American Southwest* (1993), highlights the sexism faced by twentieth-century female anthropologists. As early as 1906, Columbia University (the alma mater of Underhill, Deloria, and Weltfish) offered twelve university fellowships annually—none of them were offered to female students.¹⁰ A study of female authors in the *American Anthropologist* from 1946 to 1970 found that women authors made up only thirteen percent of the scholarship published by the journal.¹¹ The women of this project are no exception to this pattern of discrimination. They all professionalized during the Great Depression, a time when employers and universities emphasized putting men back to work.¹² None of the women discussed in the following pages received tenured positions until at least age forty, and many went years without steady work opportunities. Deloria, in particular, lived her entire life treading uncertain economic waters.¹³

¹⁰ In 1891 the university allowed women to audit courses, but some departments, such as political science, banned women from the study altogether. Elsie Clews Parsons was the first female to attain a PhD from Columbia in anthropology in 1899. See Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 86–87. In later years Franz Boas would try to find funding for research for a variety of his female students, but they rarely did they attain funding packages directly from the University.

¹¹ Information provided from Robert Murphy, *Selected Papers from the American Anthropologist, 1946–1970* (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1976), taken from *Hidden Scholars*, 11.

¹² See Parezo, “Anthropology: The Welcoming Science,” introduction, *Hidden Scholars*, 22; Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 240–42; and Suzanne Metler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), xi.

¹³ Deloria was the only scholar without a doctorate. Also, she never attained a tenured teaching position. The other three women did not attain tenured positions until later in life. Wheeler-Voegelin was the youngest, receiving a tenure-track position at Indiana University at age 40 (in 1943). Weltfish was 59 when she attained a tenure-track position at Farleigh Dickenson University (in 1961), and Underhill was 66 when she received a teaching position at Denver University (in 1949).

Discrimination against female anthropologists is a common thread woven through existing scholarship on female anthropologists, but should not overshadow the contributions these scholars made despite their discrimination.¹⁴ Evaluating these discriminatory practices offers a critique of sexism within larger institutions; Nancy Parezo emphasizes this point, writing, “The rediscovery of women scholars is a critique of the history of anthropology, and a call for the reexamination of anthropology, academia, and society.”¹⁵ Acknowledgement of these inequities is undeniably important, yet much work needs to be done on the important contributions of female scholars despite the sexism they faced. Much like the questions of historical agency within Native American history, this project acknowledges the shared discrimination these women witnessed on account of their sex (and for Deloria, her race as well), but also examines how these women used their scholarship and careers to articulate important, political messages about women, American society, and Native America.¹⁶

Additionally, overemphasizing the marginalization of women anthropologists often neglects the struggles of the Native American communities who interacted with these women. This project attempts to merge the parallel scholarly dialogues on twentieth-century female anthropologists and American Indians. Chapter one returns Underhill’s story to its historical context within an important shift in Indian policy, while chapter two addresses the historical realities the Tübatalabal and Pawnee faced in relation to the ethnographic work of Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin. Additionally, chapter two and three attempt to highlight the contributions of Native people in these conversations by recovering their voices from both

¹⁴ The introductions to *Women Writing Culture*, *Daughters of the Desert*, and *Hidden Scholars*, all emphasize the discrimination against female anthropologists. See, Parezo, ed., *Hidden Scholars*, Behar and Gordon, ed., *Women Writing Culture*, and Parezo and Babcock, eds., *Daughters of the Desert*.

¹⁵ Parezo, “Anthropology: The Welcoming Science,” in *Hidden Scholars*, 29.

¹⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty presents an important theoretical standpoint on history of the subaltern. See, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

field notes and the life and writings of Ella Deloria, Yankton Sioux anthropologist. Each woman's political dilemma or point of view had ambiguous results for indigenous communities.

Historians of Native Americans have discussed the impact of early anthropology on the development of Allotment and assimilation policy in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Frederick Hoxie explains how Lewis Henry Morgan's evolutionary stage model became the intellectual foundation for an Indian policy aimed at helping Native Americans could climb the evolutionary "ladder" towards civilization.¹⁸ Margaret Jacobs has examined the anachronistic role of anthropologist Alice Fletcher, as both a cultural preservationist and an Indian agent promoting allotment and assimilation. According to Jacobs, Fletcher created an image of American Indians that gained popular currency with politicians and the American public.¹⁹ Fletcher offers an early example of the multi-dimensional lives of many female anthropologists—as both political actors and cultural conservationists. Scholars have left somewhat unexamined, however, the role of anthropologists' connections to politics in the twentieth century.²⁰

¹⁷ See Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); and Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Lewis Henry Morgan joined John Wesley Powell in promoting representations of American Indians that correlated with the mantra of Indian "progress." Chapter two of this thesis will discuss in greater detail the continuation of Morgan's evolutionary stage model in ethnographic thought. See Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 115–46; Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*, 66; and Dippie, *The Vanishing American*.

¹⁹ Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*, 97–101.

²⁰ Daniel M. Cobb does discuss activist anthropologists in his study of Native activism in postwar America, but only briefly and mainly in his discussion of Sol Tax. There is no gendered perspective either. See Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 111–24. David Price looks at the government's assault on activist anthropologists during the same time period, but is not interested in their politics as much as the discriminatory practices of the federal government and the American Anthropological Association. See Price, *Threatening Anthropology*.

One exception to this is historian Catherine Lavender, who has pioneered work on the political, mainly feminist, motivations of certain female anthropologists. Her work, however, has addressed the politics of female anthropologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lavender's work, *Scientists and Storytellers: Female Anthropologists and the Construction of the American Southwest* (2006), examines female anthropologists' use of Native American culture to critique gendered divisions in American society. Methodologically, *Scientists and Storytellers* compares written field notes to published texts in order to pinpoint the feminist impetus behind select ethnographies of Elsie Clews Parsons, Gladys Reichard, Ruth Benedict, and Ruth Underhill. Lavender's method offers a lens for locating the political motivations behind ethnographies.²¹ Furthermore, her work has shown how anthropology became a useful vehicle for challenging common-held beliefs about gender. Lavender, however, limits her inquiry to explicitly feminist anthropologists. This project builds on Lavender's work by broadening the political motivations behind woman anthropologists' scholarship. As the following pages reveal, female anthropologists had a variety of intentions for their work.

This thesis also expands on Lavender's method by viewing not only the production of ethnographies as printed texts, but also their relation to the American public. Therefore a deep reading of printed material becomes useful not only in uncovering the motivations of the authors, but also as a means to understand the texts as productions of knowledge that can shape politics. Historian Oz Frankel has analyzed how print culture of the nineteenth century became a critical tool for state building in Britain and the United States. His scholarship details how early ethnographers, namely Lewis Henry Morgan and Henry Roe Schoolcraft,

²¹ Catherine Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers: Feminist Anthropologists and the Construction of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 6–8.

provided the American government with important information on American Indians that would affect the colonization of the American West. According to Frankel, in the nineteenth century the government was the collector and producer of information, but, “By the Progressive Era [in the United States], citizenship would become intertwined with possessing information, as in the notion of the ‘informed citizen.’”²² Indeed, by the twentieth century “print statism”—as Frankel called it—allowed numerous independent scholars and authors to have a hand in informing both the American public and government officials.²³ These women, as producers of knowledge, had opportunities to shape discussions of race, colonialism, and gender in American society in both their published work, and, for some, within their government positions. Therefore closer reading of their texts within the context of their careers as educators, scholars, and federal agents advances the claim that these women used ethnography for distinct, and different, political ends.²⁴

Chapter one, “Shaping Educational Landscapes: Ruth Murray Underhill’s Web of Cross-Cultural Plurality,” discusses Ruth Underhill’s publications and political career within the BIA, and explores how her publications sought to inform Native and non-Native Americans. Underhill believed in the power of “informed citizens,” and used education to produce a web of cross-cultural understanding between a variety of Native and non-Native

²² Oz Frankel, *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore, Ma: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 2.

²³ Frankel defined “print statism” as the communication between the state and its constituents via print. As the literacy rate rose and published material became more available in the twentieth century, a less monopolistic control of print by the state gave way to a more democratic publication process. Frankel, *States of Inquiry*, 2.

²⁴ I emphasize “and different” here in order to combat a common desire in comparative works to, as scholar Maria Cotera states, emphasize a “search for sameness.” By forcing women to automatically relate to each other, we neglect the unique differences inherent in these historical figures. This is especially apparent in the deployment of the term “women of color” to suggest, according to Cotera, “a likeness of experience, identity, and epistemic standpoint.” By acknowledging difference, this thesis will pull away from a methodological tendency in comparative history to homogenize women’s experiences. See Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 7. Virginia Scharff’s *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) also embraces differences among her female subjects and provided methodological inspiration for this project.

communities. Her commitment to education and information dissemination is apparent in her prolific publication record—achieved despite the sexism she confronted within the BIA.

Chapter two, “Translation and Politicization: Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, Gene Weltfish and the Production of Ethnographic Knowledge,” employs Lavender’s methodology to compare Wheeler-Voegelin’s and Weltfish’s field notes with their respective publications: Wheeler-Voegelin’s *Tübatulabal Ethnography* (1941), and Weltfish’s *The Lost Universe* (1964). Chapter two addresses how Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish manipulated Native voice to both critique and endorse the colonial state. Both publications sought to document a Native “past,” thus embracing the idea that Native Americans were doomed to “vanish.”²⁵ Yet Weltfish, in particular, simultaneously used her work to critique postwar American consumerism and sexism.

Chapter three, “Beyond Fiction: Ella Deloria and the Politics of Cooperation,” examines Deloria’s lesser-known projects with the Navajo and Lumbee, along with her 1944 publication, *Speaking of Indians*. Her interactions with the Navajo and Lumbee communities highlight Deloria’s political brokering between missionaries, Native nations, and the federal government.²⁶ Deloria’s “politics of cooperation,” as I’ve termed her political perspective, become most apparent in *Speaking of Indians*. Deloria firmly believed that to ensure Native American futures, missionaries, government officials, and Native communities would have to work together.

²⁵ Brian Dippie contends that the ideology of the “Vanishing American” disintegrated with the advent of Indian New Deal politics that embraced Indian existence. Yet an analysis of the construction of Weltfish’s and Wheeler-Voegelin’s works, published during and after the Indian New Deal, challenges that narrative endpoint. Both women embraced the idea that the American Indian would ultimately disappear. See Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 297–355.

²⁶ Deloria is in many ways a cultural and political broker. For more on this role, see *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* ed. Margaret Connell-Szasz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

These chapters do not intend to provide a comprehensive analysis of these women's lives and publications. Instead, this project highlights the politics of their work—both written and lived. In many ways this thesis explores what it means to draw female anthropologists from disparate backgrounds into a shared engagement with American politics. These women did not simply passively inhale cultural information, but instead used that information to intervene in political debates about federal Indian policy, postwar consumerism, and racial and sex-based equality. Although they all worked for the American government at some point in their career, each of them also worked for indigenous communities, writing down their oral histories and languages, as well as preserving their cultural identity in texts. Historian of Australian aboriginal history, Ann Curthoys, discusses the tendency of scholars to embrace written archives and dismiss oral history. In “The History of Killing and the Killing of History,” Curthoys evaluates the “history wars” between historians of Australia. At the heart of the debate, Curthoys contends, is the validity and accuracy of oral history. According to Curthoys, western society's reification of written documentation has significant effects on how we interpret our national historical narratives.²⁷ All of the women discussed in the following pages, despite their colonialist or decolonialist motivations, preserved the cultural identities of the Pawnee, Navajo, Dakota, Tübatalabal, Tohono O'odham, and others in text. As evident in the extensive textual documentation for the Indian Claims Commission, written documentation continues to be an important first step in indigenous communities' claims land and resources. All of the female ethnographers discussed here documented oral history, and all of them, at some point, sought to inform non-Native Americans about the communities they worked with—Deloria wrote *Speaking of Indians* for a non-Native,

²⁷ Ann Curthoys, “The History of Killing and the Killing of History” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 352–55.

Christian audience; Wheeler-Voegelin published *Tübatlabal Ethnography* for non-Native academicians; Underhill wrote numerous pamphlets directed at Indian Service personnel; and Weltfish published *The Lost Universe* in the hopes of restructuring postwar urban space.

By highlighting the distinct motivations behind their written ethnographies, this thesis reveals that these women confronted important issues concerning sexism, postwar consumerism, and U.S.-Indian relations. Yet each of these women's agendas had mixed effects on the Native communities they worked with. In many instances their political inclinations did not make Native American interests a top priority. Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin believed that accurately documenting the "facts" of Tübatlabal life would grant her a place in a male-dominated community of scholars; meanwhile her publication reified the preservation of a Tübatlabal past and disregarded their contemporary concerns. Gene Weltfish hoped that the "vanishing" Pawnee lifestyle provided an important remedy to the consumer-driven life of postwar Americans, but disregarded the Pawnee's contemporary struggles for reparations and land. Ruth Underhill sought to educate Indian Service personnel and the larger American public about American Indians, but often neglected Indian points of view. Of the four scholars, Ella Deloria was most concerned with documenting Native perspectives in order to assist her communities. But Terminationists co-opted her rhetoric of cooperation in an effort to soften the malign motivations of their politics.

Despite their marginalization within academia and society at large, these women traversed the American political landscape, collecting, shaping, and disseminating information on American Indian cultures. Their information, however, could both endorse and undermine Native American claims to place and sovereignty.

Chapter 1

Shaping Educational Landscapes: Ruth Murray Underhill's Web of Cultural Plurality

At ninety-five, Dr. Ruth Murray Underhill (1883–1984) shifted in her seat, piecing together the mental field notes of her life. “There was a story I used to be told when I was a child . . . it was a duck or somebody who was Sylvia Pelico.”²⁸ She paused and asked the interviewers, “Do you remember Sylvia Pelico?” After a prolonged silence she continued with a compelling metaphor:

Anyway I guess it was an Italian story. Sylvia Pelico started to go somewhere and everywhere he went he would meet somebody. They'd say “Where are you going Sylvia Pelico?” He would say, “I'm going to Rome or wherever.” “We want to go with you” they'd respond. So then they would go with him. That's the way it happened with me. I kept collecting people and go on and on with them.²⁹

Ruth Underhill's collection of people bespeaks her frequent navigation of new places and foreign cultures. As a professionally trained anthropologist, Underhill spent her life observing, following, and befriending numerous groups of Native Americans. As a government employee, Underhill worked as an Indian education authority who sought to develop a program of cultural pluralism for modern America. She did not passively inhale cultural information, but instead claimed a career by applying her intimate knowledge of Native American cultures—notably the Tohono O'odham—to the education of Indians and non-Indians alike.³⁰ From the 1930s to the 1960s, Underhill navigated dirt reservation roads

²⁸ The strangeness of this story may be the result of a transcription error. It is also important to keep in mind that this interview was taken at the end of Underhill's life, therefore some of her recollections could contain factual errors.

²⁹ Joyce Herold, the Ethnography Curator at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, as well as Dave Baysinger, a technology manager for the museum, interviewed Ruth Underhill from July 1979 to November 1982. Oral history transcript, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, Alfred M. Bailey Library and Archives, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver, Colorado [hereafter, Oral history transcript, DMNS].

³⁰ When Underhill compiled information on the Tohono O'odham the tribe called themselves the Papago. I have maintained that usage when referring Underhill's work, but in all other cases I cite the tribe as they presently call themselves: the Tohono O'odham.

in a series of Fords and charted a life on the margins of mainstream America. Ultimately, she believed that peripheral American cultures offered remedies to modern American dilemmas.

This chapter seeks to evaluate her tenure as an employee of the BIA from 1935 to 1948, along with her scholarship concerning cultural amalgamation. Both her publications and her work as a government agent highlight her experience as an educator of Indians and non-Indians. Her scholarship emphasizes her desire to forge a middle ground between Native and non-Native America—a place where communities could cohabit, develop, and maintain the cultural sinew that binds people together. Her years as a scholarly advisor for the BIA sheds light on the sexist politics of Commissioner John Collier, the complicated cultural roles of anthropologists as intermediaries, and the unique perseverance of a resolute woman determined to disseminate information on Native Americans.

Historical analyses of today and academicians during Underhill's lifetime have neglected the significance of her ethnographic work, and particularly her tenure as an advisor for the BIA. Contemporary scholars tend to focus solely on her book-length publications, notably the first “autobiography” of a Native female, Maria Chona, in Underhill's *Papago Woman* (1936). Modern evaluations of Underhill examine how the popularity of her scholarship, emphasis on feminist arguments, and pursuit of cultural “purity” damaged her intellectual standing among fellow academicians.³¹ Historian Catherine Lavender concludes, “Her popular readership caused many anthropologists to dismiss her work as overly personal and literary.”³² Furthermore, Underhill “concentrated on gender roles and women's place” in her publications, which Lavender charges, caused “a change in the meaning of the

³¹ See Shirley Leckie and Nancy Parezo eds., *Their Own Frontier: Women Intellectuals Re-visioning the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Parezo ed. *Hidden Scholars*; and Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*.

³² Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 116.

informant's testimony."³³ Other scholars criticize her because "Underhill felt that 'pristineness'—isolation from the cultural adulteration brought about by intense contact with outsiders—was an important element in legitimizing native voices."³⁴

Yet these interpretations reflect only partial realities of Underhill's life. Deeper analysis of her publications and Indian Service career exemplify her desire to use education to dispel common misnomers about Indian people and bridge the divisive lines often created out of ignorance. In the summer of 1934, Underhill presented herself before a classroom of Navajo students. The lesson-plan focused on Navajo verbs and vocabulary. That moment marked the beginning of Ruth Underhill's career as an applied anthropologist for the BIA. In 1935 her work at the Navajo Hogan School translated into a liaison position with the BIA's newly formed Applied Anthropology Unit (AAU). Over the next thirteen years, Underhill served as a scholarly advisor for the AAU and the Technical-Corporation of the BIA (TC-BIA), and assisted the director of the BIA's Division of Education, William Beatty.

As a government agent, Underhill shuttled from the BIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., to Indian reservations in the Pacific Northwest, Great Lakes, and Southwest. Meeting with BIA employees and Native Americans, Underhill shaped educational landscapes and mediated cross-cultural formations in the wake of a new era of reorganization.³⁵ Despite one scholar's reference to the BIA as "hospitable" to applied

³³ Ibid., 10, 16.

³⁴ Catherine Lavender and Nancy Parezo, "Ruth Murray Underhill: Ethnohistorian and Ethnographer for the Native Peoples" in *Their Own Frontier*, 355.

³⁵ The Indian New Deal was a facet within the larger New Deal reform efforts to combat the Great Depression of the 1930s. Prior to the Indian New Deal the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 promoted individual land allotments for Indians, thus intending to break-up tribal organization. During the 1920s, John Collier and other reformers challenged the allotment policy as growing anti-modernist sentiments began to idealize and reify the so-called "simplicity" of communal Indian life. The chief legislation surrounding the Indian New Deal included the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1935. See Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father*, Vol 2. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 945–

anthropologists, Underhill portrayed the bureau as Commissioner John Collier's patriarchal enclave.³⁶

Additionally, Underhill's published work belies the assumption that she reified a cultural "pristineness" at all costs. Her Columbia University dissertation and numerous BIA-funded publications demonstrate a deep interest in the undeniable impact of modernization on traditional culture. "I think the mistake that anthropologists make," she insisted, "is not to recognize that it moves. That culture has moved all the time."³⁷ By championing cultural fluidity, Underhill acknowledged the realities of cross-cultural exchange that many early-twentieth-century anthropologists neglected in their fieldwork.³⁸

Foreign cultures had intrigued Underhill at an early age. Born in 1883 in a suburb of New York City to an upper-middle class Quaker family—the descendents of acclaimed "Indian Fighter" Captain John Underhill— young Ruth matured in an environment she described as "thoroughly bound to convention." She often traveled to Europe, and recalled leaving her chaperones in order to explore alone. Stateside, Underhill conveyed a similar desire for autonomy. She habitually avoided group activities, instead spending hours poring through her father's library and rebuffing the numerous suitors corralled by her mother.³⁹

Underhill continually challenged the cultural norms of her Quaker family and the Victorian ideal of separate spheres. She yearned to "experience life" and rejected the idea of becoming a well-married mother.⁴⁰ After her graduation from Vassar College in 1905, Underhill chose an occupation instead of a husband. She held numerous social work

47; and Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 69–72.

³⁶ Katherine Spencer Halpern, "Women in Applied Anthropology in the Southwest" in *Hidden Scholars*, 191.

³⁷ Oral history transcript, DNMS.

³⁸ Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 177.

³⁹ Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 103; and Oral history transcript, DMNS.

⁴⁰ Oral history transcript, DMNS.

positions, eventually joining the Charity Organization Society (COS) in 1914 to assist Italians in New York City slums.⁴¹ This social work abruptly ended when her superiors discovered her close affiliations with the woman suffrage movement. It would not be the first time Underhill found herself in contested waters due to her feminism. She did not, however, lose her drive for self-sufficiency. She traveled to Italy, working for the Red Cross during World War I.⁴² Upon her return, Underhill briefly married, although she spoke little of this relationship later in her life. Decades later she recalled leaving the courthouse, after filing for divorce, to enroll in Columbia University's graduate program.⁴³ Underhill pursued graduate school in 1930, as a means to claim economic independence, while also seeking answers to larger social issues. Her work with the COS and Red Cross left her disenchanted with social work's remedies for larger, societal problems. Underhill attended graduate school in search of better solutions for a rapidly urbanizing and modernizing world. Armed with the desire "to understand people better, to find out why different groups live, act, and think the way they do," Underhill soon found herself in the halls of Columbia's anthropology department.⁴⁴

Underhill later claimed that life before her admittance into Columbia's anthropology program composed only the preface of her life's novel.⁴⁵ She entered Columbia's program as an older, unconventional graduate student. Columbia's faculty, especially renowned anthropologists Dr. Franz Boas and Dr. Ruth Benedict, provided the methodological and

⁴¹ Copy of Ruth Underhill Government Personnel Records, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver, Colorado.

⁴² Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 105.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁴ Marjorie Barrett, "Homemaking's Not Her Forte But Her House is Charming." Date unknown, *Denver (Colo.) Rocky Mountain News*, Clippings Records: Ruth Murray Underhill, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado [hereafter Clippings file, DPL].

⁴⁵ Ruth Murray Underhill, 1883-1984, "Oral history interview with Underhill, Ruth Murray," in Heritage West Oral History Project, item no. 70390, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

ideological mixture that fostered Underhill's transition into applied anthropology.⁴⁶

Following Boas's vague suggestion to "find out how they live," Underhill traveled to the Tohono O'odham reservation in Arizona, and later completed her dissertation, *The Social Organization of the Papago* (1937).⁴⁷

Underhill's dissertation highlights her interest in the processes of cultural exchange. Documenting the cultural composition of the Tohono O'odham, Underhill evaluated the impact of Spanish, Mexican, and American colonialism on the community. Regarding the Tohono O'odham's incorporation of Spanish customs, Underhill dismissively argued that "they took two institutions: the whipping post and the governor."⁴⁸ Underhill juxtaposed the violence and dictatorial rule of the Spaniards and Mexicans with the arrival of American colonizers.⁴⁹ Underhill favored the Americans' efforts to import schools, hospitals and extension services as a means to raise standards of living. According to Underhill's dissertation, the American colonial enterprise left the Tohono O'odham culture "unspoiled and independent."⁵⁰ She does note, however, that despite the attempted "hands-off" policy, American services weakened kinship ties in the Tohono O'odham community. Underhill purports that the steady onset of an American-incentivized wage economy created a socio-economic stratification that incited intra-tribal tension and disrupted Tohono O'odham kin relations. Although her dissertation took a pro-American stance, Underhill perceived that

⁴⁶ Boas's work focused more on political structures, while Benedict focused on the individual and how he/she reflected larger belief systems. Underhill would have to employ both tactics in navigating the BIA and Indian cultural environments. See Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 107.

⁴⁷ Oral history transcript, DNMS.

⁴⁸ Ruth Underhill, *Social Organization of the Papago* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 203.

⁴⁹ She maintained the myth of the Black Legend in her analysis of Spanish and Mexican rule. For more on the Black Legend, see María Deguzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005); and David Weber, "The Spanish Legacy in the Historical Imagination," chap. 12 in *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 335–353.

⁵⁰ Underhill, *Social Organization of the Papago*, 204.

even well-intentioned colonizers fractured indigenous communities. She recognized that colonialism had touched American Indian culture—a claim that preceded her peers, whose work continued to separate indigenous communities from their colonized realities. *The Social Organization of the Papago*, therefore, displays the effects of Americanization on Indian life and does not seek out a cultural “pristineness.” Underhill’s analysis of cultural amalgamation informed her later work as a BIA advisor.

In the midst of her doctoral work, Underhill entered the job market during the mid-1930s.⁵¹ She found the waters difficult to navigate—especially as a woman. She relied on the financial support of Boas and the controversial anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons in order to continue her research. When the Boas-Parsons funds ran out, however, Underhill had trouble finding employment in a university system that had become increasingly male-dominated. Historian Rosalind Rosenberg has examined how women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used scholarly professionalization to challenge Victorian gender norms.⁵² Underhill followed in the wake of dissident female social scientists such as Elsie Clews Parsons and Margaret Mead. Yet Rosenberg concluded that the intellectual revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not incite the social revolution needed to disband gender inequality. As a result, Underhill embarked on her career in the midst of the professionalization and masculinization of universities. The Great Depression only further reversed female scholars’ initial attempts to undermine sexual inequalities within the university system.⁵³ Therefore Underhill had trouble attaining employment in the academy, and instead sought work as a government employee.

⁵¹ Underhill obtained her doctoral degree in 1937, following the publication of *The Social Organization of the Papago*.

⁵² Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, xvi.

⁵³ Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 239.

At the suggestion of anthropologist Gladys Reichard—a fellow Columbia graduate—Underhill joined the Indian Service, initially as a freelance educator of Indian Service employees. In 1934 Reichard requested Underhill’s assistance at the government-sponsored Navajo Hogan School. Underhill spent the summer working with Reichard, Reichard’s interpreter Adolph Brittany, and eighteen Navajo volunteers. Together, they worked on developing a written Navajo language based on a translation method crafted by Reichard.⁵⁴ The Hogan School reflected larger Indian New Deal efforts to revitalize Native languages by improving literacy. Eventually, summer courses became a part of Underhill’s administrative calendar. She would not only assist in program development for federal Indian schools, but would also conduct numerous courses at summer institutes for Indian Service personnel.⁵⁵

Indian New Deal administrators expected the summer programs to help Indian Service employees embrace a fundamental shift in Indian policy. In 1933 newly elected president Franklin Roosevelt nominated activist John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier immediately transitioned away from the assimilation policies that had characterized the previous administrations, and sought to give some of the largesse of Roosevelt’s New Deal to the American Indian people. The Indian New Deal’s chief legislation was the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), passed in 1934. The IRA re-established reservations that the federal government had disbanded under the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and initially intended to buy back land lost during the previous

⁵⁴ Oral history transcript, DMNS. Anthropologist Edward Sapir and his associate Bernard Haile had already begun working with the Navajo at a Catholic mission to develop a written language. Reichard later clashed with Sapir’s understudy, Harry Hoiyer, after he began publishing Sapir’s work that challenged the translation method of Reichard at the Navajo Hogan School. For more on the Navajo Hogan School see, Julia S. Falk *Women, Language and Linguistics: Three American Stories from the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1999), 132–8; and Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 109.

⁵⁵ For more on the Hogan School, see Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 82.

Allotment Era.⁵⁶ The IRA also promoted day-school education efforts on reservations to replace assimilation-oriented boarding schools.⁵⁷

The Indian New Deal required a re-training of Indian Service employees who had enforced policies of total assimilation and Americanization. Collier wanted a workforce that shared his philosophy of Indian community, autonomy, and cultural revival. In 1933 Commissioner Collier outlined the importance of Indian education, reorganizing the Indian service, and pairing social scientists with existing school systems.⁵⁸ Two years later, anthropologist and BIA advisor Scudder Mekeel reiterated the need to use “the native culture in the educational system.”⁵⁹ Underhill’s courses answered such calls for Indian Service re-education.

The BIA held Indian Service summer training programs from 1935 to 1939 in various locations, including the Sherman Institute in California; Fort Wingate, New Mexico; and Pine Ridge, South Dakota.⁶⁰ Underhill taught a course on the “History of the American Indians,” frequently focusing on tribes located near the summer training schools. BIA administrators expected these schools to provide information that personnel could “apply to problems which are common to all those who deal educationally with the Indians.”⁶¹

Underhill’s course descriptions demonstrate her interest in the processes of acculturation on Indian reservations. For example, a description of a course on the Indians of California

⁵⁶ The IRA was also known as the Wheeler-Howard Bill. Prucha, *The Great Father*, 950–4.

⁵⁷ For more on day school efforts, see Donald Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1933), 75. Accessed at Government Records, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

⁵⁹ Scudder H. Mekeel, “An Anthropologist’s Observations on Indian Education,” *Progressive Education* (1936), 159.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Folder 27, box 2, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, collection number M060, Penrose Library, Denver University, Colorado. For more on Indian education, see Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*.

detailed how basic cultural understandings would be “discussed in their original state and as affected by a series of changes involved in White contacts.”⁶²

By 1935, Underhill had also joined the “human dependency unit” of the Technical Corporation of the BIA (TC-BIA). Working in tandem with ecologists and other scientists, the TC-BIA surveyed environmental degradation on the reservations. The Collier administration advocated environmental reform in an effort to promote land-based economies that would foster independence in Indian Country. Yet for the Navajo, such rhetoric was tied to a larger national issue: scientists feared that soil erosion on the reservation would clog the Hoover Dam located downstream. Tasked with uncovering the Native response to proposed plans for the reduction of Navajo livestock and the introduction of new farming methods, Underhill observed the Navajos’ cultural, social, and economic ties to the soil. The TC-BIA worked to build a consensus around productive and restorative land-use practices. Yet the TC-BIA did little to lessen the cultural and economic blow of livestock reduction. Historian Marsha Weisiger has pointed out how the reports of the TC-BIA arrived too late to halt the largest slaughters. As a result of this controversial Collier policy, the Navajo resisted further New Deal reforms and rejected the IRA.⁶³

Ultimately the TC-BIA lost funding and failed to forge a viable bond between government reformers and Native communities. Underhill and the TC-BIA anthropologists drew criticism from both scientists in the field and bureaucrats in Washington. As historian

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ In addition to the well-documented stock reduction program, Soil Erosion Service scientists worked to reduce silt from flooding the Colorado River, implemented water spreading devices and dams, as well as rodent control and re-seeding elements. See Lawrence Kelly, “Anthropology in the Soil Conservation Service.” *Agricultural History* 59 (1985): 139. Stock reduction ultimately left the Navajo economically disenfranchised. Paired with Commissioner Collier’s coercive manipulation of tribal factionalism, the Navajo ultimately stated their dissatisfaction with New Deal policy by rejecting the Indian Reorganization Act in 1936. See Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 50; and Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal*.

Lawrence Kelly notes, “ the human dependency team [of the TC-BIA] lacked the dedication, continuity, and administrative support which was vital to its mission.”⁶⁴ From her experiences in the TC-BIA, Underhill learned a valuable lesson about the difficulties of bridging cross-cultural ties between non-Indian policymakers and Indian people.

Underhill continued as a freelance scholar for the BIA until 1935, when the Applied Anthropology Unit (AAU) of the BIA hired her full-time. The AAU conducted studies of social organization among tribes that chose to adopt the IRA and write their own tribal constitutions. The bureau expected AAU members to evaluate the possibility of acquiring new lands and to document the issues facing Depression-era Indian communities.⁶⁵ In 1937, the year she graduated from Columbia and published *The Social Organization of the Papago*, the BIA assigned Underhill to report on the Tohono O’odham. Returning to the reservation as a government agent, Underhill concluded that the tribe was reluctant to incorporate New Deal reforms, especially the economic changes suggested by the Collier administration. Her conclusions echoed her dissertation’s emphasis on the corrosive effect of the cash economy. Shortly after she relayed this information to her superiors, Collier removed Underhill from the AAU and placed her in the BIA Division of Education.⁶⁶ Commissioner Collier later claimed that her suggestions would delay the reorganization process, but he blamed her sex, not her informed criticisms of his program, noting that his “personal experience with professional women in administration, and executive women, had been most discouraging.”⁶⁷ Underhill’s return to Washington after summers of travel marked a return to a narrow-minded administration supported by Collier’s general distrust of “executive women.”

⁶⁴ Kelly, “Anthropologists in the Soil Conservation Service,” 146.

⁶⁵ Lawrence Kelly, “Anthropology and Anthropologists in the Indian New Deal,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 16 (1980): 10.

⁶⁶ Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 110.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

As an agent of the state, government officials expected Underhill to conform to and support government policies. Underhill had once controlled the direction of her work, but as she noted, the government “knows what they want, and you can just come and kneel at their feet, if you like it.”⁶⁸ The bureau’s sexism began with Commissioner Collier. Many Native and non-Native activists labeled Collier the “savior” of Indian peoples due to his rejection of assimilation policy, yet Underhill’s recollections paint a darker picture. Underhill named him “Louis XIV” and mocked his “god-like” status among BIA employees. Not only did Collier continually promote men into high-level administrative positions over Underhill, he also upheld a simplistic and rigid image of Native Americans that she barely tolerated. “He wanted them [Indians] to go the way that *he* knows best,” she recalled, often ignoring both Underhill’s insights and Indian realities.⁶⁹

“When a young man came into the service,” Underhill stated, “he would always be about two grades above us.”⁷⁰ Women appointed by Collier, however, sometimes joined these men in the higher ranks of the bureau. Laura Thompson, who was later married to Collier, was one such woman. Assigned to administer the collection of ethnographic data towards the end of Collier’s tenure, Thompson held a position of scholarly authority Underhill envied.⁷¹ Underhill resented Thompson’s ability to slide into a top-level bureau position, while she patiently waited for a promotion that never came. Yet Thompson did hold a PhD in anthropology, and, although she was ten years younger than Underhill, she had amassed a significant amount of experience in the field.⁷² Despite these frustrations,

⁶⁸ Oral history transcript, DNMS.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 57.

⁷² Biographical information on Thompson pulled from the Smithsonian Institution’s online guide to her manuscript collection, at <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/fa/thompson.htm#Chronology>.

Underhill navigated the BIA skillfully, because she was equipped with humor, and selected battles worth fighting. She grudgingly responded to the title of “Miss” instead of “Dr.,” but got her revenge by circulating a verse about Collier:

If I slept with Mr. Collier, every word I said would be ranked as expert wisdom through the power of the bed! Superintendents and Officials would be gathered round my knee gaping at my _____ oh, but not my salary! As it is my bright suggestions only fall on deafened ears and my measly per diem just grows smaller with the years. I could be a flaming genius and I still would die unknown. Who’s to tell if I’m a bright girl since alas, I sleep alone!⁷³

Underhill recited this verse to her interviewers decades after it had circulated through the BIA offices. The poem likely never came to the attention of Collier, yet the verse speaks to a larger neglect of female intellectuals by both the academy and government agencies in Depression-era America. While female anthropologists such as Elsie Clews Parsons and Matilda Coxe Stevenson had succeeded her, the Depression marked a return to discriminatory employment policies in the wake of economic crisis.⁷⁴ Scholars have documented Collier’s support of social scientists in government agencies, yet Underhill’s experience reveals the sexist nature of his employment practices in the BIA.⁷⁵

Underhill resigned herself to work in a discriminatory environment where a patriarchal administrative structure enforced paternalistic policies. Despite these inequities, Underhill claimed a highly productive career. Her writing provided a source of solace and productivity. The ethnographic text created a space in which Underhill could exert a larger degree of autonomy. Underhill published over a dozen stories on the Tohono O’odham, in

⁷³ Oral history transcript, DMNS. Accessed 13 November 2011.

⁷⁴ Suzanne Metler offers an insightful examination of the sexist policies of the New Deal. See Metler, *Dividing Citizens*, xi. For a discussion on the increasing discrimination of women in the New Deal university setting, see Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 238.

⁷⁵ Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 11.

addition to one hundred articles, and twenty monographs on Indian communities.⁷⁶ In many instances, her publications provided the first written information on specific tribes.

During her seven-year tenure within the Division of Education, Underhill's pamphlet writing, textbook publications, and contributions to the Indian Service's magazine, *Indians at Work*, speak to a productivity level that belied the discrimination she faced. She wrote seven pamphlets for the BIA's Indian Life and Customs Series—a program aimed at arming Indian Service personnel with information on Native Americans.⁷⁷ In addition to utilizing her knowledge of Indian culture to inform non-Indian administrators, these works demonstrate her continuing interest in acculturation analysis. For example, *Here Come the Navajo!* emphasized “changing conditions since their [the Navajos'] first appearance in the Southwest.”⁷⁸ In these government-funded pamphlets, Underhill acted as the voice of indigenous Americans, yet in her research she never directly transcribed Native American voices.⁷⁹ Instead, Underhill visited communities in the summer to create a cultural sketch of a community, and then conducted the remaining research in the archives of the Smithsonian Institute. Locked in the far corner of the library, Underhill tended to craft her cultural analyses distanced from Native American input. As a designated Indian authority, she employed a research model that neglected Native American voices.

Underhill also contributed several articles to *Indians at Work*, a monthly magazine circulated among Indian Service personnel. Her articles focused on the language, culture, and

⁷⁶ Leckie, *Their Own Frontier*, 338.

⁷⁷ Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 111. Pamphlet titles included: *Here Come the Navajo!*, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, *The Indians of Southern California*, *The Northern Paiute Indians*, *People of the Crimson Evening*, *The Story of the Blackfeet*, and *Workaday Life of the Pueblos*. Many of these pamphlets turned into book-length projects. Folder 24, box 4, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, collection number M060, Penrose Library, Denver University, Colorado.

⁷⁸ Folder 24, box 4, Ruth Murray Underhill Collection, Collection Number M060, Penrose Library, Denver University, Colorado.

⁷⁹ Oral history transcript, DMNS.

religion of Indian peoples. Both *Indians at Work* and the Indian Life and Customs pamphlet series sought to illuminate Indian ways of life, while also charting the impact of cultural exchange.

In her debut article for *Indians at Work*, published on April 1, 1935, Underhill presented an outline of the social and ceremonial organization of Native people in Arizona and New Mexico. In “Southwest Indians,” Underhill argued that government officials who sought to change a Native community’s economic, cultural, and social makeup needed to understand the tribe’s social organization. “Until we know this age old background [of social organization] we have no key to the mental attitudes, the interests, the aims, that make up Indian psychology” Underhill insisted. “Southwest Indians” highlights the importance of kin networks and child-rearing practices, as components of a culturally “integrated whole.” Emphasizing the interlocking matrices of culture, she concluded, “We cannot lightly ask that one part be changed unless we know the connectedness with the others.” She held that “Changes should be made slowly, and from within rather than from without, by edict.”⁸⁰ Her additional publications in *Indians at Work* discussed differences between the Tohono O’odham and the Pima (Akimel O’odham) in southern Arizona, the vocabulary and complex language style of the Tohono O’odham, and the “Old Inter-Village Games of the Papago.”⁸¹

Underhill’s publications assisted Indian Service personnel by encouraging them to embrace the cultural differences they once sought to eradicate. Her desire to provide information to “naive” Indian Service employees is evident in her pamphlet writing and

⁸⁰ Ruth Underhill, “Southwest Indians,” *Indians at Work*, April 1, 1935, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter CSWR].

⁸¹ Ruth Underhill, “Desert People,” *Indians at Work*, April 15, 1936, CSWR; and “Vocabulary and Style in the Indian Language,” *Indians at Work*, March 1, 1936, CSWR.

contributions to *Indians at Work*.⁸² However, Underhill also attempted to re-educate “ashamed” Indian children. She found that many young Natives were ignorant of “the glorious past of their own race.”⁸³ Therefore, Underhill published in order to re-instill Native American cultural pride. Her name still graces numerous textbooks taught in federal Indian schools as a part of the Collier campaign for a cultural renaissance in Indian Country.⁸⁴

Years later, a Denver newspaper claimed Underhill was known best by Denverites “as an Indian authority.”⁸⁵ Her work undeniably speaks to her deep interest in and knowledge of Native Americans. Yet as an authority, Underhill advanced top-down Indian policy, neglecting Native American input. Her *Indians at Work* pieces assumed that anthropologists, not Indian people, should direct policy. Decades later, Indian activist and scholar Vine Deloria Jr. excoriated anthropologists’ tendency to assume intellectual control over Native Americans. “Behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued,” states Deloria in his 1969 manifesto, *Custer Died for your Sins*, “if traced completely back to its origin, stands the anthropologist.”⁸⁶ Despite her own misgivings about paternalistic policies, both the BIA and Underhill often blocked Native contributions to the formation of Indian policy.

But Ruth Underhill lived long enough to allow Native Americans to speak for themselves.

In the summer of her ninety-seventh year, long retired from the bureau and her later teaching position at Denver University, Underhill returned to the Mojave reservation in

⁸² Oral history transcript, DMNS.

⁸³ Barrett, “Homemaking’s Not Her Forte But Her House Is Charming,” Clippings file, DPL.

⁸⁴ Book titles included: *The Papago Indians of Arizona and their Relatives the Pima, Navaho Weaving*, and *Pueblo Crafts*. See Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 111.

⁸⁵ Barrett, “Homemaking’s Not Her Forte But Her House Is Charming,” Clippings file, DPL.

⁸⁶ Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 81.

Arizona. “They asked me to write a book about the tribe [Mojave],” Underhill told a Denver newspaper shortly before her trip, “I said no . . . white people have been doing this long enough. You write it this time.”⁸⁷ The newspaper sought to document Underhill’s achievements as she prepared to accept an honorary award from the Mojave community. A year earlier, the Tohono O’odham had recognized Underhill, stating, “We the people of the Crimson Evening, the O’odham, recognize your efforts and your talents in preserving and capturing the spirit of our people.”⁸⁸ The Mojave and Tohono O’odham peoples appreciated Underhill’s scholarship. Her publications informed Americans about their communities and provided a written record of their history. The past and present of the Tohono O’odham and Mojave could now reach thousands of readers, a gift, that despite its faults, tried to educate Americans about their little-known neighbors and fellow citizens. These tributes underscore Underhill’s successful career of informing the non-Indian world about Indian culture, while also providing a written cultural past utilized by Native communities.

Yet her scholarship also educated other American communities. A 1950 article published in *Marriage and Family Living* exemplifies her desire to use indigenous cultures to inform a modernizing nation. In “Many Goals, Many Trails,” Underhill offered the Tohono O’odham and Mojave cultures as antidotes to what she viewed as outmoded American gender norms. “When I open a woman’s magazine,” she wrote, “I should be delighted not to be faced with more kinds of china and table cloths, more painting of furniture, more recipes, more fripperies to keep a woman busy in her little house.”⁸⁹ The Tohono O’odham and Mojave, in contrast, spent their money on activities that brought the family together.

⁸⁷ Underhill as quoted in Alan Cunningham, “At 97, Underhill will return to Indians,” August 20, 1984, *Denver (Colo.) Rocky Mountain News*, Clippings File, DPL.

⁸⁸ Leckie, *Their Own Frontier*, 337.

⁸⁹ Ruth Underhill, “Many Goals, Many Trails,” *Marriage and Family Living* 12 (1950): 137–8.

Hoarding money in an effort to increase wealth was alien to the Tohono O’odham and Mojave. Furthermore, their families embraced a democratic value system—with an emphasis on respecting all family members. From these differences Underhill concluded: “Know your group [family]. Be sure you have grasped their needs and have made the most of every effort on their part toward satisfying those needs.”⁹⁰ For Underhill family life should center on family needs and relationships, not the consumer-driven commodities that beckoned from the latest magazine ads. Clearly a call for a more egalitarian, less patriarchal, American family, “Many Goals, Many Trails” used Native communities question and undermine postwar American culture.

Underhill’s work in the Indian Service was bittersweet. On one hand, the bureau provided the adventure and income she desperately sought. On the government’s dime, Underhill would pack up her lavender-colored Ford, “Lilly,” and head out to the reservations to teach, write, and research. In her own words, “Indian Service life meant jolting around in a car from one end of the country to the other over dirt roads and rocky roads and in the blizzards and in the heat.”⁹¹ The opportunity to engage with diverse Indian communities compensated for the patriarchal policies of Collier’s BIA. She navigated the porous boundaries between Indian and non-Indian Country, and between scholarly and political circles. Of her “place” in the world, Underhill commented, “I think I’d rather live up on the satellites that go around the sun.”⁹² Underhill found the autonomy implied in the previous quotation on the outskirts of American society. In Indian Country, surrounded by her Native friends and interviewees, she crafted a satisfying sanctuary.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁹¹ Ruth Murray Underhill, 1883-1984, "Oral history interview with Underhill, Ruth Murray," in Heritage West Oral History Project, item no. 70390, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

⁹² Oral history transcript, DMNS.

As anthropologist Florence Ellis stated of her own research for the Indian Claims Commission, the role of the applied anthropologists was “to give back to them [Native Americans] whatever they can use of your understanding of things.”⁹³ For Underhill, “them” included both Native and non-Native people. Despite her faulty methodology, and amidst sexism, Underhill produced an extraordinary body of usable ethnography. She used cultural information to promote justice and cross-cultural reform. Underhill also carved out an extraordinary career in public service, despite the inequities she confronted at the bureau. She utilized education as a means to negotiate between Indian and non-Indian communities. Her literary abilities made her work appealing to Indians, scholars, *and* the larger American public. As an administrative agent, she embraced modernization in an effort to promote economic prosperity, even as she upheld tradition in order to maintain cultural diversity.

⁹³ Parezo, “Conclusion: The Beginning of the Quest,” *Hidden Scholars*, 345.

Chapter 2
**Translation and Politicization: Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, Gene Weltfish, and
 the Production of Ethnographic Knowledge**

“To speak of Indigeneity,” ethnographer Audra Simpson emphatically states, “is to speak of colonialism and anthropology.”⁹⁴ Simpson posits that historically, two main enterprises produced non-Native perceptions of Indian America: the academic analyses of ethnographers; and the colonial documentations of merchants, missionaries, and militia. Yet the anthropologist and the colonizer are not simply confronting Indian communities in a vacuum. Simpson argues that the colonizer depends upon the resources of the anthropologist, and therefore the ethnographer becomes a key individual who seeks, in Simpson’s words, to “define and know the difference” between Native America and colonial settlers. By constructing those differences colonial regimes are better equipped “to govern those [communities] within.”⁹⁵ Anthropologist Les W. Field mirrors this sentiment, stating that “even in the post–World War II era, it is commonplace that anthropology has been and remains the child of imperialism.”⁹⁶ Anthropology, according to these scholars, is historically part and parcel of the colonial agenda in Native America. Moreover, it acts as a type of intellectual warfare—in which knowing one’s “enemy” assists in the destruction of a people and a way of life.

⁹⁴ Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship,” *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9 (December 2007): 67.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹⁶ Les W. Field, “Unacknowledged Tribes, Dangerous Knowledge: The Muweka Ohlone and How Indian Identities are ‘Known’” *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2003): 79.

Field and Simpson join Vine Deloria Jr. and other scholars in charting the long history of the colonial impetus behind the “study of mankind.”⁹⁷ Yet binaries, when historicized, never emerge as hardened as some critiques suggest. This chapter intends to complicate these claims by examining the *process* of creating anthropological knowledge, from field notes to published texts. While other chapters have examined solely the publications of female ethnographers in tandem with their careers, this chapter will explore two women’s scholarly authority within the intimate spaces of fieldwork, prior to publication. An analysis of Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin’s and Gene Weltfish’s lives and publications advances the claim that ethnography and ethnographers can both support *and* attack the colonial state.

Both women employed a memory culture methodology that reified an indigenous past, while neglecting the colonial realities of the present. By using memory culture methodology, both women endorsed the notion that the Native American was doomed to “vanish,” or—in a word more common to twentieth-century politicians—“integrate.” Yet, especially in the case of Gene Weltfish, aspects of her publication sought to undermine the postwar American system. Weltfish used her ethnography of the Pawnee to assert a new blueprint for material feminists in the postwar period. Even Wheeler-Voegelin’s publication indirectly rebuked American claims to the Kern River Valley, by tying the Tübatalabal people to the land.

As historian Catherine Lavender has shown in her work, *Scientists and Storytellers: Feminist Anthropologists and the Construction of the Southwest*, a powerful process takes place not only during the ethnographic interview process, but also during the translation of

⁹⁷ See Lee D. Baker, *Anthropology and the Racial Politics of Culture* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Hoxie, *A Final Promise*; and Field, “Unacknowledged Tribes, Dangerous Knowledge,” for discussions on how anthropological ideas have shaped federal policy toward American Indians.

field notes into published intellectual commodities. Lavender argues that four feminist ethnographers of the twentieth-century reshaped the perspectives of their interviewees in an effort “to build a feminist critique of patriarchy.”⁹⁸ This translation process highlights the socially constructed nature of ethnography—as numerous voices intersect and are then shaped by the editorial hand of the anthropologist. Methodologically, I mirror Lavender’s process of comparing private field notes to the published texts the ethnographers created. However, I will move beyond Lavender’s focus on a feminist agenda for re-shaping and distilling Native voice. The lives and publications of Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988) and Gene Weltfish (1902–1980) display ulterior motives—outside of or in addition to feminism—for their ethnographic scholarship.

This chapter evaluates the construction of two distinctly different ethnographic texts: Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin’s *Tübatulabal Ethnography* (1941) and Gene Weltfish’s *The Lost Universe: Pawnee Life and Culture* (1964). Gene Weltfish and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin are in many respects a study of opposites: Weltfish used her fieldwork to critique American racism, sexism, and urban living, while Wheeler-Voegelin mimicked the scholarly process of anthropologist Alfred Kroeber in an effort to situate herself within an increasingly male-dominated academy of ethnographers. Both Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish, however, manipulated Native voice in order to achieve their personal goals.

Yet *Tübatulabal Ethnography* and *The Lost Universe* are not simply books on shelves. These ethnographic productions of knowledge would inform and were informed by two political careers. Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin are pertinent examples of twentieth-century female ethnographers who adapted their scholarly pursuits to political ends. Both engaged in

⁹⁸ The four anthropologists Lavender evaluated were Elsie Clews Parsons, Ruth Benedict, Gladys Reichard, and Ruth Underhill. See Lavender, *Scientists and Storytellers*, 2.

political discourses and activities, but in drastically different ways. Wheeler-Voegelin acted as a scholarly informant for numerous Indian Claims Commission cases in the nineteen fifties and sixties. Weltfish, in contrast, sought to advance a material feminist cause focused on liberating women from the isolation and economic disenfranchisement associated with postwar American consumerism and suburbanization.⁹⁹

I will evaluate the process of translation from field notes to published anthropological knowledge, thereby bearing witness to the dialectic between interviewee and anthropologist, between knowledge and power. This method helps to display the varied political consequences of anthropological constructions of Indian communities. As female scholars, Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish confronted their own struggles with professionalization. Both of their careers began in the economic doldrums of Depression-era America, a time when the state emphasized putting American men back to work. They both matured in their profession in the postwar era, a period characterized by the American woman's return to domesticity in suburban dwellings. Both women undermined postwar America's cultural norm by pursuing academic and activist work. Wheeler-Voegelin's and Weltfish's ethnographic work and political careers demonstrate the myriad ways in which anthropology can operate to both reinforce *and* undermine the colonial state.

Writing her way in: Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin and *Tübatalabal Ethnography*

In November 1933, Estefana Salazar (Tübatalabal) wrote to Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin discussing the status of Wheeler-Voegelin's Tübatalabal acquaintances and

⁹⁹ For a greater discussion of material feminism, see Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981).

interviewees.¹⁰⁰ Salazar painted a grim picture of Depression-era Tüatalabal country. Nestled in the Kern River Valley of California, Salazar recounted the stories of suicide, property loss, and economic hardships that plagued the fractured community. Despite the bleak tone of the letter, she closed, “Always love to Erminie.” This letter suggests a close relationship formed between Wheeler-Voegelin and her interviewees. Yet, outside of this personalized letter, Wheeler-Voegelin’s field notes leave little information about the friendships she may have maintained during her summers in the Kern River Valley.¹⁰¹

In the early twentieth-century, with the help of anthropologist Franz Boas, the study of culture took on a scientific tone as the study entered the university setting. As a result, masculine, emotionless analyses flooded ethnographic literature. In an effort to conform to the conventions of her field, Wheeler-Voegelin adopted a detached, sanitized tone when documenting the Tüatalabal. She used the scientific language of her field in an effort to write her way in to a profession that had become increasingly unreceptive to women. As discussed in the chapter on Ruth Underhill, Depression-era academic opportunities mirrored a larger trend towards hiring male workers within the American workforce. Women had historically found anthropology to be an open and welcoming discipline, yet as job opportunities dwindled men became the primary targets for employment. Underhill’s inability to find steady work in the nineteen thirties exemplified this larger trend of masculinization in academia. Wheeler-Voegelin, no doubt aware of this, conformed to the

¹⁰⁰ I use the term *interviewee* instead of the more common *informant* because the later associates closely with subversive or secret activities. The term *informant* gives the impression that Native Americans secretly disclosed private information about their tribe against the will of their larger community.

¹⁰¹ Salazar to Wheeler-Voegelin, November 1933, folder 365, box 40, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, 1934–1985, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois [hereafter Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, Newberry Library].

dry language of contemporary ethnographers in an effort to advance her career as an academician.¹⁰²

Wheeler-Voegelin was born in 1903 in northern California. She attended college at the University of California, graduating in 1923. She did not immediately pursue graduate work but instead married and moved to New Orleans. Her marriage quickly dissolved and she later returned to the University of California at Berkeley to pursue a Masters degree in Anthropology under the direction of Alfred Kroeber. A single mother at the time, Wheeler-Voegelin brought her daughter with her during her fieldwork among the Kiowa. At Berkeley she met and married Charles Voegelin, and from there they began a long partnership in the field. Charles would study linguistics of a community while Ermine contextualized the language with cultural information and folklore. In 1933 the Voegelins pursued their first joint research project in Tüatalabal country.¹⁰³

Wheeler-Voegelin employed a dry, scientific language in her Tüatalabal field notes. Alfred Kroeber, her Berkeley advisor, undoubtedly influenced Wheeler-Voegelin's note-taking method. Wheeler-Voegelin thought an emphasis on "facts" would distance her from scholarly squabbles and better ensure her place in the field. "If we restrict ourselves to discovering facts," she wrote in her field notes, "we are gathering data which are of solid value and whose value does not depend on or derive from their connection with some theoretical construction."¹⁰⁴ This emphasis on codification and fact collection reflected Kroeber's early method, which accentuated documenting information on specific cultural *traits*, rather than attempting to paint a larger, interconnected cultural picture. Kroeber

¹⁰² For a greater discussion of the masculinization of higher education in the nineteen twenties and thirties, see Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*.

¹⁰³ Helen Hornbeck Turner, "Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988), Founder of the American Society for Ethnohistory," *Ethnohistory* 38, no. 1 (winter 1991):60–65.

¹⁰⁴ Box 39, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, Newberry Library.

considered these traits, documented individually, to be an integral part of any cultural makeup. He asserted that there were a number of characteristic components of culture including social organization, religious practices, war, economic production, and art, among others.¹⁰⁵ Approaching these categories individually, Kroeber and his followers sought to localize and codify a people and their way of life—much as a biologist evaluates an animal’s distinctive traits. Wheeler-Voegelin’s dry summaries of Tübatlabal traits reflect this process of codification that initially filtered the perspectives of her indigenous interviewees.

Ten indigenous interviewees shared vital information with Wheeler-Voegelin, yet their worldviews are only vaguely discernible from her documentation. Wheeler-Voegelin distilled their comments and personalities into impersonal cultural traits, and used them exclusively as source material for her “fact” gathering. She placed their initials at the bottom of each summary of information. The chief collaborators included Steban Miranda and Frances Philips, both sixty-eight-year-old elders who could recall the earlier cultural makeup of the Tübatlabal. In the published text, Wheeler-Voegelin lists the remaining interviewees along with their blood quantum.¹⁰⁶

Wheeler-Voegelin filled her notebook with summaries of specific cultural traits, with the interviewee’s initials placed next to the information they provided. She used headers such as “Marriage,” or “Subsistence Patterns,” to denote the codification of Tübatlabal life within a distinctly Kroeberian framework. Rich in details about the processes that organized the early Tübatlabal, these sections notably lack stories, names, and change over time.

Additionally, she wrote most of her summaries in the third person, not as direct transcriptions

¹⁰⁵ Purnima Sinha and D. P. Sinha, “Alfred Louis Kroeber: His Contributions to Anthropological Theories,” *Anthropos* (1968/1969): 796.

¹⁰⁶ Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Tübatlabal Ethnography* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1938), 1.

of the interviewees' accounts. These categories reappeared numerous times in her notes, as she cross-referenced the interviewee's claims with other Tübatalabal perspectives.

Ultimately, Wheeler-Voegelin distilled the perspectives of Miranda, Salazar and other interviewees into singular units that fit her ethnographic agenda. Actual people become important only in her genealogical codification of the community members.¹⁰⁷

Although Wheeler-Voegelin may have seen her work as impartially recording “the truth,” neutral language carries political and intellectual implications. For example, the analyses of ethnobotany and topography that appeared throughout her notes reinforced, albeit indirectly, the Tübatalabal claim to the land. Numerous pages list plants and animals, such as jimsonweed and bears, which the Tübatalabal used for ceremonies and subsistence. Her interviewees also brought her into abandoned home sites and described to her the form and function of the sites before their abandonment. These experiences highlighted the animals, plants, and practices that rooted the Tübatalabal people to the Kern River Valley. Wheeler-Voegelin's written documentation of this information could assist the Tübatalabal in their claims to place.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, amidst the sanitized directives on how to make a moccasin, weave a basket, and prepare tobacco, some of Wheeler-Voegelin's language suggests her sentiments on particular issues. For example, she labeled her documentation of transvestites “Sexual Perverts/Deviants.”¹⁰⁹ According to another heading, she considered piercings and tattoos

¹⁰⁷ Twenty-nine genealogies appeared in the field notes. See box 1, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, Newberry Library. There is also a separate collection of Tübatalabal genealogies in the University of California, Berkley archives. It is important to consider the emphasis placed on codification and western perceptions of family construction involved in the ethnographic construction of genealogies. This highlights the western lens employed by Wheeler-Voegelin in her organization of the Tübatalabal community.

¹⁰⁸ Tübatalabal Notebooks, boxes 39–40, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, Newberry Library.

¹⁰⁹ Tübatalabal Notebooks, box 40, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Papers, Newberry Library.

“Deformations, Mutilations.” Although these headings reflected common non-Native perceptions of the time, they highlight her understated judgment of Tübatalabal customs.

Wheeler-Voegelin made one exception to these dry accounts, by transcribing the biography of Frances Philips. Philips, an elderly Tübatalabal woman, shared her life story with Wheeler-Voegelin. Philips came of age in the late nineteenth century and struggled to support her numerous children, while combating illness, drought, and colonization. Philips revealed the hardships her community faced as a result of non-Native occupation of the Kern River Valley. In stark contrast to Wheeler-Voegelin’s lists and charts, Philips recounts the murder of her husband at the hands of his friend, non-Native Howard Peterson. She also discusses her baptism into the Catholic faith. Violence, cultural and spiritual changes, and socio-economic hardship bleed through the pages of her account, giving humanness to an otherwise impersonal document.¹¹⁰

Wheeler-Voegelin’s field notes suggested that she also took an autobiographical sketch from Philips’s second husband, but it was not located with her notes. Philips’s account, however, suggests that Wheeler-Voegelin used her story to both integrate the separate cultural traits she documented and bring life to her static information. Yet Philips’s story also emphasizes the difficulties the Tübatalabal faced in the wake of non-Native encroachment. One such effect of colonialism was cultural mixing, a theme Wheeler-Voegelin ignored by focusing on the Tübatalabal past prior to colonization. Like many early twentieth-century anthropologists, Wheeler-Voegelin sought out elderly interviewees in an effort to recall a cultural past before colonialism—a method known as memory culture

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

methodology.¹¹¹ The introductory remarks in her published ethnography reinforce Wheeler-Voegelin's desire to seek out a Tübatalabal pre-contact past.

The University of California Press published *Tübatalabal Ethnography* in 1938. Wheeler-Voegelin's efforts to write her way into an academic profession are reinforced in her decision to seek out a university press and publish her notes using a "telegraphic" style. These two decisions emphasize how, unlike Underhill, Wheeler-Voegelin wrote for a small coterie of academicians, not the larger American public. Wheeler-Voegelin used "telegraphic" style in her publication, thereby shortening certain words, especially names, in an effort to "simplify" the language.¹¹² Initials replace the names of interviewees, and they rest outside the text, as a type of ethnographic citation. She provided no background on the interviewees except Philip's autobiography. Instead, Wheeler-Voegelin relegates Salazar, Miranda, and others to three-letter reference material.

Wheeler-Voegelin stated that her goal "was to obtain as complete a description as possible of the manner in which the 'old timers' had lived out their lives in this region."¹¹³ By observing the "old timers," Wheeler-Voegelin sought to excavate a cultural life that, in her own words, "[is] existent today only in the minds of certain elderly persons."¹¹⁴ Wheeler-Voegelin employed her field notes for two specific purposes. First, *Tübatalabal Ethnography* created a cultural map of the Tübatalabal past, and second, it placed its subjects within a Euro-American framework based on culture areas. Wheeler-Voegelin mapped the landscape that the Tübatalabal utilized and examined how their subsistence patterns came from both the

¹¹¹ Wheeler-Voegelin's (and Weltfish's) use of memory culture methodology uncovers the persistence of the "vanishing" Native American ideology. Historian Brian Dippie's seminal work on the subject ended in the New Deal era, a time in which, he argued, non-Natives began to celebrate and honor the existence of indigenous Americans. However, both Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish's work, conducted during that time, display an emphasis on a "lost" way of life. See Dippie, *The Vanishing American*.

¹¹² Wheeler-Voegelin, *Tübatalabal Ethnography*, 1.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Great Basin and “California” coastal areas, thus creating a “borderline” community that bridged two distinct culture regions.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, outside of Wheeler-Voegelin’s stated intentions, *Tübatalabal Ethnography*’s language reveals a tacit acceptance of Lewis Henry Morgan’s outdated evolutionary stage model. The evolutionary stage model first entered ethnographic thought in the mid-nineteenth century and posited that civilizations deemed primitive could, over time and through acculturation, develop into civilized cultures modeled after western societies. This framework created an ill-defined and highly interpretive scale used to measure the sophistication of a culture.¹¹⁶ Wheeler-Voegelin was quick to seek out a cultural past, but her repeated use of the word “simple” also highlights her subtle measurement of evolutionary status. For example, the introductory paragraphs of *Tübatalabal Ethnography* describe the Tübatalabal’s “structural simplicity.” When discussing the religious practices, Wheeler-Voegelin states that the “concept of a supreme deity [is] *lacking*,” as if a supreme deity was required in complex cultural formations. She also used the term *lacking* to identify their agricultural knowledge.¹¹⁷ Wheeler-Voegelin claims that the women’s decoration of jars provide “an interesting example, among a people with a comparatively simple culture, of artists playing with their technique.”¹¹⁸ Subtle judgments such as these illustrate the Euro-American lens that Wheeler-Voegelin employed to measure the complexity of Tübatalabal culture.

In her publication, Wheeler-Voegelin also made judgments about Tübatalabal social and political sophistication. While discussing the social organization of the Tübatalabal,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ For more information on Lewis Henry Morgan and the effects of his evolutionary stage model, see Hoxie, *A Final Promise*.

¹¹⁷ Wheeler-Voegelin, *Tübatalabal Ethnography*, 1.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1, 58, 60.

Wheeler-Voegelin states that they were organized into “tiny hamlet groups.” In another instance she suggests that they are “loosely organized bands.”¹¹⁹ These evaluations, emanating from a professional ethnographer, could have serious implications for a community that sought political autonomy. Scholars have discussed how Kroeber’s use of the term *tribelet* in reference to Northern California Natives hindered their attempts to gain federal recognition. By calling them “tribeleets,” Kroeber concluded that certain Native groups were less organized and politically autonomous than other, larger tribes. Kroeber also described communities such as the Muweka Ohlone as a collection of “bands,” which stifled their quest for federal recognition. Wheeler-Voegelin’s descriptions of the Tüatalabal as “bands” and “loosely organized” ultimately constructed an identity of the Tüatalabal that shaped non-Native perspectives of their community. As a result, the Tüatalabal continue to fight for federal recognition today.¹²⁰

In many respects, Wheeler-Voegelin sought to unearth a static representation of a past culture. In *Tüatalabal Ethnography*, she mentions only briefly the contemporary status of the Tüatalabal, otherwise sticking to the past Tüatalabal life.¹²¹ Therefore the ethnography was less an attempt to paint a picture of contemporary Tüatalabal life and needs, but instead a romantic voyage into a culture that had since “vanished.”

The purpose of *Tüatalabal Ethnography* was to detail the subsistence patterns and cultural traits that were but memories in the minds of Tüatalabal elders. Yet Wheeler-Voegelin held these cultural traits against an ideological baseline of tradition and simplicity.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 4, 41. Les W. Field discusses the negligible effects the term “bands” held in the process of acquiring federal recognition for Northern California indigenous communities. A “band” was considered by both academic anthropologists and federal officials to be a socio-cultural community with informal leadership. See Field, “Unacknowledged Tribes, Dangerous Knowledge.”

¹²⁰ See Kent Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: the Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 42.

¹²¹ Wheeler-Voegelin, *Tüatalabal Ethnography*, 11.

Wheeler-Voegelin concluded that the Tübatalabal were simultaneously simple and band-like, and therefore hindered their claims for federal recognition and autonomy. As a result, this seemingly academic publication, intended for ivory tower ethnographers of the early nineteen forties, could in many ways become a political commodity, utilized by the colonial state to delegitimize Tübatalabal claims to land and recognition.

In reality, the Tübatalabal had endured decades of non-Native encroachments and suffered the allotment of their communal land holdings during the later half of the nineteenth century. For the Tübatalabal, white encroachment brought with it violent conflicts in both the Owens and Kern River valleys. In 1863, as recounted by Frances Philips, white soldiers massacred the majority of Tübatalabal men in an event later titled the Kern River Massacre.¹²² Severe epidemics of measles and influenza swept the remaining populations in 1902 and 1918. As a result of the hardships they faced in the valley, many residents moved to the Tule River reservation to seek employment and economic support during the twentieth century. In 1955 the last hereditary chief died, but a council maintained the nation's identity. The Tübatalabal joined the Kawaiisu and Canebrake area Indians in forming the Kern Valley Indian Community, with a shared mission: to gain federal recognition.¹²³

In spite of *Tübatalabal Ethnography's* political implications, its publication aided Wheeler-Voegelin in her effort to write her way into an academic career. After her work in California among the Tübatalabal, Wheeler-Voegelin finished her doctoral degree in anthropology at Yale University. She was the first woman awarded a PhD in anthropology from Yale, a year after the publication of *Tübatalabal Ethnography*. In the nineteen forties

¹²² Barry Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 149.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 149. The Kern Valley Indian Community petitioned for recognition in 1979. California has a total of forty-three tribes that have petitioned for federal recognition and have yet to be recognized.

she conducted work among the tribes of the Upper Great Lakes Region. In 1943 the Voegelins relocated to Indiana and settled at Indiana University (IU) in the department of history, where Erminie taught the university's first ethnohistory course.¹²⁴ During her time at IU Ermine founded the American Society for Ethnohistory in 1954, and served as the first editor of the society's journal, *Ethnohistory*, until 1964.¹²⁵ In addition to her success in academic-oriented positions, Wheeler-Voegelin's work also took a political bend.

While Wheeler-Voegelin was at Indiana University, the federal government began shifting away from the New Deal program of tribal reorganization, and toward a policy of termination. Native American communities in the postwar era were concerned about the future of their nations amidst heavy budget cuts. In 1946 President Truman signed the Indian Claims Commission bill, effectively creating a tribunal to discuss land and reparation disputes between the federal government and indigenous nations. Native nations inundated the commission with claims; yet winning their case often came with a price. By the nineteen fifties, the American government had linked the claims commission to the disastrous policy of termination. House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed in 1953, introduced an aggressive Indian policy that intended to dispel the trust lands of American Indians, revoke their federal recognition status, and fully assimilate them into American society. The termination of federal recognition began on a tribe by tribe basis, and often became a stipulation in reparation agreements.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ All biographical information on Wheeler-Voegelin taken from Turner, "Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988)," 60–65.

¹²⁵ Turner, "Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988)," 63–65.

¹²⁶ For more information on the Indian Claims Commission, see Donald Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy 1945–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 25–31. For a background on the founding of the American Society for Ethnohistory, see the introduction to Connell-Szasz, ed. *Between Indian and White Worlds*.

A chief goal of the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) was to prove the “use and occupancy” of a tract of ceded land at the time a particular treaty was ratified. Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin worked on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice as a researcher attempting to prove or disprove Native American occupancy of specific land areas. Her anthropological reports sought an understanding of how the native groups structured their culture and subsistence patterns with a particular environment. The federal government funded Indiana University’s Great Lakes-Ohio Valley project to research these subjects for specific cases. Wheeler-Voegelin authored eight of the thirty-four reports on contested areas between 1956 and 1969. Her work made her an agent of the state whose research directly impacted the fate of reparations for tribes such as the Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa.¹²⁷

Much of the language in the ICC reports mirrored the sanitation of *Tübatalabal Ethnography*. For example, in 1972 an ICC finding concluded that the Citizen Band of Potawatomi Indians of Oklahoma—along with the Pottawatomie Tribe of Indians, the Prairie Band of Pottawatomie Indians, and the Hannahville Indian Community—were not allotted reparations for contested tracts of land in northern Illinois. One of the dockets submitted for this case was the co-authored “Anthropological Report on the Indian Occupancy of Royce Areas 77 . . . and Royce Area 78 . . .” by Wheeler-Voegelin and fellow ethnographer Emily J. Blasingham. The report deduced the use and occupancy of these tracts of land in the early nineteenth century. With heavy reliance on colonial sources from French missionaries, British militia, and later U.S. Army representatives, the documentation concluded, “all of Royce Area 77 [northwestern Illinois] was, during our final period of 1805-1816 an area *nonexclusively* used and occupied by several different Indian groups.” Furthermore, the

¹²⁷ Turner, “Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin (1903–1988),” 65.

occupancy for Royce Area 78 (northeastern Illinois) was “inconclusive.”¹²⁸ As a result of this analysis, the Potawatomi lost their battle for financial reparations.

Wheeler-Voegelin’s initial translation of Tübatalabal interviewees into dry, scientific prose, greatly informed her political work with the ICC. Wheeler-Voegelin first appropriated Tübatalabal cultural information in an effort to ensure her entrance into a male-dominated field. Her dry, detached rhetoric became a method she later harnessed in her reports for the ICC. Her Euro-American framework of ethnographic analysis shaped her initial conversations, summaries, and fact-finding encounters with Frances Philip, Esteban Salazar and Stefana Miranda. Her scientific reductionism and codification of traits slighted any effort at gleaning a Tübatalabal worldview, but paired well with the ICC’s desire for scientific objectivity.

For the Material Feminist Cause: Gene Weltfish and *The Lost Universe*

Gene Weltfish’s career as an activist and her publication of *The Lost Universe* offer a different perspective on the way in which twentieth-century women used ethnography to influence politics. Weltfish’s career is marked by advocacy for racial, sexual, and economic equality that highlight her determination to critique the state that attracted Wheeler-Voegelin. Weltfish was born in 1902 in the Lower East Side of New York. Her desire to break gender norms began at an early age, by attending male-oriented Jewish ceremonies with her father. Her father died when she was young, which forced her to hold various part-time jobs while attending Hunter College and later Barnard University.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin and Emily J. Blasingham, “Anthropological Report on the Indian Occupancy of Royce Areas 77 . . . and Royce Area 78 . . .” in *Indians of Western Illinois and Southwestern Wisconsin* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974) 194, 198. For the opinion of the Commission on the case of the *Potawatomi Citizens v. United States*, see the digitized Oklahoma State University files, Indian Claims Commission Decisions, p.187, vol. 27, at <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/icc/v27/v27toc.html>.

¹²⁹ Ruth E. Pathè, “Gene Weltfish” in *Women Anthropologists*, 372.

In her senior year at Barnard, Weltfish took a course from the popular scholar-teacher, Franz Boas. His teaching would greatly influence Weltfish's ethnographic career. Following graduation from Barnard in 1925, Weltfish enrolled in Columbia's graduate program in anthropology.¹³⁰ In 1929 she completed her dissertation on the development of basket weaving among Native groups, but did not receive her doctorate until 1950 due to the costs associated with publishing her work. She could not afford it, yet the university mandated that the dissertation be published. After completion of her dissertation, Weltfish received a Social Science Research Fellowship to continue fieldwork among the Siouan tribes and the Pawnee. As a result of her data collection, she curated numerous exhibitions at institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the Field Museum in Chicago.¹³¹

Weltfish was briefly married to a fellow ethnographer, Alexander Lesser, but she divorced him fifteen years later. Weltfish was a member of numerous organizations including the Women's International Democratic Federation (elected Vice President in 1945) and the Congress of American Women (elected President in 1946). She gave numerous lectures throughout the country that focused on providing a scientific rationale for racial equality, women's rights, and economic restructuring. In one year alone Weltfish presented over three hundred public lectures.¹³² This activist activity quickly caught the attention of the FBI, who began surveillance of her in the late 1940s. The FBI's records highlight their concern about Weltfish's involvement in the aforementioned organizations, and her co-authorship of a controversial pamphlet, titled "The Races of Mankind" (1943).

¹³⁰ Ibid., 373.

¹³¹ Ibid., 374.

¹³² Ibid., 376.

Yet before her name graced FBI records, Weltfish drove to Pawnee, Oklahoma, in the summer of 1935, to collect information on the Pawnee. Her two-year-old daughter, Ann, joined her in her expedition. Like Wheeler-Voegelin, Weltfish's approach to her fieldwork reflected her anthropological genealogy. Gene Weltfish's educational kinship traces back to Boas, the innovative and activist anthropologist of the early twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century Boas' work provided a topical breadth to anthropology that extended beyond biological and evolutionary concepts. Furthermore, he carried anthropology into the university setting and professionalized the discipline. In theory Boas rejected the evolutionary framework imposed by early anthropologists, and argued that a culture could only be understood in its limited cultural context, a concept later termed "cultural relativism."¹³³ Throwing off the notion of evolutionary progress, Boas and his students attempted to study each community within its own microcosm. But these microcosms were never free from outside influence, especially when they confronted colonizing and globalizing envoys. As a result, the purist tendencies of Boasian ethnology had trouble dealing with the realities of cross-cultural exchange. Boasian anthropologists tended to practice "salvage anthropology" in an effort to preserve the last bit of "pure" cultures doomed to "vanish." As a Boasian anthropologist, Weltfish attempted to gain an insider's view of Pawnee culture. Yet, as implied by the title of her ethnography—*The Lost Universe*—Weltfish felt that many of the chief Pawnee cultural patterns were "lost" after the Pawnee were relocated to Indian Territory, in modern-day Oklahoma.¹³⁴ Her method

¹³³ Jerry D. Moore, *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 1997), 40.

¹³⁴ Gene Weltfish, *The Lost Universe: Pawnee Life and Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), xi.

reflected this sentiment. Her field notes emphasize how she relied on the memories of her interviewee, Mark Evarts, in an attempt to capture a past that was reputedly less acculturated.

At the time they met, Evarts had suffered the loss of his wife, child, and home. Weltfish chose to have Evarts recall the year 1867 because the Pawnee were then living on the Nebraska plains and the federal government had not yet moved them to their reservation in Indian Territory.¹³⁵ Weltfish mentions in her published ethnography that Evarts, as an elderly tribal member, provided important information on Pawnee life at the Nebraska reservation where, according to Weltfish, “Pawnee culture was still very much an integral polity and way of life.”¹³⁶ Evarts grew up on the reservation in Nebraska from 1861 to 1875, when he moved to Indian Territory. He recounted his story as a member of an intricate web of kinship and responsibility by infusing his narratives with place names and people. While Weltfish dutifully recorded his accounts, Evarts was also practicing his own ethnography of Euro-American culture. Weltfish described their interaction as a lively conversation, rather than a one-sided interview. “[M]any of his questions concerned the white culture and its values,” she wrote.¹³⁷ Evarts evidently saw the value in collecting his own ethnographic data on the life ways of a culture that was increasingly imposing itself upon the Pawnee nation.

The Pawnee field notes begin when Evarts introduces Weltfish to his kin. Their names, followed by a brief story, placed Evarts within a system of people who would continue to have significant roles in his stories. Unlike Wheeler-Voegelin’s genealogies, Evarts spun his own web of relationships as a part of Pawnee custom, not scientific codification. Evarts’s control of the conversation allowed Pawnee men and women to come alive in Weltfish’s

¹³⁵ Box 1, Gene Weltfish Pawnee Field Notes, 1935, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois [hereafter Weltfish Pawnee Field Notes, Newberry Library].

¹³⁶ Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, x.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, x.

notes. For example, Clear Day, a wife of Old Bull, was a “lively woman” who “always like[sic] to gamble.”¹³⁸ Meanwhile, Old-Lady-Grieves-the-Enemy, according to Evarts, “talks like man” and could “say anything, she didn’t care.” This was possible because Old-Lady-Grieves-the-Enemy went out to fight an invading Sioux band while the rest of the community hid in their homes. In Evert’s words:

She took some soot off the brass kettle and smeared it across her face, meaning she would do anything, not care about danger. Then she twisted all her hair onto the front right side into a knot, put on a gee string and with a war club in her hand went to face them, saying, “We’ve got to do something, you men sitting here doing nothing!”¹³⁹

In Weltfish’s notes, women and men alike breathe life into the Pawnee culture. Through these stories, Evarts conveys Pawnee perspectives more easily discerned than Wheeler-Voegelin’s accounts of the Tübatalabal.

Evarts was diligent in providing perspectives of both males and females within the community, and in Weltfish’s summaries of his material, she seemed focused on the social construction of gender in the community. She highlighted gendered divisions at dinner table conversations, while playing games, and when organizing ceremonial responsibilities. When discussing Pawnee hunting excursions, Weltfish divided Evarts’s accounts by gender. She documented the role of men in attaining food and also women’s work in food preparation and storage.¹⁴⁰ As Evarts and Weltfish conversed, the information that Weltfish recorded in her notes speaks to her emphasis on community interdependence.

Furthermore, Evarts and Weltfish did not shy away from detailing practices and world outlooks considered unconventional in interwar America. Evarts discusses another story of a chief who wed a prostitute, who engaged in hard work to prove herself to the

¹³⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁹ Box 1, Weltfish Pawnee Field Notes, Newberry Library, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 22.

community. Furthermore, Weltfish documented candidly Evarts's perspective on abortion and adultery. "February is called bastard month" wrote Weltfish, "because in the cold climate of Nebraska . . . one always found many fetuses about, as a result of 'miscarriage' or abortions."¹⁴¹ Weltfish addressed such issues in an effort to glean an alternative worldview. Yet, instead of organizing everything under rigid cultural traits like Wheeler-Voegelin, Weltfish arranged her notes chronologically. In doing so, Weltfish employed a western framework of time, yet allowed Evarts's narratives and opinions to bleed through the text.

The Pawnee notes, however, would be transformed during the publishing process. Unlike Wheeler-Voegelin's *Tubatalabal Ethnography*, Weltfish's Pawnee work was not published for almost thirty years. In the years between her fieldwork and publication, Weltfish spoke out on racial and sexual equality, and sought to build a blueprint for more open and communal urban environments. She paired her activism with a teaching position at Columbia University. Her experience as a female scholar-activist highlights the persecution of Cold War containment politics, and the struggles she faced as a woman with a strong stance on equality. Her political career during that time would greatly influence her activist agenda within *The Lost Universe*.

In the fall of 1935, Boas invited Weltfish to teach in the graduate program of anthropology at Columbia University. She taught basic courses in linguistics and ethnology, but also developed a course on race relations—a subject dear to her. With the outbreak of World War II, many Columbia faculty members moved to Washington, D.C. to assist the government in the War Department. Weltfish remained at Columbia, but between 1943 and 1944 she co-authored three pamphlets for domestic circulation. These pamphlets discussed

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 115.

race issues.¹⁴² In 1945 she published an article titled “American Racism: Japan’s Secret Weapon” in the *Far Eastern Survey*. In the article Weltfish pressured Americans to confront the hypocrisy of wartime propaganda that promoted violence against Nazi racism, while racism festered in the American South. According to Weltfish, the Japanese drew on this duplicity to spread anti-American propaganda throughout Asia. The threat of such efforts, she reasoned, could bring about another world war. Ending American racism, she wrote, was the first job of Americans who sought peace.¹⁴³

Yet the most controversial of Weltfish’s publications was her co-authored pamphlet, titled “The Races of Mankind.” Gene Weltfish co-authored this essay with a fellow female Boasian ethnographer, Ruth Benedict. According to Weltfish, “The pamphlet was originally written at the request of the U.S.O. for distribution to the men in the armed forces, who had to fight side by side with allies such as the Huks and the Philippines[sic] . . . ‘The Races of Mankind’ was used, not only for orientation by the army, but in the de-Nazification program in Germany after the war.”¹⁴⁴ The pamphlet demonstrates that the differences between racial groups were a result of cultural and class differences, not biology. Government officials initially intended “The Races of Mankind” to act as an informative pamphlet for military personnel fighting in World War II. Yet, in 1944, the chair of the congressional House Military Affairs Committee, Kentuckian Andrew J. May, prohibited its distribution to the army because of its strong activist stance and information that cited instances where northern blacks outscored southern whites in intelligence examinations (the information on the southern whites was polled from Kentucky, which undoubtedly hit a nerve with May).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Pathè, “Gene Weltfish,” 376.

¹⁴³ Gene Weltfish, “American Racism: Japan’s Secret Weapon,” *Far Eastern Survey* 14, no. 17 (1945): 233–37.

¹⁴⁴ Gene Weltfish quoted in Pathè, “Gene Weltfish,” 375.

¹⁴⁵ Price, *Threatening Anthropology*, 110–14.

Despite the limited success of “The Races of Mankind” among government officials, the pamphlet later went on to sell nearly one million copies in the next decade, and was adapted as a comic book and a short film.

Evident in these publications is Weltfish’s commitment to racial, social, and economic equality. This activism, however, took place in a political climate that increasingly sought conformity and nationalism amidst the growing threat of communism. Her numerous public speeches and articles critiquing American discrimination ultimately brought her before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee for questioning in the fall of 1952, and before McCarthy’s Subcommittee on Investigations on April Fools Day, 1953.¹⁴⁶

In these meetings, state and federal officials questioned Weltfish about her affiliation with the Congress of American Women and the Women’s International Democratic Federation, organizations by then considered subversive. They inquired about her motivations behind the publication of “The Races of Mankind” and her purported affiliations with the Community Party.¹⁴⁷ In response Weltfish repeatedly invoked the Fifth Amendment and refused to answer any questions regarding her political or personal views. Although she was never prosecuted for these allegations, her political stance had significant effects on her academic career. University officials notified her of her job termination while she was in Washington, D.C. At one point Ruth Benedict, Weltfish’s colleague and co-author of “The Races of Mankind,” broke into a closed meeting of university administrators to insist that Weltfish retain her position and be offered tenure at Columbia—but to no avail.¹⁴⁸ On the cover of the *New York Times* in April 1952, the university defended their dismissal of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 126.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 127.

Weltfish, and claimed that it was not associated with her political affiliations.¹⁴⁹ Her activism clearly hindered her career, as institutions like Columbia University and the American Anthropology Association developed an isolationist and protectionist stance that left academics who faced government assaults without the resources needed to maintain their jobs and credibility. The Weltfish case exemplifies how university officials, fearing government intervention, shelved academic freedom in Cold War America.¹⁵⁰

Following her communist accusations Weltfish's *The Lost Universe* was published, but the book showed signs of her continued commitment to reforming American society—despite persecution. Weltfish lost her job at Colombia after seventeen years of teaching, and it would take her another nine years to find a professorship. Shortly after her dismissal, Weltfish began work at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln with a fellow Columbia graduate, John Champe. During that time she shuffled between New York City and Lincoln, often with her daughter in tow. Her experience as a single mother navigating postwar urban landscapes would have a profound effect on her publication of *The Lost Universe*. In 1958 she received a two-year grant from the Bollinger Foundation to work on her Pawnee notes recorded in 1935. The scholarship proved to be the financial launchpad for the development and publication of *The Lost Universe*. Three years later, Weltfish secured a tenure-track teaching position at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey, and continued work on her forthcoming publication.¹⁵¹

The Lost Universe, published in 1964, used the perspectives of Mark Evarts to advance another of Weltfish's concerns: material feminism. Historian Dolores Hayden grapples with the material feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in her work

¹⁴⁹ Will Lissner, "Colombia is Dropping Dr. Weltfish, Leftist," *New York Times*, 1 April 1953, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Price, *Threatening Anthropology*, 120.

¹⁵¹ Pathè, "Gene Weltfish," 378.

The Grand Domestic Revolution (1982). This movement, according to Hayden, had two main goals: (1) the economic remuneration for women's household unpaid labor, and (2) a complete transformation of the spatial design and material culture of American homes.¹⁵²

Weltfish, in *The Lost Universe*, continues the material feminist tradition by seeking a re-spatialization of American urban living. Her experience as a single mother in New York City influenced her desire to create domestic spaces that served working mothers and promoted communal living. Weltfish, unlike the material feminists discussed in Hayden's work, used the Pawnee as a model for the restructuring of urban America. Her unique, postwar take on material feminism is visible in her conclusions from *The Lost Universe*.

Weltfish states that the objective of her work is to “dispel some of our static preconceptions and open up new possibilities of change in our point of view about these early American settlers [Pawnee].”¹⁵³ For Weltfish, the “lost” universe of Pawnee life ways could be “regained” by using Pawnee culture to reform American urban families. Methodologically, Weltfish took Evarts's accounts and admittedly reorganized them, while also avoiding changing words “too radically.”¹⁵⁴ Some names and stories Evarts recounted were reduced to smaller summaries. For example, the Pawnee field notes discuss in detail the intimacies of exchange between Evarts and his grandmother, citing how she constantly fed him, played with him, and taught him to respect his elders. Weltfish translated stories of this relationship into the following generalization: “children slept in beds with their grandmothers and shared a bowl with them at meals.”¹⁵⁵ Such summaries highlight how Evart's stories fell

¹⁵² Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 1.

¹⁵³ Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, 9.

¹⁵⁴ The last chapter of the book is titled “The Universe Regained.” Ibid., xi.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

into the background, displaced by Weltfish's larger objective of advancing a postwar material feminism.

Weltfish used Evarts's accounts to critique the isolation of postwar urban living, a lifestyle she was no doubt familiar with during her time at Colombia. The American system of "controls," states Weltfish, relegated American families to an isolation where "sexes are thrown together in an incest-breeding welter of physical familiarity." Simultaneously, there is a demand, she states, "for personal detachment, so that we require intensive psychological reorganization to heal us from the ordeal of our childhood."¹⁵⁶ Such individuality, according to Weltfish, "could be costly if it does not have a flexible society within which to operate. It is our task to design such a society."¹⁵⁷ Her blueprint for redesigning postwar America drew on the dynamic kinship relationships and liberal social practices Weltfish constructed from "lost" Pawnee practices. Thus the Pawnee culture of 1867, recounted to her by Evarts, became a "control case" to observe an alternative model of a people who have "never been pressed into a mass mold."¹⁵⁸ She spoke of the Pawnee and American Indians in general, not as a separate community engaged in their own rights struggle in modern America, but instead as a people "furnished" to Americans to provide an alternative model of living.¹⁵⁹

Following this introduction, *The Lost Universe* jumps into a narrative-style account of Pawnee life in 1867. As a feminist anthropologist, Weltfish focuses on accounts of women shifting from parenting, to labor, and then courtship, in a society that used kin as a means to organize itself. She highlights the division of labor between men and women, but seeks to understand how a community built on mutual dependence and individual realization made for

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵⁷ Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, 59.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

a successful 1867. In her own words, this attempt at realization took place as follows: “he began his development as a disciplined and free man, or as a woman who felt her dignity and her independence to be inviolate.” As a result, the Pawnee women in particular, exercised “a kind of independence and decisiveness that was not becoming to a woman in our society.”¹⁶⁰

Similar to Wheeler-Voegelin, Weltfish skirts any discussion of the contemporary state of Pawnee people. In a review of her publication, University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax states that the little discussion of contemporary Pawnee life “seem[s] to say that today there is nothing but the annual Pow-Wow, with no explanation as to why.” According to Tax’s review, the idea that the Pawnee have disappeared speaks to the fact that “the Indian way comes filtered through the non-tribal mind of the author.”¹⁶¹ Weltfish defends her stance on the state of the Pawnee by stating they are “thoroughly integrated citizens of the present.”¹⁶² When referencing American colonialism, she simply writes that the Pawnee were “overwhelmed by time and events.”¹⁶³ The Pawnees, therefore, become a people and a way of life that had vanished. Contemporary Pawnees, according to Weltfish, became “integrated” American citizens who could also benefit from her blueprint for urban America. Written at the dusk of the termination era of federal Indian policy, Weltfish ascribed to the belief that Termination of federally recognized tribes could and would integrate American Indians into American society.

Weltfish’s *The Lost Universe* was an attempt to infuse meaning into a world that was growing increasingly mechanized, isolated, and stratified within the postwar economic boom. In her concluding chapter, titled “The Universe Regained,” Weltfish calls for a “greater

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶¹ Sol Tax, “Review of *The Lost Universe*,” *Ethnohistory* 14, no. 2 (1967): 85.

¹⁶² Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, 444–47.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 2.

mobility of the woman in all worlds,” and a liberation from apartment isolation.¹⁶⁴ Included in this chapter is an outline of what a “family oriented” apartment building would look like, equipped with a common room and floor host who would watch children and assist the tenants with household chores. Freeze-dried foods would replace those requiring time to cook, and the time saved would allow for more social activities and intellectual pursuits. To infuse a sense of pride in the American workforce, universities would treat both meatpacking and history as “intellectual challenges” instead of simply occupations.¹⁶⁵ All of these suggestions sought to free women from the isolation of the domestic space and allow them to grow intellectually and/or materially.

Weltfish utilized her professional position as a trained anthropologist in an effort to legitimize her calls for equality. In his work on the FBI’s surveillance of activist anthropologists, historian David H. Price points out that for many of these scientists, it was less their direct or indirect ties to communism that resulted in their persecution, and more their activist stances that threatened the conformity desired by government officials in Cold War America. Weltfish’s lengthy FBI records point to concerns about her appeals for social justice in developing nations, criticism of the Red Cross for separating blood by race, and articles appealing to Americans to dispel the racism that undermined the rhetoric of freedom.¹⁶⁶

Yet, while Weltfish faced persecution from her colleagues and the American government, she simultaneously dismissed the Pawnee’s struggle to avoid federal termination of their tribal status, and loss of land. Weltfish advocated for racial equality in America while neglecting the social, political, and economic needs of the Pawnee. In *The*

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 451.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 454–58.

¹⁶⁶ Weltfish, *The Lost Universe*, 118. See also Weltfish, “American Racism: Japan’s Secret Weapon,” 233–37.

Lost Universe, the Pawnee became a tool for Weltfish's critique of American cultural organization, and she missed an opportunity to assist the Pawnee in their own efforts for autonomy.

In reality, the Pawnee struggled after their relocation to Indian Territory. Unemployment and lack of services plagued the community. A 1972 survey stated that over fifty percent of the Pawnee population was unemployed. Unemployment forced many Pawnee to leave Oklahoma in search of work, fundamentally changing the demographic of the nation.¹⁶⁷ On July 14, 1950, the Pawnee nation filed suit in the Indian Claims Commission court requesting reparations for eight separate claims. The first five claims sought compensation for the thirty-three million acres of Pawnee land in central Nebraska and Kansas ceded to the United States in three treaties during the mid-nineteenth century. The last three claims concerned tracts of land in Oklahoma that the federal government sold without Pawnee consent.¹⁶⁸ The total claim called for over thirty million dollars of recovery compensation.¹⁶⁹ The Pawnee nation lost five out of the eight claims, because the commission could not "confirm" the use and occupancy of the land, especially in Nebraska and Kansas. The ICC handed down this decision two years before Weltfish appeared before the McCarthy committee.

Conclusion

In the summer months of the early 1930s, two female ethnographers entered two distinct indigenous communities, armed with two decidedly different ethnographic

¹⁶⁷ Alexander Lesser and Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *History, Evolution, and the Concept of Culture: Selected Papers by Alexander Lesser*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 125–26.

¹⁶⁸ *Pawnee Indian Tribe of Oklahoma v. The United States*, docket no. 10, 14 July 1950, see the digitized Oklahoma State University files, Indian Claims Commission Decisions, vol. 1, p. 230, online at <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/icc/v21/v21toc.html>.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

approaches. These divergent approaches materialized into drastically different field notes; which also shaped the ways in which these visitors appropriated and wove their Native interviewees' perspectives into written ethnographies.

As female ethnographers, both Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish approached their construction of indigenous society in different ways. As a student of Kroeber, Wheeler-Voegelin placed cultural traits into silos of summarization, which silenced the direct perspectives of her interviewees. Her inclusion of Frances Philip's autobiography provided a personalized antidote to her dry scientific prose. Philip emerges as the living element of Wheeler-Voegelin's analysis, infusing emotion into the culture of the Tüatalabal people from a female perspective. Meanwhile, Weltfish embraced the Boasian study of the microcosm, intentionally excavating stories and narrations from Evarts in order to distill a Pawnee worldview that, in her opinion, could liberate women from the "control" of American culture. Caught up in her material feminist agenda, Weltfish dismissed contemporary Pawnee issues, and instead relegated their culture to a distant—"lost"—past.

Despite the ethnographer's manipulations and motivations, the Native interviewees occasionally utilized their own ethnographic agenda in the field notes. For example, Evarts's ethnographic questioning of Weltfish displays his own effort to glean information about non-Native America. Additionally, Salazar and Miranda directed Wheeler-Voegelin to old homestead sties and local plants that directly linked their people to the Kern River Valley. Those efforts tied the Tüatalabal to place, and reinforced their claims to this particular land.

Their activities, however, do not to override the inherent distillation process that takes place in composing ethnographic field notes. Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin held the reigns of authorship, and therefore they re-interpreted indigenous perspectives. Wheeler-Voegelin

and Weltfish discounted Depression-era concerns of the Pawnee and Tüatalabal, focusing instead on an indigenous “past” that was, in their minds, less tarnished by the onslaught of non-Native Americans.

Despite these differences, Wheeler-Voegelin and Weltfish shared a desire to sidestep contemporary Native American issues and focus on salvaging—and for Wheeler-Voegelin codifying—a “past” cultural makeup. They both engage in memory culture ethnography, by seeking out elderly interviewees who could recall the cultural makeup of the community of years past. Evarts and Weltfish documented the theoretical year of 1867, when the Pawnee still migrated across Nebraska, and were not yet “tainted” by removal and allotment. Similarly, Wheeler-Voegelin attempted to glean information about subsistence patterns that had since then been partially supplanted by dry goods and American commodities. In their desire to find these pasts, they often minimized the indigenous communities’ present situation. Their notes, however, would undergo another translation process, as native voices fell subject to the editorial hand of the anthropologist. In examining the published works based on these notes, this chapter reveals how another layer of reorganization, maintenance, and deletion would reshape these cross-cultural exchanges.

In their respective publications, Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin provide drastically different ethnographic analyses for different reasons: one intended to inform and continue ivory tower conversations, and the other sought to use the “lost” culture of the Pawnee to advance her material feminist blueprint for urban America. Despite this difference in motivation, both Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin subscribed to the salvage of an indigenous past, and subsequently avoided the contemporary issues of the Tüatalabal and Pawnee.

Both Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin constructed indigeneity to fit their own personal and political motivations. The interviewees, however, also constructed their own idea of indigeneity, ranging from Mark Evarts's stories to the Frances Philip's Tübatalabal plant descriptions. The interviewees' interpretations therefore complicate the existing literature that delineates strict ties between indigeneity, anthropology, and colonialism. Evarts and Philips used these ethnographic encounters to ask their own questions and tie them to place, thus using anthropology to decolonize and protect their people. Furthermore, constructions of culture can both adhere to *and* work against the forces of colonialism. In many respects Weltfish's work for racial equality sought the breakdown of American racial stratifications that furthered Cold War America's colonial, nationalistic order. Yet, she simultaneously disregarded any Pawnee claims to sovereignty. Similarly, Wheeler-Voegelin indirectly exposed Tübatalabal claims to the land by examining the plants, animals, and places that rooted them in the Kern River Valley. Later, her other ICC ethnographic works would provide information that both assisted and hindered Native American communities in re-claiming place. As anthropologists who navigated between the porous boundaries of Indian and American country, both Weltfish and Wheeler-Voegelin allied with *and* critiqued the colonialist American state. Therefore the practice of anthropology *and* anthropological publications contain a fluidity in application that complicates our understanding of the study's political role in the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 Beyond Fiction: Ella Deloria and the Politics of Cooperation

“I actually feel that I have a mission: To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people who have to deal with them.”
Ella Deloria to H.E. Beebe, 1952¹⁷⁰

Ella Deloria’s *Speaking of Indians* (1944) commenced with an intriguing quotation taken from *Western Star* (1898), a Pulitzer-prize winning poem about the American frontier. Deloria chose these words to begin her manifesto on Indian America:

They were neither yelling demon nor Noble Savage. They were a people.
They were a people, beginning—
With beliefs, Ornaments, language, fables, love of children . . .
And a scheme of life that worked.¹⁷¹

Stephen Vincent Benet, the non-Native author of *Western Star*, was a household name among the Christian, non-Native audience Deloria sought to inform. Deloria, also known as Anpetu Waste Win (Beautiful Day Woman), used the words of the famous poet to underline the shared humanity between Native and non-Native people. Moving beyond contemporary discussions of race and culture that plagued political (and especially anthropological) discourse in the mid-twentieth century, Deloria focused on the American Indian community as a people—a people with a rich cultural heritage, and a people not so different from their non-Native neighbors.

This chapter will explore Deloria’s contributions to the formation of a federal Indian policy based on cooperation and community building. While scholars have engaged with Deloria’s fiction writing, there has been little focus on her non-fiction work. Yet, as a researcher for the Phelps-Stokes project on the Navajo reservation in 1938, as a Farm

¹⁷⁰ Quote taken from Janet L. Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria and Mourning Dove: Writing for Cultures, Writing Against the Grain,” in *Women Writing Culture*, 134.

¹⁷¹ Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (1944, repr.; New York: Bison Books, 1998), cover page.

Security Administration agent with the Lumbee in North Carolina in 1940, and in her 1944 publication, *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria sought to influence political discourses on Indian policy. She joined political debates among missionaries, Native communities, and government officials, advocating for cooperation. Her politics of cooperation required a confrontation of the past in order to create a productive and inclusive future for Native and non-Native Americans. As a Native American, an “insider,” she sought to use her position to inform a largely non-Native audience about indigenous history. But, most importantly, she worked to address the present needs and future aspirations of Native people. As a woman and a Yankton Sioux anthropologist, Deloria focused on using history to inform a viable and productive Indian future. Similar to many Christian Indians who came before her, Deloria believed in the inevitable co-existence of Native and non-Native peoples and therefore sought to work within American society for change and reform.¹⁷² Unfortunately, as the following pages illustrate, Deloria’s language of cooperation found its way into the wrong hands. Termination advocates ultimately shaped notions of “cooperation” into a campaign to dissolve Native American tribal sovereignty and land claims.

Most Deloria scholarship focuses on literary analyses of her posthumously published novel, *Waterlily* (1988). Historians and literary scholars cite this work as Deloria’s true expression of her Dakota point of view, because it emphasized the importance of kinship and

¹⁷² Other well-documented Christian Indians include Sam Occom (Mohegan), Charles Eastman (Sioux), and Zitkala-Sa (Dakota). For information on Occom see Margaret Connell-Szasz, “Sam Occom: Mohegan as Spiritual Intermediary,” in *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* ed. Margaret Connell-Szasz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); and Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007). For information on Eastman and Zitkala-Sa, see Frederick Hoxie, *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001).

displayed a cultural resistance to colonialism.¹⁷³ One historian called the text “a woman-centered tribal recovery project.”¹⁷⁴ Scholars argue that this novel highlights Deloria’s decolonizing methodology, desire to revive an indigenous cultural past, and insider-outsider status as a Native anthropologist. Additionally, they argue that Deloria’s ruminations on American Indian history did not rest on the common assumption that American Indians were doomed to vanish. As literary scholar Rosanne Hoefel concluded in her study of African-American anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston and Deloria: “They [Deloria and Hurston] could discern the reflection in literature, folklore and art of a self-preserving response to the colonial and postcolonial world as active subjects of survival, not passive victims of an agenda embedded in theories of the disappeared.”¹⁷⁵ In other words Deloria did not endorse the idea that Native Americans would eventually disappear. As a twentieth-century Yankton Sioux woman, Deloria was herself a prime example of American Indian persistence.

This chapter delves more deeply into Deloria’s work with government agencies, large non-profits, and missionary organizations in the late 1930s and 40s. The Farm Security Administration, Phelps-Stokes Fund, and Friendship Press were all organizations concerned with the welfare and future of the American Indian people. Deloria’s association with these agencies placed her within important political enclaves that would ultimately shape Native

¹⁷³ Deloria’s *Waterlily* continues to be an important reference point for students of American Indian literature. For a discussion of *Waterlily* as it relates to kinship and colonization, see Conan Kmiecik, “‘A Little Less Than Perfect Happiness’: Ella Deloria’s *Waterlily* as a Paracolonial Production,” M.A. thesis, Winona State University, 2008; Mary Juline Couzelis, “Reconstructing Ethnic Identity American Indian Literary Nationalism in Ella Cara Deloria’s *Waterlily* and James Welch’s *Fools Crow*” (MA Thesis: University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2008); Patricia Mary Drunkenkiller, “The Writings of Ella Cara Deloria: Toward Revitalizing Culture and Language,” (MA Thesis Western Illinois University, 2008); Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*; Julian Rice, *Lakota Storytelling: Black Elk, Ella Deloria, and Frank Fool’s Crow* (New York: Lang, 1989) and *Deer Women and Elk Men: The Lakota Narratives of Ella Deloria* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); and Maria Eugenia Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez and the Poetics of Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

¹⁷⁴ Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 154.

¹⁷⁵ Rosanne Hoefel, “‘Different by Degree’: Ella Cara Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, and Franz Boas Contend with Race and Ethnicity,” *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (spring 2001):183.

American lives. Deloria did not limit her activism to fiction, but made a life out of advocating for a future Indian America based on cultural revival, cross-cultural exchange, and, above all, Native and non-Native cooperation. Deloria proposed alternatives to Indian policies that drew stark lines between missionaries, government officials, native people, and mainstream society. She thought that doing the most good for her people meant building bridges between all concerned parties.

Deloria was born in 1889 on the Yankton Indian reservation in South Dakota. She entered the world between two historic events that would greatly impact her Sioux community: the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.¹⁷⁶ These two tragic events displayed the power of American colonialism and the devastation it wrought on indigenous people. It was into this darkened landscape of colonialism that Deloria was born. Deloria was raised at Standing Rock, where her father, Phillip Deloria, served as an Episcopal minister. Deloria's parents furnished Ella with a western, Christian education. As a priest, her father undoubtedly held an important position in the community and worked with Native and non-Natives alike for the benefit of his congregation.¹⁷⁷ Reverend Deloria likely tapped church resources to bring services to the reservation. Historian Bonnie Sue Lewis details how, in the late-nineteenth century, Native ministers used the monetary wealth of Christian organizations to fund food, shelters, feasts, and schools for their community.¹⁷⁸ Also, Deloria's father likely mirrored other Native clergymen's attempts to blend Christianity with Sioux traditions in an effort create a syncretic spiritual culture that

¹⁷⁶ For more on the Allotment policy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Hoxie, *A Final Promise*; Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*; and Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Bonnie Sue Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), xiii, 86. For more on Deloria's family background, see "Vine V. Deloria Sr.," in *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900* ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

¹⁷⁸ Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians*, 155.

could navigate the modern American landscape. These Native ministers, Lewis contends, crafted a socio-spiritual middle ground in a world that increasingly appeared divided by assimilationists and traditionalists. For example, they incorporated kinship customs and band organization into their church organization.¹⁷⁹ Deloria, as the daughter of a Christian leader, witnessed the effect her father and his church affiliations had on the community.

As a Christian Indian, Deloria considered education the gateway of opportunity for Native youth. This is reflected in her own educational background, which began at Saint Elizabeth's, and also included the All Saints Indian Boarding School, Oberlin College, and finally, Columbia University's Teacher College. Deloria graduated from Columbia with a Bachelors of Science in 1915.¹⁸⁰ Throughout her life, she remained committed to providing Native students with similar educational opportunities—evident in her teaching stints at the All Saints Indian School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and St. Elizabeth's Mission in Wakpala, South Dakota. She also took brief summer graduate courses in education at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Kansas.¹⁸¹

Unlike the other scholars discussed in this project, Deloria never attained a doctorate. As a woman, however, she experienced the same difficulties of other female colleagues in finding steady, reliable work. Unlike Ruth Underhill, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, and Gene Weltfish, Deloria also dealt with the burden of confronting race-based discrimination. Furthermore, as a Yankton Sioux, Deloria had strict kinship obligations to her family that often made it difficult to balance kin and career. She was often in charge of her sickly sister and took care of her father when necessary, hindering her from taking additional

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 46.

¹⁸¹ Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 46; and Ella Deloria, "Resume," Ella C. Deloria Project, Dakota Indian Foundation, Chamberlain, South Dakota. Online at http://zia.aisri.indiana.edu/deloria_archive/index.php [hereafter Deloria Project, DIF].

coursework or jobs that would keep her away from her family. In a letter to her mentor, anthropologist Franz Boas, Deloria reiterated the cultural differences that kept her from graduate work, stating, “I know white people leave their parents and go off, but we are not trained that way.”¹⁸² Yet she recognized the power that a degree held: “I suppose I should have enrolled and taken a bit at a time, so as to have a degree after my name—it counts for so much,” she wrote to Boas in 1935, “But I could never quite make it with all the demands upon me. If I had that, I think it might have been easier for someone to finance my work.”¹⁸³

Deloria met Boas at Columbia. He was immediately impressed with her linguistic skills. Deloria knew both Yankton and Dakota dialects of Sioux, and Boas capitalized on her knowledge. He hired Deloria as a consultant to anthropology students at Columbia in 1914.¹⁸⁴ Initiated at Columbia, Boas and Deloria maintained correspondence until his death in 1942. It was at times a strained relationship, as Deloria repeatedly asked Boas for more work and money. Yet her connection to Boas gave her the opportunity to continue work on her passion—indigenous languages.¹⁸⁵ Throughout the 1930s, Deloria worked on Lakota, Teton, Yankton, and Lumbee dictionaries, and translated numerous documents, including George Bushotter’s *Lakota Texts*.¹⁸⁶ Boas’s small stipend allowed Deloria to continue this preservationist work.

Deloria’s commitment to language matched her loyalty to Christian-centered education. Throughout her life Deloria worked with missionaries, teaching at St. Elizabeth’s Missionary School in 1914 and All Saints School from 1915 to 1919. Deloria then left All

¹⁸² Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 4 October 1929, Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania [hereafter Boas Papers, APS].

¹⁸³ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 5 December 1935, Boas Papers, APS.

¹⁸⁴ Ella Deloria, “Resume,” Deloria Project, DIF.

¹⁸⁵ Deloria talks about recording Winnebago vocabulary “for fun.” Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 25 Aug 1935, Boas Papers, APS.

¹⁸⁶ Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 47.

Saints to assume a position as the National Health Education Secretary for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), a position she held until 1923.¹⁸⁷ Soon after she was employed at the Haskell Institute, one of the oldest federal Indian boarding schools. As a physical education teacher at Haskell, Deloria took an unconventional approach to her field and added pageants to her curriculum. In 1927 she produced a pageant titled "Indian Progress: Commemorating a Half Century of Endeavor among the Indians of North America." According to her nephew, Vine Deloria Jr., the play "demonstrated that Indians could adapt to the most rigorous (and nonsensical) requirements of white society."¹⁸⁸ The children wore buckskin costumes acquired from a curio store in Nebraska. The pageant was divided into four parts, and the sole character, "The Voice," narrated four different scenes, beginning with "The Old Life" when "the Grim God of Fear held constant sway." The old life is then juxtaposed with the entrance of Christianity, which "brings to the Indian the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity." Following the arrival of the missionaries, the pageant discusses the hardship of boarding schools, where Native children were "sent to spend long years in strange environments." The pageant ends with triumphant praise for Indian loyalty under the American flag. The production addressed the ability of Native Americans to adapt amidst hardship, Christianize, and become loyal American citizens. As much as the pageant reflected Deloria's desire to show the common nationality shared by Natives and non-Natives, it was also rife with propaganda, promoting both "faith" and "flag." Therefore the "Indian Progress" of the title reflected both Deloria's desire for cooperation

¹⁸⁷ "Ella Deloria," *Native American Woman: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Gretchen M. Bataille and Laurie Lisa (New York: Routledge, 2001), 90–91. Her contemporary, Charles Eastman (Sioux), also worked for the YMCA as a field agent.

¹⁸⁸ Vine Deloria Jr., introduction to Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, xiii.

and commonality, and the propaganda of Haskell Institute officials.¹⁸⁹ The government would later employ Deloria to use her skills in pageantry among the Lumbee.

More likely, as the pageant's patriotic tone suggests, Deloria worked to ensure that her students had the confidence and conviction to work within a modernizing world. A student of Deloria's, Esther Burnett Horne (Shoshone) praised Deloria and another Haskell teacher, Ruth Muskrat Bronson (Cherokee), for their teaching methods. "Ruth and Ella listened to us," she wrote, "They taught us that we could accomplish anything that we set our minds to." Yet, according to Horne, Bronson and Deloria approached their teaching with equal measures of optimism and skepticism. Horne recalled: "they also taught us not to believe that everything we learned was the truth. They pointed out biases in what we read and taught us how to disagree without being disagreeable. They taught us how to defend ourselves, as Indian people, without getting angry or defensive. This lesson has been invaluable to me throughout my life."¹⁹⁰ Horne reiterated Deloria's desire to protect Native children while also offering them the best amenities of a modern world. But Deloria's vision of Christian assimilation had its limits. In 1935 Deloria wrote to Boas that she was offered a position at a missionary school. She did not provide the details on the specific institution, but relayed to Boas that she hoped to find other work. "I didn't like it [the school] much," she wrote, because "it is the purpose of the school, to make standardized Americans out of the pupils as the best way out for them."¹⁹¹ Hard-line assimilation would never be part of Deloria's politics of cooperation.

¹⁸⁹ Ella Deloria, "Indian Progress: Commemorating a Half Century of Endeavor Among the Indians of North America," Deloria Project, DIF.

¹⁹⁰ Esther Burnett Horne and Sally McBeth, *Essie's Story: The Life and Legacy of a Shoshone Teacher* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 42.

¹⁹¹ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 25 August 1935, Boas Papers, APS.

The same cannot be said for Gustavus Elmer Emmanuel Lindquist (1886–1967), a non-Native missionary who oversaw the Protestant religious education program at Haskell while Deloria was there.¹⁹² Lindquist was at the beginning of his long career as an advocate for American Indian integration. As the field secretary of Indian work for the Protestant Homes Missions Council (HMC) and “missionary-at-large” at the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Indians and Others in North America (SPG), Lindquist became the leading advocate for American Indian assimilation and Christianization in the 1930s and 40s.¹⁹³ Lindquist co-founded the Roe Indian Institute with Henry Roe Cloud, a well-known Winnebago Christian. Yet Roe Cloud and Lindquist soon found themselves at odds in the early 1930s upon Congress’ appointment of Indian activist John Collier to Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Historian David Daily addresses the contentious battle between Lindquist and Collier over the future of American Indians. From the inception of Grant’s Peace Policy in 1869, to Collier’s appointment in 1933, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and missionaries worked together on a program for Indian assimilation and Christianization.¹⁹⁴ The BIA allowed missionaries to teach religious programs at federal Indian boarding schools (with Haskell as a prime example) and also granted Indian land to religious organizations in order to build churches or missionary schools like Deloria’s alma maters: All Saints and St. Elizabeth’s. Yet when Collier became Indian Commissioner in 1933, he challenged the missionary-BIA alliance as well as the vision of assimilation upon which it was based. Lindquist, an ardent

¹⁹² David Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade Against John Collier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 8.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ For more on the Grant Peace Policy, see Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*.

assimilationist, then used the support of the SPG and the HMC to contest Collier's patronage of Indian religious and cultural freedom.¹⁹⁵

Deloria, as a Christian Native, fell into the middle ground of this contentious debate on Indian policy. Deloria in many ways embodied historian Frederick Hoxie's description of Progressive Era Indians, "rather than embrace the idea that that tribal communities could return to the past or accept the invitation to abandon their heritage and take on the trappings of American civilization," Hoxie argues, they "defined a middle position between those extremes."¹⁹⁶ Many other scholars have highlighted Deloria's tendency to rest in middle grounds: between anthropologists and Native communities, between Native and non-Native America.¹⁹⁷ Yet they do not foreground her agency as a political actor. Deloria found herself in the midst of a heated political debate that would have profound effects on the future of Native America. Lindquist, especially in his book, *Handbook on Study of Indian Wardship* (1944), would lay the groundwork for the Termination policies of the 1950s.¹⁹⁸ In the same year Lindquist's *Handbook* was released, Deloria would publish her own blueprint for Native America's future: *Speaking of Indians*. In it, Deloria would outline her middle-ground alternative to total assimilation or cultural isolation.

Deloria stood somewhere between embracing Native tradition and relative isolation from American society (typified in the Collier Indian New Deal policies) and full-scale Americanization (evident in the activism of missionaries such as Lindquist). In her work with the Phelps-Stokes project, Farm Security Administration, and Friendship Press, she highlighted commonalities between missionaries and government officials, and charted a

¹⁹⁵ Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.*, 4–5.

¹⁹⁶ Hoxie, *Talking Back to Civilization*, 4.

¹⁹⁷ See Cotera, *Native Speakers*; and Julian Rice, *Lakota Storytelling*.

¹⁹⁸ Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.*, 9.

progressive agenda for American Indian futures. In *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria would urge cooperation between American Indian communities, government agents, and missionaries in the construction of an Indian future that would both celebrate tradition and embrace modernity and incorporation. Initially receptive to the Collier administration, Deloria wrote enthusiastically to Commissioner Collier in 1933 offering her assistance with any sort of governmental task. She had also contacted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in the hopes of attaining a government position. Government affiliates, however, left Deloria's appeals unanswered. She later wrote to Boas that she sensed she could not attain a position because, among non-Native government employees, she had a "reputation of being so educated!"¹⁹⁹

Deloria eventually found a position with a project that also encouraged missionaries, government officials, and Native communities to work together in addressing socio-economic needs of the Navajo. In 1938 the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a New York-based non-profit, hired Deloria to conduct research on the Navajo Reservation. The Phelps-Stokes Fund focused on African American and American Indian education, which had once included generous donations to the Roe Cloud Institute. Now the organization turned its attention to the growing rift between missionaries and government officials, and to the needs of the Navajo nation. By 1938, the Navajo had already become the controversial centerpiece of the Commissioner John Collier's Indian New Deal. Commissioner Collier's divisive stock-reduction program had caused the Navajo to reject the Indian Reorganization Act, the cornerstone legislation of the Indian New Deal. Collier recognized that the future of his

¹⁹⁹ Deloria to Collier, 1933, John Collier Papers, 1922–1968, microfilm, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; and Deloria to Boas, n.d. 1938, Boas Papers, APS.

policies rested on remedying the socio-economic strife that plagued the community.²⁰⁰ As a result, the BIA remained involved in and in contact with the Fund as they conducted their research. According to the report, “the Fund has always kept in very close touch with American Indian conditions through the U. S. Office of Indian Affairs.” Thomas Jesse Jones, the educational director of the Phelps-Stokes program, claimed that the purpose of the project “is to secure such a factual understanding of the conditions as is necessary to bring about the cooperation of all agencies—governmental and private, including of course the cooperation of the Indians and their organizations.”²⁰¹ In the introduction, Anson Phelps Stokes, the president of the fund, stated that the committee members frequently consulted government officials, and representatives of missionary and Indian welfare agencies. The Home Missions Council, Lindquist’s primary organization of support, also contributed to the project.²⁰² The project therefore, sought to incorporate two increasingly polarizing agencies into their reformist agenda.

Deloria wrote to Boas upon accepting the position, stating that the project appeared “interesting,” and expressed her gratitude at having found a steady paycheck for more than a few months.²⁰³ The final report was published in 1939, titled *The Navajo Indian Problem*. According to the report, the “primary purpose has been to secure such an understanding of conditions on the Navajo reservation as to help bring about the cooperation of all agencies—government, missions, philanthropists, and, most of all, the Indians themselves.”²⁰⁴ Deloria,

²⁰⁰ For more on the Navajo and the Indian New Deal, see Parman, *The Navajos and the New Deal*; White, *The Roots of Dependency*; and Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*.

²⁰¹ Thomas Jesse Jones, “Plans for the Study of the Navajo Reservation,” folder 10, box 47, Phelps-Stokes Fund Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York City.

²⁰² Report, x-xi. Quote xi.

²⁰³ Deloria to Boas, 23 January 1939, Boas Papers, APS.

²⁰⁴ *The Navajo Indian Problem* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1939), ix.

in her role as a researcher for the project, had strongly advocated for such cooperation at a time when the government and missionary organizations remained bitter foes.

Deloria's voice, however, was ciphered out of the final publication. Phelps-Stokes officials distilled the investigators' individual findings and opinions into a dry, "scientific" language so as to, in Jones's words, create a document "without any appearance of an investigation committee seeking to establish praise or blame."²⁰⁵ This dedication to "facts" mirrored a larger trend in print culture of claiming objectivity in order to avoid controversy.²⁰⁶

Yet Deloria, as a Native person, also served to legitimate the project. The introduction highlights the cooperation of Deloria, who, as a Native, "guaranteed that the interpretations and views of the Indians are sincerely recognized in the conclusions presented."²⁰⁷ Clearly the committee's organizers thought Deloria would validate the project's findings. Deloria joined other staff members including Thomas Jesse Jones, Harold B. Allen, President of the National Farm School, and Charles T. Loram, chairman of Yale University's Department of Race Relations in their alleged "fact-finding" mission. According to the published report, Jones tasked Deloria with speaking to Navajo women and studying tribal customs.²⁰⁸ The fund covered \$400 worth of her travel expenses in the spring of 1938.²⁰⁹

The final report, *The Navajo Indian Problem*, addresses all aspects of Navajo life and the relationship of missionaries and government officials to the Navajo people. Specific

²⁰⁵ Jones, "Plans for the Study of the Navajo Reservation."

²⁰⁶ A later *New York Times* article announcing Deloria's *Speaking of Indians* publication praised her work based on the idea that the book addressed Natives "not controversially, but factually." "Religious Books Recently Published," 21 October 1944, *New York Times*.

²⁰⁷ *Navajo Indian Problem*, i.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰⁹ Expenses sheet, folder 7, box 47, Phelps-Stokes Fund, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York City.

chapters are dedicated to the role of the government and missionaries in Navajo life.²¹⁰ The report stated that the older Allotment polices had been “too great an attempt to impose modern American civilization on the Indians,” and that the Indian New Deal programs appear “inclined to retard the progress of a people.”²¹¹ A (thinly) veiled criticism of the Collier administration cited the “rapidity” of the new approaches in Indian policy.²¹² The report claimed that the brief amount of time allotted for policy implementation left “both Indians and many friends of the Indians . . . confused and often resentful.”²¹³ To ameliorate the injurious effect of both polices, the report suggested more advisory committees on the reservation level, and the hiring of more Natives into the Indian Service. The report, however, singled out missionaries for their well-funded initiatives on the reservation. According to the report, Christian organizations spent about \$350,000 annually on Navajo services.²¹⁴ Considering their effort in health services and education, the report posited, missionary organizations should continue to expand and funnel money onto the reservation. Christian “friends of the Indian,” however, should avoid being “overly evangelistic.”²¹⁵

Along with its goal of assisting both the government and Christian organizations in their work with the Navajo, the report also addressed the contentious relationship between the two associations, typified by the Collier-Lindquist battle. Missionaries, the report states, were confounded by government support of Indian religious freedom. Nonetheless, the Navajo appeared confused at their role within a supposed “Indian Renaissance” promoted by Indian New Deal officials. And even more confusing, the report outlines places where

²¹⁰ Chapter three is titled “Administration,” Chapter four, “Missionaries and the Navajos.” The conclusion of the report also has separate discussions for administrators and missionaries. See *Navajo Indian Problem*.

²¹¹ *Navajo Indian Problem*, 27–28.

²¹² *Navajo Indian Problem*, 28.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

Commissioner Collier supported missionary activities despite his call for Native American religious freedom. *The Navajo Indian Problem* concludes, without much evidence, that “remarkable progress has been made in the development of cooperative relationships between the Government and missions on the Navajo reservation.”²¹⁶ In sum, *The Navajo Indian Problem* foregrounded the missionaries’ and government officials’ common concern for Indian welfare in an effort to build a cooperative strategy for Indian policy.

The chapter titled “Health, Hogan, Heritage” perhaps best summarizes the outlook of the Phelps-Stokes project. On one hand the report respected the importance of the hogan as a home, yet it still retained certain racist assumptions, for example, arguing that as a one-room structure the hogan was “conducive to a laxness in morals.” The solution according to the report? Keep the Hogan, but give it a modern twist in order to promote health and morality. The report suggested that the hogan be equipped with some modern amenities such as screens, wooden floors, and homemade furniture.²¹⁷ With cooperation, the study asserted, the Navajos could have the best of what tradition and modern advancements had to offer. In the report’s words, “A balance between the indigenous culture and that of the modern world must be found.”²¹⁸ *The Navajo Indian Problem*, partly authored by Deloria, became a political blueprint for reform on the Navajo reservation that promoted a plan to join missionary reformers, government agents, and the Navajo people into a cooperative move toward modernization and Christianization, while maintaining a respect for Navajo culture and tradition.

Yet Deloria did not always embrace her brokering position within this political battlefield. She wrote to Boas in May 1939 about a potential opportunity to continue her

²¹⁶ *Navajo Indian Problem*, 107–110.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83–84.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

mediation between the Navajo and the government as a state-funded researcher. But she did not consider the job a worthwhile one, despite her financial need. “Why I think it is not a feasible job,” she explained, “is that it is like trying to conciliate and get cooperation from such a heartless monster of a machine, a Frankenstein, such an impersonal organ as the government, with no person responsible. I cannot see any chance of usefulness therefore.”²¹⁹ Clearly Deloria had strong doubts about working in an impersonal bureaucracy. Yet she accepted a short-term position with the Farm Security Administration (FSA), perhaps out of financial duress, or because she saw potential benefits for the Lumbee community. Perhaps, too, she hoped the FSA would be a less hide-bound bureaucracy than the BIA.

In July 1940, Deloria went to Washington, D.C., to interview for a temporary FSA position in North Carolina. Ruth Muskrat Bronson, her Cherokee colleague at the Haskell Institute, recommended Deloria for the position.²²⁰ Pointing to her previous experience, the FSA granted Deloria the job and she headed to North Carolina later that year. The FSA tasked Deloria with creating a pageant that would drum up popular press for the Lumbee community of North Carolina.²²¹

Historian Malinda Lowery has discussed the struggle of the Lumbee to assert their identity and cultural vision within the Jim Crow South. The Lumbee had sustained a drastic decline in their land base in the decades after 1900, mostly due to bank foreclosures and the federal government’s decision to drain swampland, which reduced many Lumbee to sharecropping.²²² The community also struggled to attain federal recognition in the Jim Crow South, where, according to historian Katherine Osburn, “the discourse of Indian blood

²¹⁹ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 21 May 1939, Boas Papers, APS.

²²⁰ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 18 July 1940, Boas Papers, APS.

²²¹ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 7 August 1940, Boas Papers, APS.

²²² Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), introduction, Kindle edition.

was the currency of this realm.”²²³ This “discourse of Indian blood,” Lowery reiterates, was often used to undermine Lumbee claims to indigeneity. The Indian New Deal, however, offered the tribe a new opportunity to petition for federal recognition. The Lumbee agreed to a FSA resettlement project in order to secure a communal land base that would distinguish them as a community. The Lumbee also underwent anthropometric exams under the direction of Dr. Carl Selzer, a physical anthropologist.²²⁴ Selzer attempted to determine the amount of Indian blood in a given person by testing for certain characteristics in his/her blood, and evaluating skin tone and hair qualities.²²⁵ The Lumbee hoped they would qualify as “half bloods” and then gain recognition, which would increase federal financial support to their community. Since the mixed-race Lumbee could not assert purity of blood, Deloria worked with them to revive the cultural characteristics that made the Lumbee a distinct community—a people.

Deloria, however, was concerned about the amount of cultural material she could find. “I doubt very much if I can find anything; the Washington Office doubts it too,” she wrote, “but quite consciously they want to me to produce something, imaginary if necessary, which will give these people a chance to cooperate on something that would draw attention to them in a better light than they have been in for sometime.”²²⁶ The FSA pageant Deloria crafted was geared toward a non-Native audience. As Lowery explains: “the pageant presented Indian identity as consumable, easily digestible for non-Indians. These stereotypes were a vision of Indianness that non-Indians felt they understood, and their lack of

²²³ As quoted in Lowery, *Lumbee Indians*, Kindle edition.

²²⁴ Lowery, *Lumbee Indians*, introduction, Kindle edition.

²²⁵ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 7 August 1940, Boas Papers, APS.

²²⁶ Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 7 August 1940, Boas Papers, APS.

authenticity played to non-Indian preferences.”²²⁷ The pageant, titled “The Life Story of a People,” carried equal doses of reality and propaganda.

Despite the non-Native audience, Deloria did not shy away from presenting the colonial realities facing the community. In the opening scene, the chorus chants, “Out of his notes, he weaves a tragic story.”²²⁸ In one scene a Lumbee grabs a gun and heads out to fight the “Yankees” in the Civil War. His friend explains that he cannot fight, retorting, “You can’t tote a gun, or vote, or fight, don’t you know that?” “Why?” the other responds. “ ‘Cause you are an Indian that’s why!”²²⁹ The play also confronts substance abuse issues and the community’s economic difficulties. Yet these dark realities butt up against an optimistic, propagandistic conclusion. As an employee in an FSA-funded program, Deloria hoped that the play might inspire the BIA to recognize the Lumbee. When discussing the Depression-era hardship the community faced, the pageant claims, “it was our government who came to our aid.” Additionally, “Our Indian people love our country, and are loyal to its government” the play concludes, “So with, love and loyalty to home, and country, and with gratitude to one God who places their fathers here, they are happy to press forward, to better and better days ahead.”²³⁰ Deloria, as an FSA employee, obviously had to curtail a certain amount of artistic and intellectual freedom in order to appease her employers, but as the only employee tasked with the pageant, she also had a significant amount of control over the project. Deloria hoped she could send a message to non-Natives about who the Lumbee were. In the opening lines, a “modern questor” asked the question plaguing non-Natives more than the Lumbees themselves: “Who are we?” “Where did our forefathers come from?” He follows these

²²⁷ Lowery, *Lumbee Indians*, chapter 6, Kindle edition.

²²⁸ Ella Deloria, “The Life Story of a People,” Deloria Project, DIF.

²²⁹ Deloria, “The Life Story of a People,” Deloria Project, DIF.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

queries with this emphatic statement: “We *do* know that they were descendents of an ancient Indian tribe, but just who were these people?”²³¹ The play tries to make sense of the Lumbee’s shared past in order to solidify their cultural sovereignty. “The Life Story of a People,” in sum, hoped that by sharing the Lumbee cultural past both non-Natives and the government officials responsible for recognition efforts would begin to understand Lumbee claims to indigeneity.

“The Lost Story of a People,” despite the fictional narrative, carried political intentions. Deloria and the Lumbee used the pageant to make claims to place and culture, acknowledging a dark history, while embracing cooperation and government support for the Lumbee’s future. Deloria later wrote that the pageant was successful and the community had raised three hundred dollars for a future pageant to be held in the town.²³² But the larger goal remained elusive. That “Frankenstein,” as Deloria once called the government, never granted the community federal recognition.

Deloria spent her free time in North Carolina compiling a Lumbee dictionary. She recognized the importance of language in claiming community and culture. She quizzed women on their slang words and names of local plants, hoping to resurrect their language. Deloria never completed the project, but she believed that the Lumbee language could be revived despite their long history of colonial confrontation.²³³

In the year following Deloria’s pageantry work with the Lumbee, the Home Missions Council (HMC), an organization of Christian ministries conducting work in the U.S., sought to address the “problem” of Indian wardship: a term that would become the decisive point of contention in the Collier-Lindquist affair. Lindquist believed that the wardship status of

²³¹ Ibid., 1.

²³² Ella Deloria to Franz Boas, 26 December 1940, APS.

²³³ Vine Deloria, introduction to Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, xvii.

American Indians was not conducive to their progress and incorporation into American society. Collier, although resistant to the term *ward*, advocated for federal assistance to Native communities. In response to this debate, the HMC invited representatives from philanthropic organizations, government agencies, and Christian groups to attempt to form a consensus, this time on the wardship issue. The HMC invited participants to form the Committee on the Study of Wardship and Indian Participation in American Life. Deloria joined Thomas Jesse Jones of the Phelps-Stokes Fund; Joseph C. McCaskill, a high-ranking BIA official; Fr. J.B. Tenny, director of the Catholic Bureau for the education of Indians; Dr. Ruth McMurray of Columbia's Teacher's college; and two representatives from the Indian Rights Association on the committee.²³⁴ The committee, however, was short lived, lasting only from 1942 to 1943.²³⁵

The committee did, however, support an influential publication. Soon after the committee's formation, it appointed Lindquist to produce a study on the wardship issue, "written from the angle of facts, unbiased by pronounced special views," and without a discussion of "controversial policies and points of view."²³⁶ In reality, the publication became a platform for Lindquist's attack on the BIA that was couched in political terms. In *Handbook on the Status of Indian Wardship*, Lindquist questioned the very existence of the BIA, and called on state and local governments to address the Indian problem. According to Lindquist, the federal government's "protection" of Natives left them vulnerable to exploitation and promoted socio-economic dependency, assertions that directly countered Collier's promises of Indian socio-economic self-determination. Published in 1944,

²³⁴ Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.*, 130.

²³⁵ Ibid., 130.

²³⁶ Quote from Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.*, 130.

Lindquist's written crusade against the Bureau became the intellectual foundation for the Termination policies of the 1950s.

Despite her participation on the committee that funded Lindquist's project, Deloria issued her own blueprint of Indian policy, which appeared simultaneously. Deloria's *Speaking of Indians* emerged in part as an alternative vision for the American Indian future. In her acknowledgements, Deloria states that she hoped to "set forth some problems, not always plain to outsiders, which beset the Indian people in their efforts to progress."²³⁷ *Speaking of Indians* begins by outlining the lengthy Indian past, delineating culture areas and language groups. She used her intimate knowledge of the Dakota to discuss the cultural sinews of the people, which were grounded in kinship relations. Part III then discussed the displacement resulting from colonialism and the reservation life of Native Americans. Part IV, the final section, addressed the "present crisis" of her people, with the final chapter providing her vision for "the new community." Her image for the future would involve closing the "wide gulf" that presently separated Indian communities from the outside world. Along with the problem of isolation, she contends, "is that [the problem] of re-education, this time for eventual qualification for full citizenship with all its duties and responsibilities as well as all its privileges."²³⁸ According to Deloria, past policies of overt paternalism and protection must give way to empowering Native communities to act for themselves and engage with American society as full citizens.

Her publisher, Friendship Press, was the official publishing company for the National Council of Churches (it continues in that capacity today). But in 1944 it offered a platform to Native women to share their perspectives on Indians in American society. Deloria's *Speaking*

²³⁷ Acknowledgements, Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*.

²³⁸ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 152.

of *Indians* and Ruth Bronson's Friendship Press publication, *Indians are People, Too* (1944), both sought to inform non-Natives about American Indian pasts, but also address their contemporary concerns. Deloria and Bronson geared their work toward the Friendship Press consumer—non-Native Christian Americans. Both authors drew parallels between Native and non-Native Americans. They addressed the humanity shared by both communities, and asserted the need for cooperation and increased cross-cultural exchange. Vine Deloria best summarizes his aunt's work in stating that, although the book heavily promoted the Christianization of American Indians, "hidden within the propaganda . . . is Ella's effort to describe the positive aspects of the Old Sioux culture and kinship."²³⁹

While Deloria's work addressed Native pasts, she employed indigenous history to inform and reform the present and future of Native Americans. As a member of a Native community, she used her ethnographic work to directly address contemporary Native needs unlike many of her non-Native peers in the field. In her own words, "All that which lies in the remote past is interesting, to be sure, but not so important as the present and future."²⁴⁰ *Speaking of Indians*, unlike her contribution to the Phelps-Stokes Fund's *The Navajo Indian Problem*, attracted a popular audience and was written solely by Deloria. Fifteen years after the book's publication, Deloria received a letter from a Benedictine missionary at Blue Cloud Abbey in South Dakota. He praised her work, emphasizing that she was "a wee bit too modest" in her assessment of its content, and "since many of our members [at the abbey] know little or nothing concerning Indians (coming from Indiana, etc.), your book did wonders to stir up in them the realization that there is an Indian culture and a way of thinking that must not only be respected but understood if they are going to be able to bring on their

²³⁹ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, xix.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

message to the different Indian tribes.”²⁴¹ Like Underhill, Deloria simplified ethnographic jargon and theories into a readable story that the American public could easily digest. She deployed a colloquial writing style, explaining terms such as Neolithic age and Mongoloid into simple definitions. Her goal was to inform non-Native Americans about indigenous people so they could find the cross-cultural footing that would benefit both communities as they moved forward.²⁴²

Similar to her work with the Phelps-Stokes project and the Lumbee pageant, Deloria did not shy away from confronting the harsh effects of conquest. In *Speaking of Indians*, she condemned the massacre of innocent women and children at Wounded Knee in 1890, along with the devastating federal Indian policies of Allotment and the boarding schools. Although some current scholars have admitted distaste for *Speaking of Indians*’s “conciliatory tone,” and Deloria’s desire “to avoid any hint of recrimination for the repressive history of U.S. public policy toward American Indian peoples,” Deloria does in fact confront some negative aspects, while employing conciliation and cooperation in an effort to bridge cross-cultural differences.²⁴³ “It came,” Deloria wrote of colonialism, “and without them asking for it—a totally different way of life, far-reaching in its influence, awful in its power, incessant in its demands.”²⁴⁴ Part of her politics of cooperation required a confrontation of the past in order to create a productive and inclusive future for Native and non-native Americans. “The Indian’s progress has been slow at times; but *there are reasons why*,” she concludes, “for the

²⁴¹ Frater Patrick Bennet to Deloria, 19 July 1959, Deloria Correspondence, Deloria Project, DIF.

²⁴² Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 2.

²⁴³ Janet L. Finn, “Ella Cara Deloria and Mourning Dove: Writing for Culture, Writing against the Grain,” in *Women Writing Culture*, ed. Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 141.

²⁴⁴ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 76.

American people need to understand *why*, so that they will not blame the people unduly, as if there were something congenitally wrong with them.”²⁴⁵

In *Speaking of Indians*, where Deloria held the reins of authorship, she was able to speak candidly about her vision for the future far more than she had been able to do in her co-authored and federally-funded publications. In her acknowledgements, she reiterates, “the widest latitude was allowed me,” in which she was able to “speak out freely from the Indian point of view.”²⁴⁶ She advocated for the dissolution of the socio-economic boundaries that separated Native from non-Native, and sought to build a non-Native understanding of the struggles contemporary indigenous communities faced.

Her discussion of economics in Indian Country offers an important example of her views on kinship in relation to economics. Existing scholarship has focused on the theme of kinship in her fictional literature, arguing that she used kinship as a means to exert a Dakota perspective and a decolonizing methodology.²⁴⁷ Yet Deloria also recognized the tenuous relationship between Dakota-based kinship and American capitalism. She argued that Native kinship structures were incongruent in a world that valued material wealth and individualism. In *Speaking of Indians*, Deloria contends, “kinship, once such a help in achieving economic security, is today a hindrance.”²⁴⁸ Capitalism’s emphasis on material wealth and saving crumbles when confronted with the kinship obligations of an indigenous community. Deloria could relate directly to this problem, having to, throughout her life, manage her work with assisting her family members.²⁴⁹ To better explain this issue, Deloria told the story of a

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 151.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., Acknowledgements.

²⁴⁷ See Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 49–59; and Rice, *Lakota Storytelling*.

²⁴⁸ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 120.

²⁴⁹ In future research it would be worthwhile to consider the gendered nature of Deloria’s kinship obligations. For example, to what extent did Deloria take care of her family because of her role as a women, versus the responsibilities of her male family members.

successful Dakota rancher who raised choice cattle for profit, but ended up leaving his work and spending all of his money on a feast when his mother-in-law died. This action, Deloria described, earned the dismay of his non-Native neighbors.²⁵⁰ Deloria told this story to reiterate why Native communities engaged differently with the capitalistic system thrust upon them. In her own life Deloria remained committed to kinship, often pushing aside work that disrupted obligations to her family. For Deloria, non-Natives needed to understand these commitments in order to better shape political and economic policies that would take this cultural trait into account.

Deloria's solutions to the economic difficulties facing the Native community began with the church, but also included the government and Native people. Her politics of cooperation are apparent in her desire to have both missionaries and the government working together with Native communities. "The Dakotas, and indeed all Indians need the churches," she wrote, "now as never before. May we never forget that."²⁵¹ Deloria, as devout Christian, advocated conversion and missionization. For Deloria, Christianity was tied to monies and educational opportunities that could assist in lifting Indian communities out of their economic doldrums. Yet she also contends that "of course they will need a lot of help: from the government."²⁵² To both government officials and missionaries, she argued for better schools on the reservation, and she also promoted off-reservation education opportunities. Deloria concludes: "In the interest of a whole race, it would be well if church and government could sit down together in their common concern for the Indian people.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 121.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 135.

²⁵² Ibid., 153.

Together, in understanding openly achieved, they would know better what they were all working for and be able to direct the people to a responsible goal.”²⁵³

Speaking of Indians hoped that a government-missionary consensus would advocate for more porous reservation boundaries. She advocated for the integration of Natives into American schools, so that they might be able to “talk the common language of America.”²⁵⁴ All forms of experience outside the reservation, she posited, could provide Natives with invaluable information on modern America that they could then use to rejuvenate their communities. She felt that the government had an obligation to her people to provide these types of opportunities.²⁵⁵ In the nineteen fifties the federal government did institute an urban relocation program that would assist Native Americans who sought to move to urban centers in order to find work. Yet government authorities linked Relocation initiatives with federal Termination policies, which sought to eradicate the land base and federal recognition of tribes.²⁵⁶ Terminationists folded Deloria’s promotion of permeable reservation boundaries into their discourse for assimilation, which ultimately advocated for the dissolution of those boundaries altogether.

On December 12, 1951, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dillon S. Myer, addressed the National Council of Churches on “The Needs of the American Indian.”²⁵⁷ The National Council of Churches, the same organization that had funded the publication of *Speaking of Indians*, listened as Myer described his vision for Cold War Indian policy. According to

²⁵³ Ibid., 161.

²⁵⁴ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 148.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 147–8.

²⁵⁶ For more information on the Termination and Relocation programs, see Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*; and Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*.

²⁵⁷ Myer was Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1950 to 1953. He had previously served as Director of the War Relocation Authority overseeing the Japanese interment programs. For more on Myer, see Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

historian Donald Fixico, the speech “emphasized the importance of a harmonious relationship between Indians and the federal government.” Using a language of cooperation that can be seen as similar to Deloria’s, Myer’s Indian policy platform began with two BIA programs, one that allocated funding to relocate Natives off the reservations, the other that supported industrial growth on reservation land. Yet this moderate loosening of reservation isolation quickly turned into full-scale attack on tribal status, which Deloria would not have supported. By 1952, Myer began touring reservations advocating a “total assimilation” policy. A year later, the House Concurrent Resolution 108, the cornerstone resolution of Termination, was passed.²⁵⁸

Although her language of cooperation and increased cross-cultural interaction found its way into the speeches and writings of Termination advocates, Deloria stands apart from Terminationists in that she believed that Indian communities, not the government or missionaries, should have exclusive direction over the American Indian future. Furthermore, although she endorsed what one historian calls “adaptive strategies” of Western education and Christianization, Deloria refused to forsake treaty rights and tribal self-determination.²⁵⁹ She concluded *Speaking of Indians* with a compelling metaphor that emphasized this perspective: “The Indian people—or any people—are a living plant. They must develop naturally, and, as they do, they drop off the lowest petals that have become dried up and useless and are hanging by a single fiber thread. Only the plant knows when to drop them in its development of ever better and fuller bloom at the top.”²⁶⁰

Deloria spent the rest of her life engaged in fieldwork among the Sioux, interspersed with brief stints of full-time work. From 1955 to 1961, she operated St. Elizabeth’s mission

²⁵⁸ Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, 66–68.

²⁵⁹ Daily, *Battle for the B.I.A.*, 5.

²⁶⁰ Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*, 160.

home in Wakpala, South Dakota. In 1961 she worked briefly at the W.H. Over Museum at the University of South Dakota, and also chaired a Commission on Indian Education.²⁶¹

While conducting fieldwork, she earned money from consulting, lecturing, and attaining small research grants. She translated numerous Dakota texts, and compiled a wealth of information on the Dakota. According to some ethnographers, Deloria's records remain the largest repositories of Dakota culture and language. In 1970, she suffered a stroke and died the following year from pneumonia in Wagner, South Dakota.²⁶²

Scholars have acknowledged Deloria's significant contributions to anthropology and fiction, as well as her devotion to Native cultural heritage. But an analysis of her nonfiction work displays a more tangible confrontation with modernization that many scholars have either overlooked or written off as overtly assimilationist. Deloria's vision for American Indians was not simply tied to a cultural past, but also incorporated and engaged with modern America. Deloria's nonfiction does not display a desire to break from the American system, but to work within it, selectively appropriating the best of its amenities for Native communities. She used her ethnographic training and Native status to advance her politics of cooperation, which addressed the past, celebrated indigenous cultural heritage, *and* sought to engage with mainstream American society. Despite her skepticism of the government, Deloria recognized the inevitable need for constructive interaction between the state, church organizations, and Native nations. As an educator and researcher, she envisioned a Native America that would incorporate both tradition and modernization. As a devout Christian, she believed in the power of faith to unite her people. Equal parts scholar and artist, Deloria deployed the written word in an effort to forge cross-cultural and political alliances to benefit

²⁶¹ Janet L. Finn, "Ella Cara Deloria and Mourning Dove: Writing for Cultures, Writing Against the Grain," in *Women Writing Culture*, 134.

²⁶² Bea Medicine, "Ella Cara Deloria," *Women Anthropologists*, 48.

Native communities. Unfortunately, in postwar America the politics endorsed by Native women largely fell on deaf ears. White, male Termination advocates simply co-opted Deloria's cooperative rhetoric to shroud the malign motivations behind their political platform. Despite Deloria's marginalization by Washington officials, however, it is important to understand her political viewpoint as a modern American Indian woman and a scholar. Not afraid to confront the past, give her opinion, and to employ propaganda as a persuasive tool, Deloria moved beyond fiction and provided a blueprint for American Indian success in the mid-twentieth century.

Conclusion
Designating Indian Authorities: The Politics of Anthropology in the Twentieth Century

“Women are indispensable to anthropology.”
 -Anthropologist Laura Thompson²⁶³

Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin died in 1988 as a well respected anthropologist and ethnohistorian. After her retirement from Indiana University in 1969, she moved to Great Falls, Virginia, to live with her daughter and son-in-law. She died nineteen years later of cardiac arrest. To this day, *Ethnohistory*, the academic journal Wheeler-Voegelin once edited, annually awards a prize for its best article, titled the Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin Prize.

Just a few years prior to her death in 1984, Ruth Murray Underhill visited the Mojave people to receive an award honoring her documentations of the community. She had continued her work and was also in the midst of collecting information on the peyote controversy, intending to publish an article in defense of the Native American Church’s use of the cactus.²⁶⁴ Surrounded by artifacts from her frequent visits to Indian Country, Ruth Murray Underhill died at one hundred and one in Denver, Colorado.

Two months before Gene Weltfish’s death, an MA student, Carol McBride, interviewed her. McBride recalled Weltfish’s curt responses at the prospect of re-living her past political controversies. “Don’t you think I’ve been chased enough,” she responded to McBride, “in this society I’ve been kicked in every corner.” Ending her angry rebuttal to McBride’s queries, Weltfish concluded, “my part is to tell people.”²⁶⁵ The FBI maintained a file on Weltfish until 1972. That same year she was forced into retirement at Farleigh Dickinson University, though she continued to teach and lecture until her death.

²⁶³ Quoted in Parezo, *Hidden Scholars*, 366.

²⁶⁴ See Underhill Collection, DMNS.

²⁶⁵ Interview excerpts taken from Price, *Threatening Anthropology*, 134.

Ella Deloria spent the final decade of her life in the Indian Country she was born into. She continued to compile Dakota texts and write until she suffered a stroke in 1970. She died the following year in Wagner, South Dakota. Deloria passed away two years after the publication of her nephew's intellectual "manifesto" on the Indian in America: Vine Deloria Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins*. At the time of her death, she had been working on a Lakota dictionary. She continued to travel to remote parts of the reservations until she passed, looking for elders who could recall the language and old customs of her people.²⁶⁶

Three of these women died in relative obscurity. Deloria had not published anything since 1944 and had been living in a motel in South Dakota for some time; Underhill lived alone in Denver, profiled briefly when the Mojave and Tohono O'odham people honored her scholarship; and Weltfish had been driven out of scholarly circles following her testimony before McCarthy's subcommittee. These women, however, had made significant contributions to the American political landscape, employing both colonizing and decolonizing lenses to frame their work.

As women, they all adapted to a professional world marred by sexism and racism. For some of them, their exclusion from the academy required them to find work with governmental or non-governmental political organizations. As a result of these affiliations, and their own personal politics, all of these women intervened in political debates of their time. For example, when Ruth Underhill ran out of funding for her research, she found work within the BIA assisting the director to the Department of Education. Gene Weltfish wrote pamphlets for the federal government in order to add to her low salary base as a lecturer at Columbia University, and Ella Deloria sought out employment with the FSA and Phelps-

²⁶⁶ Vine Deloria, Ella's nephew, recalls her final days in his introduction to her publication, *Speaking of Indians*, xviii–xvix.

Stokes fund when her research stipends from Boas ran out. Their adaptations, despite varying motivations and perspectives, brought them all into the orbit of the American state.

Underhill, Weltfish, Wheeler-Voegelin, and Deloria recognized the authority that accompanied a degree in anthropology and used their professional status as PhDs (or, in Deloria's case, her "insider" authority as a Native paired with her western education) to disseminate their ethnographies and political points of view. Yet several of these women's desire to reshape gender norms or attain certain positions in the academy or politics, led them to neglect the Native communities they collaborated with. Emulating Underhill, Weltfish, and Wheeler-Voegelin, many anthropologists chose to use their knowledge about American Indian communities to critique mainstream American gender norms, restructure postwar urban spaces, or show a coterie of male academicians the breadth of their knowledge. As a result, many ethnographers skirted the contemporary claims of Native communities to land and sovereignty. These cultural shape-shifters retained important markers of their own non-Native (or in Deloria's case, Native) point of view, despite attempting to speak the language and ingest the knowledge of another culture. Even Deloria, who labored to translate her Dakota perspective into digestible information for non-Natives, found her rhetoric of cooperation co-opted by Terminationists with drastically different political agendas.

These women's lives also display the pervasiveness of twentieth-century anthropologists in American politics. Weltfish, Wheeler-Voegelin, Underhill, and Deloria did not chart the typical career trajectory of an academician. Instead of publishing from within the confines of the academy, these women join a large population of historically under-analyzed anthropologists who directly engaged with American politics in the twentieth century. These women and their impact on political history are important to our

understanding of how scholars, and their studies of culture, can influence political decisions concerning U.S. imperialism, U.S.–Indian relations, women’s rights, and racial equality. In the culturally diverse United States, understanding a myriad of cultural backgrounds remains crucial to policy decisions that can relate to and assist a variety of Americans. Politicians today continue to grapple with how to create legislation that informs and benefits multiple cultural communities. Anthropology provides a vehicle for collecting information on a variety of cultures, and therefore it can be a powerful intellectual tool when applying policy across cultures. Based on the long list of anthropologists—including the women discussed in this project—who have been consulted by the federal government, both government and non-government political organizations have recognized anthropologists’ authoritative position on discussions of culture.

From the inception of the discipline, anthropology has had a longstanding relationship with the federal government. In the late nineteenth century, John Wesley Powell acted as the crucial surveyor of American Indians in the American West and director of the federal Bureau of Ethnology. The ethnographic ideologies of Lewis Henry Morgan and Alice Fletcher underpinned the Indian assimilation efforts of the late nineteenth century and encouraged the relocation of Native material goods to museums and archives. During the Indian New Deal, Commissioner Collier of the BIA employed anthropologists to survey the current socio-economic status of indigenous communities and directed them to promote Indian New Deal policy, acknowledging their important intellectual, albeit non-Native role as scholarly authorities on American Indians.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ See Lawrence Kelly, “Anthropology and Anthropologists in the Indian New Deal,” 10–20. See Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, for a discussion on anthropologists in the late nineteenth century. For more on Powell, see Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*

During World War II, federal agencies hired anthropologists to document wars abroad, write informational pamphlets, and monitor the Japanese Relocation camps.²⁶⁸ Scores of ethnographers also worked for the War Department in the mid-twentieth century, documenting the cultures the United States hoped to stamp out of existence. Others filed reports on behalf of Native communities in the Claims Commission, providing crucial textual evidence that would win financial gains for indigenous communities.²⁶⁹ At the same time, some of these scholars became targets of the federal government due to their engagement with activist organizations such as the Congress for American Women, National Congress of American Indians, and the Communist Party.²⁷⁰

In the postwar period, ethnographer Sol Tax would coin the “Action Anthropology” method, in which the traditional participant-observant relationship transformed into active engagement with the needs and requests of Native communities. In reality, Tax and many of his contemporaries simply popularized a method that had long been the silent and unobtrusive agenda of Native anthropologists such as Ella Deloria. Tax and other anthropologists participated in landmark events within twentieth-century American Indian history, finding themselves in the halls of the University of Chicago for the Chicago

(1954, repr.; New York: Penguin Books, 1992); and Donald Worster, *A River Running West: The Life of John Wesley Powell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁶⁸ Female anthropologists Rosalie Wax, Elizabeth Colson, and Tamie Tscuiyama worked in the WRA internment camps. See Katherine Spencer Halpern, “Women in Applied Anthropology in the Southwest: The Early Years,” *Hidden Scholars*, 189–201, especially 194. See also, Lawrence Kelly, “Anthropology and Anthropologists in the Indian New Deal.”

²⁶⁹ Anthropologist Gordon MacGregor thought that at least twenty anthropologists were employed by the Justice Department during the Claims Commission, with an equal number working on behalf of tribal governments. Florence Hawley Ellis and Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin were prominent female ethnographers working on within the commission. See, Halpern, *Women in Applied Anthropology*, ” *Hidden Scholars*, 196.

²⁷⁰ See Price, *Threatening Anthropology*, for a lengthy discussion activist anthropologists.

Conference in 1961 and in the courtrooms of Claims Commission cases throughout the postwar period.²⁷¹

These political affiliations tell us something about anthropologists' role as "Indian authorities" in the twentieth century. Beginning with the New Deal government's appointment of academics to government positions, scholars and intellectuals became increasingly important consultants in policy decisions throughout the twentieth century. Anthropologists, as "students" of the Indian, therefore acted as authorities on Indian cultures and socio-economic needs. Their status as scholarly experts on American Indians subsequently put them at the center of U.S.–Indian policy debates, replacing the missionaries and "Indian fighters" who directed Indian policy in the nineteenth century. This altered emphasis on consulting with professionalized anthropologists shifted power from missionaries and war heroes into the hands of scholars. Still absent or underrepresented in these conversations, however, were the subjects themselves—Native Americans.

Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, Gene Weltfish, Ruth Underhill, and Ella Deloria fit into this larger narrative of anthropology's engagement with the American state. Yet they also represent a coterie of female ethnologists still understudied by historians. The lives and publications of women such as Rosalie Wax, Bea Medicine, Zora Neale Hurston, Nancy O. Lurie, Florence Hawley Ellis, Cora Du Bois, and others, warrant similar studies on the ways in which these women shaped political landscapes during the twentieth century.²⁷² An analysis of their scholarship as products of knowledge with political implications, and their careers as state-employees or political activists reinforces the political nature of anthropology. Ultimately, these women used their studies of culture to engage with political

²⁷¹ Cobb, *Native Activism*, 31–48.

²⁷² Most of the women mentioned are only briefly addressed in the most comprehensive anthology on women anthropologists to date—Parezo's *Hidden Scholars*.

discourses on race, gender, and U.S.-Indian relations. Anthropology became a useful means to inform non-Native Americans, critique the American state, and provide political blueprints for the American future. Despite their marginalization, these women used their lives and their scholarship to act as covert (or overt) political agents during the twentieth century.

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