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“Two different kinds of life”:
A Cultural Analysis of Blackfeet Discourse

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Our purpose in this chapter is two-fold: we analyze a discursive practice used by Blackfeet people to say something about themselves; and in the process we offer a sort of primer in cultural discourse analysis. The materials for the former are drawn from Blackfeet (Amskapi Piikuni) people of northern Montana USA. As we examine these materials we will make explicit some of the concepts and procedures we use for cultural discourse analyses. By the end, we hope to contribute an understanding about a Blackfeet practice of communication as well as to introduce a perspective on discourse analysis, especially one based in cultural concepts, principles, and premises.

Introduction: By Way of Speaking

A leader of the Blackfeet (Amskapi Piikuni) nation, Chief Earl Old Person, who served as a Blackfeet Tribal Council Member for more than fifty years, was asked by an interviewer from Montana TV about his people, an indigenous group whose traditional homeland is in northern Montana USA. He measured his words carefully as he wanted both his tribal members and non-tribal listeners to understand something important to him and his people. In a reflective voice, he said:

- 1 Within the people today,
- 2 they uh, it's something that
- 3 they feel good about, to identify themselves as the Blackfeet.
- 4 This is our uh identity
- 5 and it goes way back.

As he discussed ways of living among Blackfeet people, he deemed it important to say a bit more about the point on line 3 about identity, specifically by mentioning what it involves today as an "Indian" way:

- 46 We have two different kinds of life.
- 47 We have our traditional way, our Indian way of life,
- 48 and then we enter into the, life today, modern way.

In brief, he reports that "the people today" "feel good" about being "Blackfeet": he points out that this "identity" as Blackfeet people "goes way back." About our "people today" he says that there are "two different kinds of life"; one is "our traditional way, our Indian way of life"; another is a "modern way," one which "we enter into." Chief Old Person's discourse invites a listener to understand Blackfeet people today accordingly, as those whose identity arises from a deep historical root and as those who have different ways of living, traditional Indian and modern ways.

Mr. Old Person is not alone in this sort of description of the Blackfeet today. Another prominent member of the Blackfeet tribe, Rising Wolf, was asked by an interviewer what people should know about Blackfeet people and culture. Without hesitation, his comments assumed a similar form. He began by saying this:

- 1 There's two different ways probably, you can go at it
- 2 One would be traditional, because I was raised by a traditional culture and language...
- 3 The other would be the more contemporary way, the assimilation, Christianity part of it...

Like Chief Earl Old Person, Rising Wolf points verbally to “two different ways...you can go at it,” one he calls “traditional,” the other, “contemporary.”

We begin hearing in these comments from these speakers a Blackfeet way of speaking about Blackfeet people. We will find that this way runs deep in its meanings about Blackfeet traditions and lives today. We will find also that these brief snippets of discourse are inextricably tied to a larger cultural discourse as well as to counter discourses. This discourse is being structured to address a universal dilemma: How do we change current circumstances for the better while also preserving the best of our tradition(s)? We call our way of exploring deeply meaningful language like this, such as the brief comments being made here and the larger discourses of which they are inextricably a part, cultural discourse analysis.

Cultural Discourse Analysis

Cultural discourse analysis is a complex investigative procedure which is designed to address these sorts of questions: what culturally distinctive practices of discourse do people use? How are these practices being produced, patterned, or structured in social scenes? What participants' meanings are being presumed, actively created and/or resisted through these discursive practices?

Responses to these questions are created through several specific modes, or procedures, of analysis, with each mode being designed to make a specific type of claim.

Above, we have fixed on the page some real examples of language as it is used in this case by Blackfeet speakers. An important first step, then, is a **descriptive mode of analysis**. This is a set of procedures designed to make claims of this form: X discourse actually occurred in this social situation in this way, or X language was actually used in this situated way. The descriptive phase of analysis is typically completed first and involves both a process of discovery, of some focal communication practice, followed by its careful documentation.

The discovery process draws to the analyst's attention some type of discourse that is indeed happening – as opposed to hypothetical examples - and typically involves a sense that this bit of discourse is culturally rich. For example, above we find comments like those being made by Chief Old Person and Rising Wolf; each is an actually occurring comment, with each being repeated, and each, we eventually find, dense in participants' meanings. In other words, we have discovered a discursive device, we find that it recurs or is patterned with each use being similar in some ways to the others and thus provides with the others evidence of a pattern. We add, also, a sense that the discourse is deemed significant and important to its users. We emphasize to begin, then, that the descriptive mode involves, first, discovering such a pattern, describing its social use, as well as transcribing it in an exacting way.

As for transcribing or documenting the social use of the pattern, analysts of cultural discourse often use specific components to offer a systematic description, drawing attention to the setting, participants, acts in sequence, key or tone, and instruments used in producing the discursive practice (Hymes, 1972). This theory of description provides an invaluable aid in documenting the details of the social situations in which the language was used.

The transcription offered above is a version of ethno-poetic transcription as previously introduced and used by many others (Hymes, 2003; see recently Cerulli, 2017; Webster & Kroskrity, 2013). This sort of transcription draws attention to several features in the discourse such as parallel structures of language, propositional content, rhetorical devices, dynamics of verse/stanza, as well as other stylized means for structuring content.

Returning to the instances of discourse above, we can characterize it as a way of “reporting culture” (see Carbaugh and Berry, 2017). We note in this Blackfeet case that the pattern involves at least these elements:

- A two-part, linguistic structure which symbolically juxtaposes two classes or cultural types of features;
- One class involves modern-life: “life today”; “modern way”; “contemporary way”; “Christianity”;
- A second involves traditional-life: an “Indian way”; “traditional culture and language”; “it goes way back”;
- This symbolic contrast activates cyclical conceptions of life and time (which we develop further below).

Regarding the latter, the two contrasting features of the cultural pattern activate indigenous conceptions of time along three inter-related cultural dimensions. At one end is the idea that our “traditional Indian way” goes “way back,” indeed to the beginning. This point on the continuum anchors, in one sense, a historical report about the way things were in the past (in the beginning, at time-1), linking “our Indian way of life” to an earlier time, deep into an ancestral past. However, the report is not simply a report about this earlier period of time, although it is partly that. A second dimension of time makes explicit that this past is active in historically-based ways of living today; this sort of practice is ongoing and a crucially important part of Blackfeet identity today. In fact, it can be actively used, as Old Person puts it, as “we enter into, the life today.” For example, in subsequent instances below we find traditional ways being practiced in order to “raise” at least some young people and children today (with time-1 knowledge into time-2 living). We will find also, as we explore this aspect of the discourse, below, that this “traditional Indian way” (from time-1) is further not only threatened today (at time-2), but too often lost. Yet there is also a bright light into the future (linking times 1 and 3). We will return to these important aspects of temporality below.

This way of reporting Blackfeet culture, then, involves agonistic discourse, or a layering of cultural terms, about two ways of life, traditional and modern ways; the report activates temporal dimensions of time, some of which are deeply rooted in traditional ways, some as ambiguously

related to today's practices, with some linked to a future where traditional ways will also continue Blackfeet ways (yet others may not). The pattern of discourse, therefore, exists in a symbolic juxtaposition of traditional and modern ways, along Blackfeet temporal dimensions that are deep and complex in their cultural meanings.

We have already introduced some findings from our second mode of analysis which consists in various **interpretive** procedures. These procedures are designed to create claims of this sort: X discourse activates these sorts of meanings to participants. In other words, when discourse is structured this way by participants, it has cultural meanings which can be known and explicated systematically by analysts.

One form of interpretive explication involves formulating what we call *cultural propositions*. These keep the analyst very close to the data by placing participants' terms, in quotes, into statements of belief, and/or value, which capture meanings that are significant and important to participants. To reiterate, the above corpus of data provides evidence of cultural propositions like the following: 1) Our "people today" "feel good" about "identify[ing] themselves as Blackfeet"; 2) Being Blackfeet is an "identity" that "goes way back"; 3) Blackfeet people have "two different kinds of life," "our traditional...Indian way" and a "modern" or "contemporary way."

This way of treating discursive data is a beginning phase of interpretive analysis, laying bases for further analyses which capture the semantic features that are active in the discourse of concern. A next interpretive phase can involve formulating statements of meaning at a higher level of abstraction. We call these statements *cultural premises*. For sake of illustration, relative to these data, we could formulate these cultural premises: Reports of Blackfeet identity involve symbolic contrasts between traditional and modern ways; these ways involve cyclical conceptions of time. In order to analyze precisely these additional meanings, in terms of our theory, we identify when a *discursive hub* is active, like Blackfeet identity here, then give special attention to *radiants of meaning* which may help grasp the deeper cultural meanings about identity in the discourse. The concepts of hub and meaning draw attention, respectively, to actual bits of discourse (i.e., a discursive hub) and the implicit cultural meanings members hear activated in that hub of discourse (i.e., the radiants of meanings). The radiants around a hub of identity like "Blackfeet identity," according to the theory, might involve meanings about action (what people can and should do, as such), feeling (what people can and should feel), and dwelling (what people understand to be the nature of things), with this symbolic identity also activating cultural conceptions of time (when is the concern of the people and practice).ⁱⁱ

Our point is this: Further interpretive analyses are needed to understand especially the cultural meanings in the discourse. We do so by formulating cultural propositions and premises being activated in the discourse, here through the symbolic contrasting terms, with this contrast being on the surface hub of identity, but also involving radiants of meanings about acting, feeling, dwelling, and time. We analyze and illustrate these in more detail by introducing some additional data.

The agonistic contrasts and temporal dimensions occur in a discourse pattern we can conceptualize further as a mini-maxi form, that is, it is a minimal agonistic form, as it occurs in a

few words; but we also hear in this form, maximal semantic power. In short, the form is a “minimizing phenomenon,” a minimal linguistic form with maximal semantic power (see Basso 1988, p. 123).

Consider the following comment made in 2015 (p. 201) by Mr. Smokey Rides at the Door during an interview with a researcher. He had been asked about Blackfeet spiritual life, ways it is active today, and how these ways involve people in the Blackfeet-Glacier country today. Partly, he referenced the importance of calling upon as well as hearing ancestors when addressing the challenges of living today. He used the following formulation when he was reporting this feature of his Blackfeet ways:

- 10 When you talk about speaking to spirits...
11 You call upon people who went before you...
12 In contemporary society
13 You just don’t know where that help will come from.

Mr. Rides at the Door refers to a traditional way of “speaking to spirits” (lines 10-11); this way brings traditional knowledge to one’s current situation in ways that inform who one is (Blackfeet), what one should do (“speak to spirits”), how one feels about one’s immediate challenge (action should be guided by wisdom), and what is best as a way of dwelling in the world today. As one listens to the “people who went before you,” you can become better connected, aligned with and attuned to the spiritual-material world in which one lives, every day. The spiritual messages help renew this sense of being connected to our earth, while also reminding us of our ethic to care deeply for all of creation. These few words tap into a deep historical root through its form of expression, an anchoring of Blackfeet ways deeply which can, and should inform traditional Blackfeet practices today.ⁱⁱⁱ

This way of life is contrasted by Smokey Rides at the Door with “contemporary society,” in which “you just don’t know where that help will come from” (lines 12-13). By juxtaposing the traditional with this contemporary way, we can hear the risk of not tending one’s historical roots of Blackfeet identity and action, as symbolic and material creation itself can become threatened from little cultivation and care. Further, if one forgets the aid of the “people who went before you,” one struggles to find where to go for “help” and what to do. This of course results in a loss of one’s way, but with a possible renewal being found in learning and practicing one’s traditional ways.

The agonistic contrast is elaborated further by Mr. Rides at the Door:

- 41 Western civilization is beginning to realize that by taking and taking and taking
42 our diminishment of the earth is drawing near.
43 Our glaciers are drying up...
52 We can continue to learn from our traditions, acting from them.
53 We will see the regeneration of Mother Earth and the people that are living on it.
54 That’s why Indian people are so important.
55 We haven’t ventured very far from that understanding of our connection to Mother Earth.

Rides at the Door's terms of the contrast contain evidence for the following cultural propositions: "Western civilization" is characterized by "taking and taking and taking" which results in "diminishment"; "Acting" upon our Blackfeet "traditions," "our connection to Mother Earth," can result in "regeneration"; "That's why Indian people are so important." In short, traditional ways help reconnect and attune people to their world; this can serve as a corrective to contemporary acts such as taking too much, environmental degradation, feeling at a loss, being uncertain about where to turn, or what to do, yielding to a bland assimilation, further religious persecution, and the like.

Enlarging the Discourse

The analysis of cultural discourse is built on the view that each discursive practice, like the Blackfeet one that reports culture, is intimately tied to others. How each is tied to others is part of what the analyst can explore and needs to discover in each case. A result of this process of discovery can lead to enlarging the discourse of concern and in the process one can gain a better idea of the nature and cultural meaning of a specific device, like that of reporting one's culture.

When exploring the above Blackfeet practice, we found larger discourses in which the practice was embedded and being used. One is the video produced about Blackfeet people by Montana TV in 2015. Chief Earl Old Person appears in this video where he speaks the instances above. What we notice also in this video is the way his verbal reports about Blackfeet people provide the orienting framing of this larger video document about Blackfeet people. Notice how his remarks both open and close the video (most of the video is presented and transcribed here in ethno-poetic form):

Chief Earl Old Person [EOP, Blackfeet]:

1 Within the people today,
2 they uh, it's something that
3 they feel good about, to identify themselves as the Blackfeet.
4 This is our uh identity
5 and it goes way back.

6 Jim Higgins [Blackfeet]:

7 The Blackfeet were, uh, very eh interesting people uh
8 We were explorers.
9 We uh traveled from the Saskatchewan River in Canada
10 all the way down to ole Mexico.
11 We travelled the backbone of the world which
12 We call the Rockies.

13 Lea Whitford [Blackfeet]:

14 I think it's important to share with our families and our children, the values, our histories
15 because that helps them ground themselves in their identity
16 and that's going to be WAY more important than anything materialistic

17 that they could pick up and have.
 18 My favorite thing is just being able to roam all over Blackfoot territory
 19 look at the landscape from uh native perspectives that can ok
 20 my ancestors were here
 21 like to see what the landscape has as far as stories
 22 and what it can tell us as people today.
 23 EOP: Our land base is something that
 24 we want to retain, to keep,
 25 because our land base is the backbone of our reservation.
 ...
 39 JH: Come to Blackfeet and visit us.
 40 Talk to our elders.
 41 We have a lot to offer.
 42 We have historical sites uh
 43 We have a museum
 44 We have uh senior citizens
 45 They're always willing to talk to people and share
 46 EOP: We have two different kinds of life.
 47 We have our traditional way, our Indian way of life,
 48 and then we enter into the, life today, modern way.
 49 Lea Whitford: We're real fortunate that we have tribal leaders
 50 that envision for the people, uh a positive future.
 51 Earl Old Person: Our life is good,
 52 and it can be good,
 53 it's up to us.
 [End of video]

We can begin by noticing the specific discursive practice we are examining on lines 1-5, and then again in lines 46-53. The final lines provide the by now familiar juxtaposition of the “two different kinds of life” that are not only “good,” but “can be good, it’s up to us.”

Looking at the discourse in this video text, we find evidence of several cultural propositions. We formulate them here and identify [in brackets] some of the elemental *discursive hubs* that are being used here to elaborate the main hub of Blackfeet identity:

1. “The **people today**” have “something **they feel good** about” [hubs of **identity**, **feeling**] (lines 1-3, 41, 49-50, 51-52);
2. This is “their **identity as Blackfeet**”; this “**goes way back**” [**identity**, **time-1<->2**] (lines 3-5, 14-15, 42, 47);
3. Blackfeet identity is connected to a “**landscape**” and our “**ancestors**” [**dwelling**, **identity**] (lines 9-12, 18-22, 23-25, 42);

4. “Blackfoot territory” is a “favorite thing,” a “landscape” that can be felt or seen and acted upon, as when we “roam” and “look” in a “native way” [dwelling, action, identity, time 1<->2] (lines 18-19);
5. The land has “stories” it can “tell”; it speaks a sacred voice [dwelling, time 1<->2, action] (lines 21-22);
6. “Our land” must be [kept and retained], it is “our backbone” [dwelling, identity] (lines 24-25);
7. Blackfeet have “a lot to offer”, our elders are “always willing to talk to people and share” [identity, action] (lines 39-45);
8. The moral: A “positive future” is “up to us” [time 1->2->3, identity] (On lines 50, 53).

This larger strip of audiovisual discourse and its propositional claims extend our understanding of this agonistic play in several ways. First, as the discourse makes a claim about a Blackfeet identity, it also elaborates that claim, in this case, through terms of feeling, time, dwelling, and action. This is noted above in items 1 through 8. In cultural discourse theory, we conceptualize the linguistic terms which are instances of each – feeling, time, dwelling, and action, respectively – as noted above, as *discursive hubs*, by which we mean, explicit terms which are active in a discourse thereby saying something about feeling (item 1), time (items 2, 4, 5, 8), dwelling (items 3-6), and action (item 7). This sort of noticing is guided by the theory which invites further investigation, when productive, of the discursive hubs of identity, action, feeling, relating, and dwelling (see Carbaugh and Cerulli, 2017; Carbaugh and Sotirova, 2015). By exploring the additional hubs, we enhance our understanding by enlarging the discourse of concern systematically to other linguistic items which are attached to the focal discourse pattern of concern.

Also, in the above transcript, we note on lines 39-45 a kind of invitation from Blackfeet member Jim Higgins to “visit us” and “talk to our elders.” While this has a generic hearing, perhaps something like a Chamber of Commerce message, we find in this case a special exigence for the invitation. Our field notes are replete with comments made by non-native people who live off of the reservation and have limited to no contact with native peoples. A full analysis of those is not possible here, but we can summarize the following stereotypical claims made about native identity and places included in them: 1) the reservations are places that are extremely poor and economically deprived; 2) Indian people and the reservations are hostile and violent places; 3) the violence is fueled by alcohol and drugs; 4) reservation Indians are lawless and not under state and federal law; you should not go there but if you must, be extremely careful. The last point is a familiar one in Montana’s airways as it stems partly from a long time, popular radio personality, Paul Harvey who said in an oft-repeated line, “If you want to get away with Murder, go to the Blackfeet Reservation” (quoting Paul Harvey, 2009). One of us has been repeatedly advised to carry a weapon if going to the Blackfeet reservation.

The above, then, enlarges the discourse of concern in multiple ways. With the video, we are taken deeper into the meanings of “Blackfeet identity” from participants’ views including the messages we have explicated about feeling (proposition 1), time (propositions 2, 4-5, 8),

dwelling (propositions 3-6), and action (proposition 7). Consideration of the video also takes us more broadly into an exigence for the video itself, redressing as it does a negative view of native people as untoward and reservations as inhospitable. Relative to this stereotypical set of claims, a counter-message is being sent: Blackfeet have a lot to feel good about including its reservation lands and landscape, its sacred qualities, important stories and yes, a positive future. The video, then, offers a counter-discourse to the non-native one which portrays native people and places otherwise.

These concerns in the counter-discourse and counter-voices also deepen our capacity to interpret meanings for example in Chief Earl Old Person's utterance:

46 We have two different kinds of life.

47 We have our traditional way, our Indian way of life,

48 and then we enter into the, life today, modern way.

What is meant here by "life today, modern way"? We find, now, equivocal symbolic meanings at play. In one direction are modern or contemporary sorts of practice which involve "help" from or are informed by "the ancestors" – as mentioned also as "aid" by Smokey Rides at the Door. These routine ways today are being guided by elder wisdom and function, as Lea Whitford suggests, a proper education of Blackfeet children, a way for Blackfeet people to "ground themselves in their identity" (line 15). This involves active knowledge about traditional ways which is being taught to children and further applied to various contemporary circumstances (time 1->2). Blackfeet scholar, Rosalyn LaPier (2017, p. xxvii), has reserved the word, "traditional" similarly, to apply to "individuals with a strong sense of their own individual identity that is grounded in their significant understanding of Native language, religious belief systems, tribal ecological knowledge, and community history." The communal knowledge afforded by the language, local landscape and community are crucial for traditional living.

There is risk in moving away from traditional ways, but also remedy available if needed. When talking with Blackfeet cultural coordinator Two Bears, he said this as we were visiting a special place on the reservation: "This is an ideal place for those of our people having trouble with drugs or alcohol. They could come out here and think about things. It's ideal for that" (quoted in Carbaugh, 2005, p. 105). The point Two Bears is making here, in this place, is that "our people" can have such trouble today. This meaning is active at times when the phrase, "the contemporary world" is being used. Here, the meaning is that some troubling activities as these are unmoored from earlier traditional practices because these activities were non-existent in the earlier time-1; the disconnection is amplified when people today are uninformed about the traditional ways which can equip them for a better life. In these cases, the contemporary world has overshadowed traditional ways, with time-2 becoming unconnected from time-1.

In these meanings of "the contemporary world," there is not only disconnection possible but also the need for a kind of remedial voice, a reconnecting of the relationship between time-1 and time-2. Smokey Rides at the Door (2015, p. 200) expresses both options explicitly:

1 When you take your contemporary teachings and mold it with your tradition
2 You'll find that there are more ways of approaching a situation...
3 Each person in their deliberations to get the answers to their questions
4 has to go through a series of motions, emotions,
5 and when you go through the series
6 you feel complete.

7 It's a different way of knowing than the one taught in school.

Note the first point, when time-2 practices are informed by time-1, "when you take your contemporary teachings and mold it with your tradition," a "complete" form of action and personage is possible. But, there is another way that is "taught in school." This other voice was expressed by Blackfeet member Joseph Stone who explained how the loss of traditional ways leads to sickness and mental health issues.^{iv} When this happens, time-2 practice is being systematically severed from time-1, leaving participants unmoored from the deep wisdom that guides traditional Blackfeet ways. The inequitable circumstances of one's life, Mr. Stone explains, can be stacked against integrating traditional ways into the modern world. This can be extremely frustrating. Another Blackfeet, Gordon Belcourt, discussed as examples how the police were called when an extended Blackfeet family gathered together beside a loved one in a hospital room to comfort them. Belcourt also recounted a diagnosis of delirium attributed to a native man who was simply calling for water in his native Blackfoot language. In both social situations, traditional ways were deemed suspect by the officers who enforced other, nontraditional policies, and thus subverted traditional ways.

The verbal portrait being drawn here between today's world and traditional ways is complex and complicated. Blackfeet people can lose touch with traditional ways; and Blackfeet people can try to practice traditional ways in a modern world, such as comforting a loved one or using one's native language, but the schism between time-1 and time-2 can be so great that the efforts are unjustly thwarted, inequitably subjugated, and thus rendered ineffectual. Blackfeet leader Leon Rattler among others has deeply lamented this loss. A continuous rekindling of this important link through efforts as these, and education of others in the importance of efforts like these, is crucial for a "positive future" to be effectively realized as envisioned by Earl Old Person, Joseph Stone, Gordon Belcourt, Leon Ratter, us, and many, many others. Our very modest efforts at noticing and understanding this discourse is one contribution to the fund.

The above analyses include a **comparative mode** of analysis in multiple ways, dramatically between deprived and endowed peoples/practices. These analyses are designed to make claims about discursive usages, within and across cases. The agonistic discourse of concern to us here not only contrasts Blackfeet and non-Blackfeet ways, generally, as when non-native discourse negatively stereotypes and disempowers indigenous people, but moreover conceives of "two ways" within Blackfeet life today as "contemporary" and "traditional." This symbolic juxtaposition makes deep messages about different versions of social life explicit with these

involving differences in the matters of lifestyle (traditional-modern), language (Blackfoot-English), religion (spiritual and non-spiritual living), education (westernized public school practices at the expense of traditional elder-based education), and health (Indian-other ways). These matters are juxtaposed and played within a complex arrangement of time. There are time-1 practices which were conducted by ancestors in the traditional way. These involve use of traditional Blackfoot language, communication among all agents in the universe, rituals of regeneration, and sacred stories attached to a landscape, all supporting Blackfeet action and personhood.^v

These meanings of traditional life are contrasted in a most pronounced way with a “contemporary world” which ignores, is uninformed about, deliberately denigrates, and/or unaware of these dimensions of life. We have understood these to be time-2 (without time-1) practices. These offer at times nearly insurmountable constraints to traditional living. The point is made that we, Blackfeet, in turn, do not feel good about the barriers to our traditional ways which actively run counter to those ways; with these barriers being encountered in and sometimes “taught in school”; confronted in health care; and exacerbated for some who experience difficulties with alcohol and drugs. In more formal terms, these barriers can be established by others, as in acts of genocide or banning spiritual ceremonies, as active ways of separating time-1 from times 2 & 3.

Counter to the above are traditional practices which are continuing today, time-1 into time-2 practices, which are taught to Blackfeet children, practiced in sacred ceremonies, activated through a traditional form of Blackfeet “listening,” “speaking to spirits,” cultural forms that can bring Blackfeet “ancestors” into our life, and in the process invigorate our people today. Through these practices, traditional ways can address, enliven, and energize circumstances of everyday, contemporary living, as time-1 knowledge overcomes difficulties one encounters in time-2. The meanings of acts as these are informed by time-1 considerations and thus consult those (time 2->1), but also are practiced in the contemporary world in light of those consultations (time 1->2). We summarize this cyclical aspect of time as time 1<->2.

This, then, brings us to the lament expressed by Leon Rattler (and many others about the cultural loss and obstruction of traditional ways) thereby bringing “good feeling” about a “positive future” into being (a vision for time-3). After all, this good life for our people (from time 1<->2 to time-3) is “up to us,” to *all of us*.

Discussion

When I (DC) was attending the inauguration of Blackfeet Tribal Council members on July 11 of 1996, one inductee said, “It’s important that we listen to each other and stay current on things but also that we rely on the traditional ways of our elders.” A second member who was being re-inducted said: “Whatever I have done has been done on the basis of our elders’ teachings... We must continue to listen to our traditional ways.” Both activated the juxtaposition of contemporary and traditional ways; both expressed the significance and importance of traditional ways as a

means of addressing contemporary issues or problems. In short, both utilized in this inauguration the discourse of concern to us in this chapter. We emphasize that the discourse of concern to us here is a robust one as it has recurring significance and importance in our data over at least a thirty-year period; we know it runs over a much, much longer period of time than this.

Blackfeet historian and environmental scientist, Rosalyn LaPier, in the preface to her recent book writes specifically about Blackfeet conceptions of time. In her words (2017, p. xxi), “time in Blackfeet society is a complex concept and different from the Western concept of time.” Her essays show how Blackfeet have recounted earlier times, in earlier times, and today, while living in traditional ways. In a similar spirit, Howard Harrod (1992, p. 20) has studied the ritual actions and symbolic forms of Plains peoples, discovering in them, the experience of traditional ways, a living practice of deep, symbolic power. He concludes his studies of Plains Indian including Blackfeet religion and morality: “we do not need to know with certainty the age or the evolutionary trajectory of the traditions which we confront in the mid-nineteenth century in order to appreciate their depth and symbolic power. Indeed, we will come to see... specific instances of what is primordial and pervasive in human experience.” As traditional ways are acknowledged, recalled, and practiced today, as LaPier indicates, Blackfeet time assumes a complex, cyclical, and deep form.

In Native American discourse, the cultural category of “traditional ways” is linked to acting in ways that are mindful of “seven generations,” a discursive thread that is woven prominently throughout Native America. As Professor David Wilkins (Lumbee) has written about this: “There isn’t a day that goes by in Indian Country that we don’t hear something about the Seven Generations... Much can be learned from [Indian] nations that respect their ancestors, themselves, and those to come. Such nations exemplify the true meaning of the Seven Generations by maintaining their integrity as peoples. [Oglala Sioux author] Vine Deloria, Jr. spoke of the Seven Generations in very practical terms. In his cantankerous way, he would express extreme annoyance at the romanticism of the concept as it was popularly used. Because, as explained to him, the generations we are sworn to protect and revere are the seven we are most immediately connected to. Think about it for a moment. It is possible that many of us have known or will know our great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Even if we aren’t fortunate enough to have been in the physical presence of those who came before us, we usually have stories, songs, and photos that have been shared so that we feel a connection. We also want to make sure our kids and grandkids are healthy, safe and aware of where they come from. So, counting our own generation—ourselves, siblings, and cousins—we are accountable to those seven generations, not some imagined futuristic peoples two hundred years down the road” (2015; see Deloria, 1999, p. 179 ff.). This is part of the backbone of traditional ways, acting in ways that go backward into time while also seeing forward into future spaces.

Our attention has been piqued by this kind of discourse as it is produced by Blackfeet people when they verbally present their culture to others and to themselves. We have also tried to

demonstrate ways of analyzing this discourse which identifies its deep cultural shapes and meanings.

Our efforts have occurred first by discovering that there is such a discourse to study. Brief discursive snippets can go by quickly, indeed; finding there is such depth and value in a few words can take time and attention. Through descriptive analyses, we have provided ethno-poetic transcriptions designed to identify this sort of discourse and to draw attention to its symbolic contrasts, parallel structures, and propositional meanings. Eventually we were able to state the more abstract elements of the agonistic pattern, identifying its linguistic and cultural features. Through our interpretive analyses, we were able to explicate specific meanings in the form of cultural propositions, cultural premises, and semantic contrasts. Our comparative analyses brought to the foreground complex contrastive meanings between indigenous and other ways, as well as between the past and future, between traditional native and contemporary ways, to practices which disempower wise traditional ways.

Across these modes of our analyses, we paid attention to several discursive hubs which are active in this cultural discourse, these focusing on the hub of identity, but also considering hubs of time, action, feeling, and dwelling. The cultural discourse, then, we find, includes participants taken-for-granted knowledge, respectively, about when things occur (time), who they are and will become (identity), what people are doing (action), the emotions being activated (feeling), and how this is attached to the nature of things (dwelling). Together, the system of discursive hubs, symbolic contrasts, cultural propositions, and premises supply a deep **cultural logic** at use in the discourse.

As for the main cultural logic in the discourse, we find it to be complex and summarize it as follows: “contemporary life” identifies ways of living that are mostly non-traditional; this can involve westernized (non-traditional) forms of education and religion, obstacles to traditional ways from others in various social contexts like hospitals, separation from Mother Earth, and attendant problems with mental and physical health. “Traditional ways” identify historically based practices of living, honoring the ways of ancestors, Indian forms of education and religion, proper connections to one’s place in the world, and attendant good feelings which result from these ways. While the two ways contrast, starkly, the Blackfeet capacity to manage both - typically navigating the contemporary world with the benefit of traditional ways - is expressed at least by Smokey Rides at the Door and Rising Wolf.

In the course of our analyses, we have taken up an additional theoretical consideration, the discursive hub of time in particular. We are building here with the benefit of earlier work where Katriel and Livio (2018, p.) found the following “four aspects of temporality came to the fore in our analyses, as the temporality associated with discourses of social change was grounded in: (1) a linear (rather than cyclical) view of time; (2) in a future (rather than past or present) orientation, whether it is infused by a sense of hope as in the first case or by a sense of threat as in the second; (3) a concern with timing; and (4) a sense of urgency.” Taking each in turn, in light of our findings, and using our notational scheme, we propose elaborating the temporal hub with the following conceptions of time: 1) that are possibly linear (time 1->2->3) and/or cyclical

(time 1<->2<->3); 2) that focus in various ways (at time 1, 2, or 3; or at time 1->2; and so on); 3) time can become an explicitly elaborated matter of concern in, and about a discourse; and 4) with immediacy or practical efficacy taking precedence with regard to a communicative practice. In this way, with Katriel and Livio (2018), we have systematically extended considerations in cultural discourses by inviting future explorations of these features of temporality in its meta-cultural commentary.

Our notation of the three dimensions of time risks a simplified misunderstanding. The temporal process at play here is not exactly synonymous with the concepts, past, present, and future. Our point, introduced here and developed below, is that the time-1 feature is both a reference to a way things were done in the past; it can also be the grounding of a present practice into a deeply important historical past. These ideas of time are not only linear from time 1 to time 2; they are also cyclical, time 2 to time 1 and back. Time is being treated, then, as both a practice in the past (time-1) AND as a present practice with roots in the past (time1<->2). This indicates an important cultural point: there are a set of Blackfeet practices today that are based in an ancient wisdom, like that of the Seven Generations, which has survived various tests and threats of time. Time-2, then, is in its simplest a way of referencing a present day task, like raising children, with this task possibly involving earlier Time-1 practices (Time1->2). Time 2 practices can also involve other contemporary practices that are not so deeply rooted in the past as traditional practices are, or those that are independent of any knowledge of those practices (simply Time-2). Time-2 can also involve difficulties, as we will see, which can be addressed by looking back and consulting ancestral wisdom (time-2->1) while also looking forward. Time-3 involves forward looking projections, some like the wisdom of Seven Generations which are based in Time-1 practices (Time 1<->3); some that are active in specific practices today (Time 1->2), or, some perhaps not anchored clearly in traditional ways as such but also explicitly forward looking (Time 2->3). There is also the possibility of actions projected into future times which deliberately remove people from their traditional ways, thus, simply Time-3. The temporal dimension, then, is based in cyclical Blackfeet conceptions of time, each being possibly connected to others, as such.

While our final comments highlight this cultural discourse and the ways it can be studied, there is much further work to do. This Blackfeet discourse includes a deep critical feature, evident when Smokey Rides at the Door mentions being schooled in ways counter to traditional ways, when Gordon Belcourt described how police were called to a traditional gathering for healing, and when a man speaking Blackfoot was diagnosed as delirious. This critical discourse is currently under more detailed investigation, as it has also been in earlier papers. We also find exciting and creative ways of understanding the Blackfoot language and its teaching when done in traditional ways. These among many other tentacles of this rich cultural discourse offer much for future study. There is much we need to know as we visit our contemporary worlds through the wisdom of traditional ways, as many wise ones have been doing, long before us.

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ⁱⁱ The preceding paragraph includes several concepts which have been explicated in detail elsewhere (Carbaugh, 2007a) including the development of the theory (Scollo, 2011) and the concepts of discursive hub and radiant of meaning (e.g., Carbaugh and Cerulli, 2017). The hubs of identity and meta-communicative action are introduced in Carbaugh (1988), with detailed development of the hub of identity in Carbaugh (1996) and the hub of meta-pragmatic action in Carbaugh (2017). The hub of dwelling is explicated fully and demonstrated (Carbaugh, 2007b; Carbaugh and Cerulli, 2013; Cerulli, 2017; Milstein, 2011) as is the hub of feeling (Carbaugh, 1990, 2017). A recent volume discusses and utilizes the theory in great detail through studies in multiple languages and societies; the volume is nicely organized around each hub/radiant (Scollo and Milburn, 2018). This note is simply illustrative with a large and growing literature behind it.

ⁱⁱⁱ The form of expression used here has been analyzed in greater detail in an earlier paper (Carbaugh, 2002).

^{iv} The following is drawn from an article by Diane Cochran in the *Billings Gazette*, Leader laments loss of Indian traditions, November 19, 2009. See also the works by Joseph P. Gone and team (e.g., Gone, 2008).

^v The wording in this sentence reflects, respectively, prior detailed studies of Blackfeet communication and culture (Carbaugh, 2005, chapters 6 & 7; Carbaugh, 2001, 2002, 2018) as well as the central themes of an in-progress monograph.