



WHEN DID INDIANS

BECOME STRAIGHT?

Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty

Mark Rifkin

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MARK RIFKIN

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments, vii

Introduction, 3

1. Reproducing the Indian: Racial Birth and Native Geopolitics in *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* and *Last of the Mohicans*, 45
2. Adoption Nation: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Hendrick Aupaumut, and the Boundaries of Familial Feeling, 99
3. Romancing Kinship: Indian Education, the Allotment Program, and Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories*, 143
4. Allotment Subjectivities and the Administration of "Culture": Ella Deloria, Pine Ridge, and the Indian Reorganization Act, 181
5. Finding "Our" History: Gender, Sexuality, and the Space of Peoplehood in *Stone Butch Blues* and *Mohawk Trail*, 233
6. Tradition and the Contemporary Queer: Sexuality, Nationality, and History in *Drowning in Fire*, 275

Notes, 317

Works Cited, 381

Index, 411

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This book began as a way to avoid my dissertation. I had just completed the penultimate chapter, and I simply could not think about the project anymore. I desperately needed a break, and I decided that the best way to do that would be to focus on some other intellectual topic. While I had been interested a great deal in queer theory throughout my undergraduate studies and in graduate school, I ended up forming a dissertation project that had absolutely nothing to do with it. I think this pattern is true for a lot of people who end up doing work in queer studies. For me, it was not a strategic plan to credential myself in something before turning to queer questions and materials, but the sum total effect of it was to direct me elsewhere. In the middle of writing my dissertation, I felt the need to turn back to questions of sexuality which I had not been asking, and I decided as a thought experiment to see what a queer analysis of Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories*, which I was teaching at the time, might look like. The article that eventually emerged from that process, which was an early version of what became chapter 3, served as the germ for this book.

That is all to say that this book has been longer in coming than it might initially seem, and the path to and through it has been somewhat circuitous. For that reason, I have a lot of people to thank stretching over a long period. I owe Carol Barash, Ed Cohen, Elaine Chang, and Marjorie Howes for first introducing me to queer studies while still an undergraduate. When I returned to the project, I already had taken up my first tenure-track position at Skidmore College, and I would like to thank Janet Casey, Jennifer Delton, Kristie Ford, Ross Forman, Dana Gliserman Kopans, Catherine Golden, Kate Greenspan, Regina Janes, Richard Kim, Michael Marx, Tillman Nechtman, Pushi Prasad, Mason Stokes, Daniel Swift, and Josh Woodfork for their support, guidance, feedback, and friendship during my time in Saratoga. The book was completed after I joined the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and I have felt warmly received there, due to the efforts of numerous friends and colleagues, including Danielle Bouchard, Liz Bucar, Sarah Cervenak, Tony Cuda, Michelle Dowd, Asa Eger, Jen Feather, Mary Ellis Gibson, Tara Green, Greg Grieve, Ellen Haskell, Jennifer

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INTRODUCTION

I mean, the issue here is marriage. And to me, the building block—and I think, to most people in America, number one, it's common sense that a marriage is between a man and a woman. I mean, every civilization in the history of man has recognized a unique bond.

Why? Because—principally because of children. I mean, it's—it is the reason for marriage. It's not to affirm the love of two people. I mean, that's not what marriage is about. I mean, if that were the case, then lots of different people and lots of different combinations could be, quote, “married.”

Marriage is not about affirming somebody's love for somebody else. It's about uniting together to be open to children, to further civilization in our society.

And that's unique. And that's why civilizations forever have recognized that unique role that needs to be licensed, needs [to be] held up as different than anything else because of its unique nurturing effect on children.

—Rick Santorum, appearance on *Fox News Sunday*

By kinship all Dakota people were held together in a great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain. . . .

Before going further, I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative.

—Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians*

In articulating his critique of legal recognition for same-sex unions in the United States, then-senator Rick Santorum suggested that the failure to specify “marriage” as “between a man and a woman” constitutes an assault on “civilization” itself.¹ While I do not want to rehearse the debates for and against same-sex marriage, including the argument for the latter position made by queer folks themselves,² I was struck at the time, and still am, by the sheer scope of his comments. Rather than appealing to particular religious traditions or the merely personal beliefs of a large chunk of the U.S. populace, he argues that officially defining conjugality in other than hetero terms will plunge the nation into barbarity. To be more precise, though, he actually offers a more positively universalizing claim—that “every civilization in the history of man” has acknowledged the connubial tie between a single man and woman as “unique.” This phrasing seems to indicate that humanity from time immemorial has had an unchanging conception of the marital “bond.” Or does it? The phrase “every civilization” could be read simply as a rhetorical flourish that possesses the same content as “history of man,” the one providing a grandiose gloss to the other. Yet one also can understand “civilization” as qualifying “history,” as specifying which aspects of the latter count as relevant in addressing the future and fate of the United States. If “every civilization” has acknowledged the “unique bond” of heteroconjugality, what about those parts of history, and peoples, that have not been characterized as having “civilization,” that have provided the *savage* counterpoint against which to define the *civilized* and that have been made the object of a mission to bring to them the saving grace of enlightenment?

The attempt here to naturalize a certain version of *marriage* as self-evidently necessary to the continuation of the species—“children” are the “reason for” it—remains haunted by the vexed history of efforts to define which kinds of persons, practices, and principles get to count as paradigmatically “human.” In other words, the assertion of a necessary relation between “marriage” and reproduction is supplemented, and intriguingly also undercut, by the normative citation of “civilization” as a set of ideal relations that matrimony is supposed to embody and transfer to the next generation. If marriage “further[s] civilization in our society,” as opposed to simply facilitating procreation per se, what is the content of “civilization”? If “society” and “civilization” are not coextensive, instead the one providing the context for “further[ing]” the other, what lies at the boundaries of “civilization”? Santorum suggests a possible answer, noting that if “love” were made the primary criterion, “lots of different people and lots of different combinations could be, quote, ‘married.’” At the edge of “civilization” lies the possibility of uncoupling affect and intimacy, eroticism, lifelong commitment, reproduction, child care, and homemaking from each other, instead seeing “lots of different combinations” of these various elements of

social life as potentially viable ways of being human. However, a “society” in which such permutations are lived, defying the obvious value of bourgeois homemaking to the health and welfare of the people, is not “civilization” but instead something else, an unnamed absence that provides the unspoken comparative referent in Santorum’s intimations of impending disaster.

In addition to demonstrating the hyperbolic and largely hysterical rhetoric that accompanies discussion of the place of homoeroticism in U.S. policy, this quotation by a prominent U.S. official points toward a largely unaddressed dimension of the public and political debate over things queer, namely, its embeddedness in an imperial imaginary that provides the organizing framework in which heterosexuality signifies. More than linking same-sex pleasure and romantic partnership to degeneration into savagery, the statement indicates that forms of sociality that do not carve out a “unique” status for the reproductively directed marital unit can be treated not simply as inferior within the scope of human history but as threatening to retard, or reverse, the progress of those that do. The invocation of “civilization” appears less as a residue of an outmoded nineteenth-century language of Euro-conquest than a trace of the ongoing enmeshment of discourses of sexuality in the project of fortifying the United States against incursions by *uncivilized* formations that jeopardize the “common sense” of national life. While homosexuality may serve as the most prominent foil to the vision of depoliticized privatization Santorum embraces, his comments gesture toward a more multivalent history of heteronormativity in which alternative configurations of home, family, and political collectivity are represented as endangering the state and in which conjugal domesticity provides the condition of possibility for intelligibility within U.S. institutions.

Can Dakota sociality, as described in the epigraph from Ella Deloria, be included under the rubric of heterosexuality? While certainly potentially incorporating the sort of affective and reproductive pairing Santorum addresses, her description of “kinship” as “a great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain” extends far beyond marital couplehood and seems to include the full sociospatiality of Dakota peoplehood within that “relationship,” depicting what it means to be a “relative” in terms that have little to do with the nuclear family unit that provides the focal point for “civilization.” In *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, Jonathan Ned Katz argues, “The intimidating notion that heterosexuality refers to everything differently sexed and gendered and eroticized is, it turns out, one of the conceptual dodges that keeps heterosexuality from becoming the focus of sustained, critical analysis” (13). Following this logic, what are heterosexuality’s contours and boundaries, and where in relation to them do indigenous forms of sex, gender, kinship, household formation, and eroticism lay? Pushing the matter a bit further, can the coordinated assault on

native social formations that has characterized U.S. policy since its inception, conducted in the name of “civilization,” be understood as an organized effort to make heterosexuality compulsory as a key part of breaking up indigenous landholdings, “detribalizing” native peoples, and/or translating native territoriality and governance into the terms of U.S. liberalism and legal geography?³ What would such a formulation mean for rethinking the scope and direction of queer studies? These are the questions addressed by this study, exploring the ways placing native peoples at its center would alter the history of sexuality in the United States and how doing so would allow for a reconceptualization of both the meaning of heteronormativity and understandings of the scope and shape of native sovereignties.⁴

In her immensely provocative and ground-clearing essay “Punks, Bull-daggers, and Welfare Queens,” Cathy J. Cohen observes, “queer politics has often been built around a simple dichotomy between those deemed queer and those deemed heterosexual” (440), “map[ping] the power and entitlement of normative heterosexuality onto the bodies of all heterosexuals” and thereby failing to recognize that “‘nonnormative’ procreation patterns and family structures of people who are labeled heterosexual have also been used to regulate and exclude *them*” (447). She further argues, “many of the roots of heteronormativity are in white supremacist ideologies which sought (and continue) to use the state and its regulation of sexuality, in particular through the institution of heterosexual marriage, to designate which individuals were truly ‘fit’ for full rights and privileges of citizenship” (453). This trenchant critique points to a larger problematic in the history of sexuality, suggesting that the ideological structure and regulatory force of heteronormativity cannot be grasped through versions of the homo/hetero binary.⁵ In this vein, the effort to *civilize* American Indians and the attendant repudiation of indigenous traditions can be understood as significantly contributing to the institutionalization of the “heterosexual imaginary,” in Chrys Ingraham’s evocative phrase, helping to build a network of interlocking state-sanctioned policies and ideologies that positioned monogamous heterocouplehood and the privatized single-family household as the official national ideal by the late nineteenth century.⁶ Such an analysis of the history of federal Indian policy enables discussion of the ways questions of kinship, residency, and land tenure lie at the unspoken center of the heteronorm, which itself can be understood as always-already bound up in racializing and imperial projects.

This kind of queer critique, tracing the unacknowledged genealogies and lineaments of heteronormativity, also builds on recent work in Native Studies that seeks to reconstruct traditional forms of gender diversity. In *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*, Will Roscoe argues that the study of indigenous sex/gender configurations,

particularly their development and normalization of non-procreative statuses and identities, “helps break the cycle of projection in which Western observers constantly replicate heterosexual binarism wherever they turn their gaze” (210).⁷ However, while rejecting the use of Euramerican sexological vocabularies in understanding native sex/gender systems, this scholarship only minimally develops what seems to me a crucial corollary—that heterosexuality is an equally inappropriate concept through which to consider traditional native family organization, land tenure, eroticism, and divisions of labor. From this perspective, heterosexuality refers less to attraction between men and women or the conditions of reproductive intercourse per se than to a kind of social formation in which coupling, procreation, and homemaking take on a particular normative shape exemplified by the nuclear family. The heterosexual imaginary, therefore, is equally inappropriate and obfuscating when considering native marriage, family, and procreation as it is when addressing more “queer” topics such as transvestism and homoeroticism. Following this logic, what would a queer critique of U.S. imperialism against native peoples look like if divorced from the search for statuses that would signify as aberrant within Euramerican notions of normality? Moreover, how does the construction and contestation of sexual normality by non-natives provide an important institutional and ideological context for efforts to conceptualize native sovereignty?

Beyond making visible the lives of “queer” persons in native communities (historically and in the present), engaging with the forms of critique found in queer studies opens the possibility within Native Studies for a more expansive and integrated analysis of the U.S. assault on indigenous social formations.⁸ Such an approach helps foreground the processes through which a particular configuration of *home* and *family* is naturalized and administratively implemented while also emphasizing the discursive and institutional connections between what might otherwise appear as distinct forms of imperial abjection (attacks on “berdaches,” polygamy, and kinship-based governance, for example). The “heterosexual binarism” Roscoe cites functions not just as a conceptual block to comparative intellectual work but as a material force—imposing an alien configuration on native cultures and providing ideological cohesion for a disparate collection of detribalizing and/or regulatory initiatives in U.S. Indian policy. The effort to insert American Indians into the ideological system of heterosexuality imposes an alien social logic while also discounting the particular ways family and household formation are central to native peoples’ functioning as polities. Official and popular narratives from the early Republic onward demeaned and dismissed the kinds of social relations around which native communities were structured, denying the possibility of interpreting countervailing cultural patterns as principles of geopolitical organization. While others have chronicled

U.S. efforts to reorganize native social life, understanding such initiatives as compulsory heterosexuality provides a more integrated framework for considering imperial interventions into native residency, family formation, collective decision-making, resource distribution, and land tenure. This approach also highlights the political work performed by native writers' depictions of quotidian elements of tradition, conceptualizing such descriptions as an effort to register and remember modes of governance disavowed by the United States.

In this way, *When Did Indians Become Straight?* explores the complex relationship between contested U.S. notions of sexual order and shifting forms of Native American political representation. Offering a cultural and literary history that stretches from the early nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century, it demonstrates how U.S. imperialism against native peoples over the past two centuries can be understood as an effort to make them "straight"—to insert indigenous peoples into Anglo-American conceptions of family, home, desire, and personal identity.⁹ Conversely, though, a parallel tradition of non-native representations has employed native peoples as a counterhegemonic symbol of resistance to heterohomemaking, *queering* the norm by citing native customs as a more affectively expansive and communalist model for settler sociality. The positive valuation of native practices and lifeways by those resisting compulsory heterosexuality, however, does not equal support for indigenous self-determination. Both the denigration and celebration of native social structures depend on interpreting indigenous social dynamics in ways that emphasize their cultural difference from dominant Euramerican ideals *as opposed to* their role in processes of political self-definition. Native writers have responded to these intertwined modes of interpellation by affirming the specificity, legitimacy, and rightful autonomy of their peoples' forms of collectivity. Their work highlights the role performed by native "sexuality" in traditional forms of political identification and placemaking while also tracking the violence at play in U.S. attempts to translate native social life into Euramerican terms.

I show how attempts to cast native cultures as a perverse problem to be fixed or a liberating model to be emulated both rely on the erasure of indigenous political autonomy; reciprocally, the book illustrates how native writers in several different periods, in response, have insisted on the coherence and persistence of native polities by examining the ways traditions of residency and social formations that can be described as *kinship* give shape to particular modes of governance and land tenure. The book takes up these issues in its three sets of paired chapters. It examines depictions in the 1820s of native kinship as an integral part of narratives about the relation between white romance and national identity, rethinking the role of the trope of captivity (chapters 1 and 2); native writers' description of traditional kinship

networks as a way of responding to major changes in federal Indian policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (chapters 3 and 4); and the contrasting portraits of indigenous peoples offered in contemporary queer texts by native and non-native writers (chapters 5 and 6). These examples provide the anchorage points for a double-sided genealogy, exploring the work performed by representations of native peoples in (re)shaping notions of sexual normality and the role played by discourses of sexuality in the struggle over what will constitute imperially intelligible modes of native political identity. The rest of this introduction will address some of the key critical terms for the study—kinship, sovereignty, heteronormativity, and race—specifying how the queer methodology I develop depends on and enables a reconceptualization of these concepts and the relations among them in the process of developing a native-centered history of sexuality.

KINSHIP'S TRANSLATIONS

If discourses of sexuality play a central role in interpellating native peoples into Euramerican hegemonies, the trope of kinship can provide a powerful tool through which to mark and contest that process. In “Go Away Water!” Daniel Heath Justice observes, “Indigenous intellectual traditions have survived not because they’ve conceded to fragmenting Eurowestern priorities, but because they’ve *challenged* those priorities,” and from this perspective, he suggests that a critical orientation predicated on kinship can provide an alternative to the prevalent pursuit of authentication in which native people(s) seek to disqualify other people’s, or peoples’, claims to indigeneity on the basis of the somewhat unreflexive employment of Euramerican (legal) categories (like blood quantum).¹⁰ He argues that “kinship is best thought of as a verb, rather than a noun, because kinship, in most indigenous contexts, is something that’s *done* more than something that simply *is*”; similarly, “indigenous nationhood,” or “*peoplehood*,” can be understood as based less on a logic of jurisdiction than “an understanding of common social interdependence within the community . . . that link[s] the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships” (150–151). This line of analysis seeks to position kinship as an active principle of peoplehood while also reorienting it away from reproductive notions of transmitted biological substance or privatized homemaking. Instead, it marks extended forms of “interdependence,” which remain largely unintelligible within interlocking settler notions of politics and family. *When Did Indians Become Straight?* seeks to foreground the rhetoric of kinship, however, in order to explore the obverse of this

point. How has heteronormativity played a central role in rendering the terms and aims of settler jurisdiction self-evident by transposing modes of indigenous peoplehood into discourses of sexuality (the basis for both hegemonic straightness and counterhegemonic queerness), in which they no longer signify as forms of autonomous political collectivity but as a “special”/“savage” aberration from the nuclear household?

The “straightening” and “queering” of indigenous populations occur within an ideological framework that takes the settler state, and the state form more broadly, as the axiomatic unit of political collectivity, and in this way, native sovereignty either is bracketed entirely or translated into terms consistent with state(/ist) jurisdiction. However, the concept of kinship, as it has emerged in anthropological discourses since the late nineteenth century, offers a means of disjoining the political imaginary of the settler state by refusing the distinction between governance and “sexuality,” understanding the facets of social life fused to each other within the latter as actively taking part in *political* processes. Put another way, “kinship” provides a way of redefining what constitutes governance by seeing dynamics of family formation and household construction, for example, as central aspects of the kinds of collective identification, spatiality, decision-making, and resource distribution that conventionally are understood as outlining the contours of a polity. That shift potentially opens room for attending to other modes of sovereignty without translating them as an aberration or diminished alternative *within* the dominant structure of the settler state. The rhetoric of kinship, then, can enable a rethinking of the ways the component parts of “sexuality” may index forms of native political autonomy that are distinct from settler policy logics, thus thwarting efforts to represent indigenous peoples as merely domestic subjects of the state.

The portrayal of indigenous kinship systems as forms of governance, though, also runs the risk of reifying native cultural difference in ways that actually short-circuit struggles for self-determination. As Elizabeth Povinelli argues in *The Empire of Love*, “The intimate couple is a key transfer point between, on the one hand, liberal imaginaries of contractual economics, politics, and sociality and, on the other, liberal forms of power in the contemporary world”: “If you want to locate the hegemonic home of liberal logics and aspirations, look to love in the settler colonies” (17). The role of “couple”-hood as symbolically central to the social logic of liberalism is captured in the imagination of romance as an “intimate event,” one sealed off from public/state imperatives that gives unqualified expression to unencumbered individual freedom. This vision of personal liberty depends upon the fact that “others must be trapped in liberal intimacy’s nightmare—the genealogically determined collective” (183), and “kinship

and the family, tribalism, and patriarchy are obvious examples of discourses of genealogical inheritances" (199). Depicting indigeneity as wedded to structures of kinship feeds into both civilizing and multicultural liberal discourses by casting native peoples as anomalous, constrained by an unchangeable tradition imagined as needing to be either eliminated or tokenistically recognized by the settler state. Both approaches accept liberal assumptions about individual freedom, as expressed through conjugal intimacy: the equation of adulthood with independence from one's birth family and pursuit of a romantic union through which to form one's own distinct household. From this perspective, the kinship system marks indigenous specificity as oddity, positioning it either as a block to national citizenship to be eradicated or as a curiosity to be preserved so as to indicate the nation's positive inclusion of aboriginal residues. The kinds of collectivity and governance associated with kinship, then, do not get to count as fully political, in the sense that they are presented as idiosyncratic and archaic—a holdover from a past that continues to survive as a sign of continuing indigenous presence within a modernity defined by the terms of settler occupation.

Instead of simply reaffirming liberal logics, might the trope of kinship help mark the ways heteronormative ideologies of "couple"-hood provide the frame for inserting indigenous peoples into the political geography of the settler state? In other words, what happens when the rhetoric of "kinship" is taken as indexing a history of indigenous-settler struggle rather than as merely describing particular arrangements of *home* and *family*? Povinelli argues that "liberal adult love depends on instantiating its opposite, a particular kind of illiberal, tribal, customary, and ancestral love" (226), juxtaposing "the autological subject" (the participant in the liberal intimate event) with "the genealogical subject" (the kinship-entrapped indigene) in ways that suggest that the former depends on the abjection of the latter. Rather than seeing them as *opposites*, the "intimate event" can be understood as providing the frame through which native social formations are made intelligible within U.S. policy and public discourses. Other forms of home and family are measured against the standard of bourgeois homemaking, with deviations appearing as failed domesticity due to a racial propensity toward perversity; as Cathy Cohen suggests, nonwhite populations are cast as nonheteronormative regardless of object choice, presented as occupying a pathologized relation to conjugal domesticity. Populations are racialized through their insertion into a political economy shaped around a foundational distinction between public and private spheres, with the latter defined by a naturalized, nuclear ideal against which other modes of sociality appear as lack/aberrance. Within this system, native forms of collectivity ordered around "kinship" signify as local, racially defined enclaves

rather than fully sovereign governments. In other words, kinds of indigenous sociality unintelligible within a social geography shaped by privatization are represented as a *special* case within the broader framing heteronormative logics of settler governance, cast as extralegal cultural difference rather than as the basis for competing kinds of legality or governance. At one point, Povinelli observes that “heteronormativity” possesses a “genealogical underbelly” that depends on the expansion of the “private” to encompass all of the “dependencies” inconsistent with liberal political economy (198). In this way, the rhetoric of kinship operates as a tactic within discourses of sexuality, consigning nonliberal models of sociality to the structural position of (failed) “family” and thereby preserving state structures and mappings from the potential challenge they pose. Thus, the nonnuclear social dynamics marked by the term “kinship” appear as “genealogical” because they are inserted into a system organized around a notion of privatized “family” and in which the apparent contradiction between these two forms of intimacy is due to forcing one social system to signify within the terms of another. To portray native peoples through the trope of kinship does not so much make them the counterpoint to liberal love and the intimate event as mark an imperial process of incorporation. “Kinship” points toward the processes by which indigenous socialities are domesticated—both made to fit a model centered on the bourgeois household and represented as internal to settler sovereignty. The rhetoric of kinship functions as a matrix of translation in which social formations that do not fit a liberal framework are recast as deviations from heteronormative homemaking.

This interpellative dynamic, often presented as a recognition of indigenous difference, is captured perhaps most ably in David Schneider’s *Critique of the Study of Kinship*, in which he argues that the concept of kinship provides anthropology with a means of narrating non-Euro-derived social formations from within a Euro-“ethnoepistemology” focused on biologically defined genealogy.¹¹ Schneider argues that the anthropological tradition of utilizing kinship as a conceptual framework for comparative cultural analysis unreflexively installs Euro-notions of “family” as universal in ways that badly distort the internal dynamics of other social systems. He asserts that “[b]etween the fieldwork and the monograph falls the shadow of translation” (3), claiming that the use of “genealogy or kinship . . . as a sort of grammar and syntax” for producing knowledge within anthropology ends up inserting native concepts into a structure defined by alien categories. Putting in question the distinction between depictions that are “emic” (derived from native self-understandings) and “etic” (derived from scholarly imperatives), he suggests that what is taken for “emic” often “is a description formulated

in etic terms" (153), making the principles of "kinship" foundational to the intellectual enterprise regardless of the actual terms used. This rubric conventionally refers to "relations arising out of sexual reproduction," and "the structural and logical priority of genealogy is built into the premises embodied in the way in which kinship is defined" (130–131). In other words, patterns of reproductive relation and inheritance—often referred to as "a genealogy" when graphically represented in terms of parental, sibling, and conjugal connections—lie at the heart of the deployment of kinship as a concept. Its various usages within anthropology are linked by a shared presumption that the "primary meanings" of kinship terms "are the kin types closest to ego [the focal point for tracing the genealogy] which then are extended outward," a practice that either explicitly or implicitly presents kinship as radiating "out from the nuclear family" (90). Without this presumed reproductive unit at its base as the literal referent for "social" and "fictive" kinship elaborations, anthropology would run into an insurmountable comparative crisis: "If each society had a different social convention for establishing a kinship relationship . . . by what logic were these all considered to be *kinship* relations since each constituted a different relationship" (108)? This unexamined, yet paradigmatic, investment in a biologically imagined genealogy patterned after conjugal domesticity leads Schneider to describe the kinship concept as dependent on the "Doctrine of the Genealogical Unity of Mankind," which presumes that "all human cultures have a theory of human reproduction or similar beliefs about biological relatedness, or that all human societies share certain conditions which create bonds between genetrix and child and between a breeding couple" and that "these genealogically defined categories, in their primary meaning, are comparable regardless of the wider context of each culture in which each is set" (119–120). The rhetoric of kinship, then, transposes other social formations into a model organized around Euro-notions of "family." For this reason, "*social kinship* could never be completely freed of its defining feature, human sexual reproduction or the folk theory of it" (111), and anthropologists who utilize the notion of "kinship" "are simply bringing *our* biology . . . back into what is presumed to be *their* (the natives') cultural theory of reproduction" (118).¹²

However, having traced the scholarly trope of kinship back to a particular "folk theory" of reproductive genealogy, Schneider asserts the uselessness of the concept, rather than considering how the process of translation he describes functions as a vector of imperial governance by recasting the structures of bourgeois homemaking as necessarily following from the biology of human reproduction. He declares, "Robbed of its grounding in biology, kinship is nothing" (112). In considering the Euro-ethnoepistemology that gives shape to the rhetoric of kinship, he argues that "[h]uman sexual

reproduction has been viewed by anthropologists as an essentially biological process, part of human nature, regardless of any cultural aspects which may be attached to it." From this point, he deduces that the second central doctrine that undergirds the use of the trope of kinship is that "Blood Is Thicker Than Water," that biology provides "kinds of bonds" that "take priority over" others and "are in principle unquestionable" (165). However, the genealogical grid that serves as the basis for mapping kinship relations is not simply an expression of "biology," or even folk theories of it, per se. Treating such a concept in isolation runs into the same problem Schneider observes of the logic of kinship, overlooking the "cultural aspects" to which "biology" attaches or its place in "the wider context" of the culture under discussion.¹³ The explicit or implicit representation of the nuclear family model as simply an expression of the necessary conditions of sexual procreation itself helps legitimize a particular political economy, employing biological discourses to naturalize a specific set of heteronormative social arrangements.¹⁴

The invocation of biology as the means of explaining dominant, institutionalized Anglo-American ideologies of domesticity fuses a collection of potentially disparate phenomena together as an inherently integrated, interdependent, natural bundle. In *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I*, Foucault suggests that "the notion of sex made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere" (154). In this way, an ethnoepistemology centered on biology helps in forging an "artificial unity" between, among other things, marital heteroromantic pairing, bourgeois homemaking, private propertyholding and dynamics of inheritance, legal determinations of familial relatedness, and a specific gendered division of labor—naturalizing as foundational a distinction among social spheres or domains. As Antonio Gramsci suggests, "If every State tends to create and maintain a certain type of civilisation and of citizen . . . , and to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others, then the Law will be its instrument for this purpose" (246). In other words, the "doctrines" that Schneider indicates shape the use of the kinship concept are animated and disseminated not just as a folk theory but by U.S. law, which implicitly mobilizes such doctrines as part of validating and maintaining a political economy of privatization enacted through various legal measures with respect to issues such as marriage, the transmission of property, home ownership, zoning, and child welfare.¹⁵ The emphasis on anthropologists' de facto investment in "biological processes," therefore, leaves aside the ways biological rhetorics work to legitimize a legally entrenched heteronormative system whose ordering principles far exceed the terms of reproductive connections of consanguinity.¹⁶

If one pushes Schneider's insights further, the trope of kinship can be understood as a key technology of settler imperialism, and if read in reverse, it can function not as a positivist set of claims about other peoples but as a way of marking the dynamics of heteronormative interpellation, revealing how indigenous self-representations and forms of self-governance are recoded as a kind of collective identity exterior to the sphere of "politics" proper and thus as subject to settler jurisdiction. Such a shift also highlights the ways the political economy of privatization is legitimized by portraying it as the natural expression of "the family," illustrating the crucial role played by "kinship" in the self-imagination and self-justification of the liberal state. The rhetoric of kinship translates social formations by viewing them through a conceptual/ideological paradigm ordered around the biologically validated nuclear family, in which they can appear as perversely aberrant or a special exemption from the general form of privatization as discussed earlier.

However, narrating the dynamics of indigenous peoplehood as *kinship* also troubles the naturalized ideal of conjugal domesticity and the separation of public and private spheres, pointing to alternative kinds of sociality even while attempting to insert them into a dominant liberal framework. Schneider indicates that in much of the early (proto-)anthropological writing through which kinship is constituted as an analytical trope, "primitive" societies are described as being "kin-based," "treating the kinship group and the polity as a single body" (45), or, as Janet Carsten suggests of the persistence of this trend into the mid-twentieth century, "They saw kinship as constituting the political structure and providing the basis for social continuity in stateless societies" (10). Ethnology's fusion of the spheres of the familial and the political in describing native peoples threatens to undo the supposedly inevitable distinction between these two domains. While privileging the kinds of domesticity dominant in the liberal settler state, the trope of kinship registers the existence of social formations that do not have a privatizing distinction between social domains, even as that fact is transposed into an ideological register in which nuclear intimacy and insularity provides the standard.

If kinship has served as a matrix through which to recast indigenous polities in ways consistent with Euramerican institutions and ideological imperatives, why retain it as part of an anti-imperial critical vocabulary? One answer would be that it has come to serve as a way for native people to name their own social structures, such as in the epigraph from Ella Deloria with which I began, or in Justice's work discussed earlier, and to decry it now is less to facilitate native self-representation than for non-native scholars (such as myself), yet again, to dictate the proper ways of portraying indigeneity. Audra Simpson observes in "Paths Toward a Mohawk Nation" that

“when articulating and analysing indigenous nationhood, we must account for and understand the foreignness that embeds their aspirations—the machinery of settlement that has hardened into institutions of governance” (122). In a similar vein, scholars should not ignore how settler terminologies have come to serve, in complicated and multivectoral ways, as vehicles for expressing indigenous identity. Following this logic, though, one could ask about the reasons for the indigenous redeployment of the kinship concept. Beyond simply its prevalence in the history of scholarly and governmental strategies for characterizing and categorizing native peoples, it also marks fairly precisely the history of settler efforts to dismantle, reconfigure, and regulate indigenous sociality, spatiality, and self-governance. As demonstrated throughout *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, the assessment of native peoples against the standard of conjugal domesticity in official and popular, as well as scholarly, accounts has served as a consistent means of constraining possibilities for self-determination by positioning “kinship-based” native modes of governance as not really governance: defining sovereignty recognizable by the federal government on the basis of political institutions that are completely differentiated from familial relations (chapters 1 and 4); depicting modes of governance in which these *spheres* are mixed as a perverse and primitive communalism that must be abandoned in favor of entry as citizens into the settler nation, itself signified by the division of the “tribe” into privatized, propertyholding nuclear families through allotment (chapters 3 and 6); or casting such modes as a way of regenerating the settler public by opening it to forms of subjectivity not defined by heteroconjugality (chapters 2 and 5).¹⁷

“Kinship” operates as a threshold concept that is both inside and outside the ideological structure of privatized domesticity, interpellating other kinds of sociality while simultaneously marking their *nonidentity* with respect to the dominant system.¹⁸ As such, “kinship” provides a way for indigenous people to indicate how their sociopolitical formations, whether officially recognized by the state or not, differ from liberal formulations; the concept also offers a means of tracing the multiple ways discourses of sexuality take part in enabling, naturalizing, and managing the ongoing project of settlement, regulating what gets to count as a polity, geopolitical identity, and proper modes of collective decision-making, land tenure, and resource distribution. Thus, in treating kinship as a matrix of translation, I less am trying to enfold various social formations into its terms—Haudenosaunee clans (chapters 1 and 5), Algonquian adoption and networks of alliance (chapter 2), Sioux tiospayes (chapters 3 and 4), Creek talwas (chapter 6)—than to use it to mark the varied and historically shifting ways these kinds of collectivity are subjected to settler assault, appropriation, and/or erasure through an enforced comparison to

bourgeois domesticity that denies or diminishes the possibilities for native self-representation and sovereignty.¹⁹

SOVEREIGNTY AND (THE LIMITS OF) TRADITION

Like kinship, sovereignty is a translation, articulating native peoples' existence as polities through a comparison to the logics and structures of the settler state. However, as with kinship, the concept of sovereignty interpellates indigenous modes of collectivity into a liberal framework while also marking their nonidentity with respect to it. More than bearing an analogical relationship to each other, kinship and sovereignty are intertwined, the former providing a way of variously managing, containing, and/or disassembling social formations that do not readily fit the dominant ideological and institutional matrix of Anglo-American governance. This process is part of what I elsewhere have characterized as the settler state's exertion of metapolitical authority over indigenous peoples—its arrogation to itself of the right to define what constitutes political identity, intelligible land tenure, and meaningful consent.²⁰ In this way, sovereignty refers less to something that indigenous peoples simply have, preceding and outside of the terms of settler occupation, than to the uneven and fraught dynamics by which the settler state recognizes/disavows indigenous modes of peoplehood and indigenous peoples negotiate the shifting imperatives/contingencies of settler rule. Putting the concepts of kinship and sovereignty in dialogue emphasizes not only the ways the former can serve as a strategy in limiting and regulating native expression of the latter but the ways official articulations of peoplehood, in response, come to be shaped by heteronormative principles. The critique of heteronormativity, then, can reveal both how U.S. control over native peoples is legitimized and naturalized by reference to the self-evident superiority of bourgeois homemaking and how native intellectuals and governments have sought to validate tribal autonomy through investments in native *straightness*.

The term "sovereignty" often is used to mark the rightful autonomy of native peoples—their existence as polities that precedes and exceeds the terms of settler-state jurisdiction. Dating from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the notion of "sovereignty" has been used by Europeans and Euroamericans as a way of indicating the separateness of political entities, the legitimate exercise of authority by national governments over the territory claimed by them as the nation, and the noninterference in the *domestic* affairs of such nations by *foreign* powers.²¹ Within the idioms of Euramerican governance, recognition of "sovereignty" is equivalent to acknowledging the

presence of a polity and its legitimate rule over its territory and people. In *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*, David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima offer such a formulation in defending the authority of native nations against settler encroachment: "American Indian tribes are sovereign nations. Their sovereignty is inherent, pre- or extraconstitutional, and is explicitly recognized in the Constitution." However, later on the same page, they indicate that this vision must be qualified, observing, "Are tribes today unlimited sovereigns? Certainly not. The political realities of relations with the federal government, relations with state and local governments, competing jurisdictions, complicated local histories, circumscribed land bases, and overlapping citizenships all constrain their sovereignty" (5). The portrait they offer is of an "inherent" sovereignty intruded upon due to contemporary "political realities." Such "relations" appear as a pragmatic, logistical, and historically accreting set of interferences in the underlying principle of indigenous sovereignty, which itself does not derive from the U.S. Constitution. Yet this *inherent* authority is not simply exterior to U.S. governance, having been "affirmed in hundreds of ratified treaties and agreements, acknowledged in the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, and recognized in ample federal legislation and case law" (8–9). These various strands of U.S. legal discourse are presented as simply registering what already was there, "sovereignty" apparently referring to modes of peoplehood whose contours and content are neither defined nor inherently "constrain[ed]" by the settler regime.

When, though, did U.S. procedures for constituting the field of "political" relations create "realities" that undermined or intruded upon this preexistent "sovereignty"? Wilkins and Lomawaima's argument can be thought of as playing the early history of treaties against the developments of the late nineteenth century that set the stage for a diminished status for native self-governance, including the following: congressional declaration of an end to treaty-making in 1871; the Supreme Court's allocation of "plenary power" to Congress in 1886 (in *U.S. v. Kagama*); and the passage of the General Allotment (Dawes) Act in 1887, which sought to break up tribal lands into privately held plots.²² This staging gestures toward the fact that native peoples cannot be reduced to a function of settler-state law due to the former's indigeneity—that their presence on the land as political entities predates the formation of the United States. At the same time, though, "sovereignty" marks that disjunction, their nonidentity with respect to U.S. jurisdiction, from within the terms of settler governance. While seeking to index the separateness of native peoples, the formulation "inherent sovereignty" also speaks to their necessary interpellation within settler discourses of "political" identity, but in its attempt to emphasize distinctness and prior-ness in order to create conceptual space within settler law for indigenous

self-determination, this assertion of native nations' status as *sovereign* brackets that process of forced *relation*—the effects on native governance and peoplehood of needing to articulate their legitimate autonomy in ways that make it intelligible to the settler state.

Other scholars in Native Studies have sought to foreground the violence at play in the state's insistence that native peoples signify their political collectivity in ways conducive to settler logics of jurisdiction, seeing the representation of peoplehood through "sovereignty" as itself a mark of this structural subordination. In a piece titled simply "Sovereignty," Taiaiake Alfred argues that the institutionalized language of sovereignty has "limited the ways we are able to think, suggesting always a conceptual and definitional problem centered on the accommodation of indigenous peoples within a 'legitimate' framework of settler state governance," adding that "[w]hen we step outside this discourse, we confront a different problematic, that of the state's 'sovereignty' itself" (34–35).²³ Using "sovereignty" to frame the issue of native self-representation and self-determination is necessarily *limiting*, measuring indigenous collective claims and articulations against a standard set by the settler state. Engaging in this *de facto* process of adjudication and assessment backgrounds a fundamental set of questions about the state's authority to evaluate indigenous formations of peoplehood, its *a priori* assertion of the right to be the arbiter of what constitutes a viable "political" identity. Native peoples "must conform to state-derived criteria and represent ascribed or negotiated identities in order to access these legal rights" (43); in doing so, they must make arguments "within a liberal paradigm" that is "in direct opposition to the values and objectives found in most traditional indigenous philosophies" (39, 43).²⁴ If the notion of *inherent sovereignty* gestures toward the recognition of modes of association, inhabitation, and governance that predate and cannot be encompassed within settler constitutionalism, that concept, from Alfred's perspective, still recycles the terms of settler law and is structured by an effort to make indigenous peoplehood legible within state logics that are dedicated to eradicating traditional native forms of sociality and spatiality—the "values" at the heart of native life. The "relations" that Wilkins and Lomawaima suggest qualify an underlying, unfettered sovereignty are, for Alfred, actually central to the settler "objectives" immanently at play in the discursive and ideological matrix of sovereignty itself.

Alfred's argument points to how forms of abjection and disavowal within settler governance are coupled to forms of recognition that ostensibly seek to give voice to native peoples while implementing "state-derived criteria" for what will constitute collective native subjectivity.²⁵ The process of engaging with the state involves taking up "ascribed or negotiated identities," such as the treatment of peoples as aggregations of persons bearing a reproductively

inherited racial Indianness (chapter 1), the extension of national citizenship as a way of redeeming the absence of *home* and *family* within tribes (chapter 3), and the acknowledgment of native governments so long as they fit a liberal separation of political and familial spheres (chapter 4). Reciprocally, this reading of recognition as interpellation draws attention to the nonliberal dimensions of native social formations that are occluded in the representation of native peoples in dominant official and popular accounts, like the role of familial terminologies and logics within international diplomacy (chapter 2), the persistence of traditional forms of local politics ordered around clans and connections among relatives despite the policies of allotment and reorganization (chapters 4 and 6), and continued attachments to homelands in the wake of dislocation/urbanization (chapter 5). Thus, following Alfred, one way *When Did Indians Become Straight?* addresses the issue of sovereignty is to suggest how discourses of sexuality crucially shape and legitimize the “criteria” utilized by the United States in engaging with native peoples, naturalizing settler ideologies of governance as simply what it means to be (part of) a polity and normalizing ongoing settler oversight as an effort to extend such awareness to indigenous populations.

Yet if the rhetoric of sovereignty works to insert native peoples into state jurisdiction, that dynamic also can go the other way, marking the enforced *relation* generated by state policy and also potentially stretching the terms of legal discourse to make indigenous practices of peoplehood legible as governance. While Wilkins and Lomawaima do not flag it as such, their use of the notion of “inherent sovereignty” attempts this kind of double-sided work, gesturing toward indigenous sociospatial formations that precede and exceed U.S. constitutionalism while marking those formations as properly protected within the U.S. constitutional order in ways that try to provide a means of registering intrusions on native self-determination as violations of the fundamental principles of U.S. law. However, without an explicit effort to mark the institutionalized imperial process of translation, to which the employment of the language of settler governance is a response, the assertion of native *sovereignty* can appear as a reference to a particular content—a pregiven set of principles and practices of sociospatiality—instead of as an intervention within an imposed dialectic. The danger lies in reifying the terms of native governance, such that a static version of it, largely generated by the state itself, comes to be recognized within settler law rather than opening room for indigenous self-representation.

In this vein, while foregrounding the imposition of Euramerican criteria, conceptual frameworks, and legal categories, analytical strategies that imagine a clear separation between Euramerican technologies of rule and native philosophies—between *sovereignty* and *tradition*—can overlook the ways the narration and institutionalization of the latter as a kind of content also can

abet the dissemination of settler norms. What constitutes tradition? Who decides, and under what circumstances are such determinations made? Or, put another way, can the effort to locate tradition be distinguished entirely from the process of imperial interpellation, including its heteronormative dimensions?²⁶ How might what gets named as *tradition* be part of the “ascribed or negotiated identities” Alfred critiques, and how might such identities be dependent on ideologies of straightness?²⁷

The citation of tradition does not itself guarantee that whatever is being designated remains unaffected by or exterior to settler socialities and governance; moreover, such formulations of tradition can function as a way of legitimizing native identity in ways that ultimately confirm, in Alfred’s terms, liberal “values and objectives.” Native feminists have explored the ways that contemporary articulations of peoplehood can rely on heteropatriarchal ideologies which are inherited from imperial policy but cast as key elements of tradition. As Jennifer Denetdale argues, “Navajo leaders, who are primarily men, reproduce Navajo nationalist ideology [in ways that] re-inscribe gender roles based on Western concepts even as they claim they operate under traditional Navajo philosophy.”²⁸ She notes that Larry Anderson, the council member who introduced the statute banning same-sex marriage in the Navajo Nation, justified his actions by asserting, “Traditionally, Navajos have always respected the woman and man union. Family values are important.”²⁹ As Denetdale suggests, the citation of certain practices/principles as tradition validates a heterogendered order, one that helps install a vision of “family” defined by conjugal domesticity as central to collective native “values.”³⁰ Similarly, Joanne Barker explores the ways that the history of the legal privileging of the male-headed, nuclear-family household in Canadian Indian policy, which functioned as a strategy of assimilation, over time came to be defended as part of the “sacred rights” held by indigenous peoples, positioning women who challenged the imposed patriarchal system for determining band membership as “embodying all things not only non- but anti-Indian” (127): “The effect of such representations was that existing, exploitative relations of power between Indian women and Indian men were perpetuated as culturally authentic and integral, even traditional” (148).

If these examples might be read as indicating the problem of institutionalizing a version of *tradition* ultimately defined within the (state-directed) imperatives of *sovereignty*, Brian Joseph Gilley’s work on contemporary Two-Spirit communities further suggests that the heteronormalization of tradition extends beyond acts by governmental bodies.³¹ “Two-Spirit men are surrounded by tribal members who speak reverently of the traditions of the past and how realignment with the old ways would cure the ills of Indian people. At the same time they understand that the tradition of

gender diversity is one that most Indians do not venerate or wish to revive. They also hear Indian people rebuke colonialism and the political-economic situation caused by European intervention in the same breath that these tribespeople apply Western value judgments on their sexuality" (57–58). This last example, in which nonheterogendered forms of sexual and gender expression are understood as perversity and outside the acceptable bounds of "tradition," suggests that the distinction between tradition and sovereignty, aligning the one with native philosophies/ontologies and the other with settler ideologies/intervention, breaks down with respect to discourses of sexuality.³²

One way of addressing this use of the discourse of tradition would be to claim that the ideas and practices attached to it are not *really* traditional, but doing so preserves the idea of a clear boundary, retaining the image of tradition as a discrete content rather than emphasizing the ways it signifies within the forced *relation* indicated by sovereignty. Hiving off tradition as exterior to sovereignty underemphasizes the extent to which the mobilization of the former concept takes shape in the context of the imposition of shifting "state-derived criteria" designated by the latter.³³ In other words, the effort to locate a particular set of practices and/or principles as tradition takes place within a context in which there are numerous incentives toward straightness and in which adopting (aspects of) heteronormativity can serve as a means of carving out space for certain kinds of indigenous association, belief, and practice. As one of Gilley's informants (Sean) observes, "They want to pick and choose the traditions that sound good to white people and make them look good to white people" (59). Put another way, the heterosexual imaginary can be thought of as multivectoral, not a single, coherent logic but an agglomeration of a range of "taxonom[ies] of perversions" working along diverse axes simultaneously (in terms of gender expression, racial identification, sexual object choice, family and household formation, marital status or ability to get married, reproductivity, etc.),³⁴ and parts of this artificial unity of the *normal*, itself a shifting and unstable nexus, might be activated so as to provide recognition for native peoples through the specification of certain practices as tradition. One version I explore is the effort to distinguish native *culture* from the legal matrix of *sovereignty*, preserving a sense of indigenous difference (which often includes acknowledgment of distinct kinship patterns) but disarticulating it from formal politics in ways that maintain the normative distinction between social spheres that characterizes U.S. liberalism (such as the localization of tradition within the regime instituted under the Indian Reorganization Act, addressed in chapter 4). Another variation is for marginalized persons and groups to play aspects of normality against each other as part of a counterhegemonic claim to legitimacy, distinguishing themselves from other, more stigmatized

modes of deviance.³⁵ This dynamic, which I refer to as the “bribe of straightness,” includes arguing for the validity of indigenous kinship systems (native family formations, homemaking, and land tenure) in ways that make them more acceptable/respectable to whites, disavowing the presence of sexual and gender practices deemed perverse within Euramerican sexology (such as Zitkala-Ša’s simultaneous defense of the tiospaye and erasure of the social status of the winkte among Dakotas, discussed in chapter 3).³⁶ In this way, the circulation of practices and principles as tradition can engage in processes of (hetero)normalization even as it may challenge other historic erasures and current institutionalized forms of denigration.

As with the earlier discussion of Elizabeth Povinelli’s distinction between “the autological subject” and “the genealogical subject,” the tropes of *tradition* and *sovereignty* could be thought of less as “opposites” than as moments within a dialectic in which the forms of political representation understood as legitimate by the state provide the framework for acknowledging difference while circumscribing its scope. Thus, instead of conceptualizing sovereignty as a set of “values and objectives” that can be juxtaposed to “traditional philosophies,” it can be characterized as a coercive relation in which *tradition* marks a limited sphere of exception to the dominant logics of the state, potentially signifying concrete forms of indigenous difference that can be institutionalized/tolerated as cultural recognition in ways that provide a further alibi for the continued exertion of authority by the settler state—including its ongoing regulation of what will constitute (native) politics.³⁷

How might “sovereignty” be employed in ways that call attention to the ongoing history of imperial interpellation while opening up other possibilities for imagining and living peoplehood? The concept of sovereignty can be used in ways that draw attention to the system of translation it manages, deconstructing and engaging the legal and political discourses of the state by illustrating how they already depend on an acknowledgment of indigenous presence, in ways reminiscent of the critical redeployment of kinship discussed earlier. As Jessica Cattelino argues, “Settler states, including the United States, establish national sovereignty in part through relations of interdependency with indigenous peoples” (163), adding that “U.S. sovereignty does not lie outside or above the settler-indigenous relationship” (177). However, not only is the work performed by *sovereignty* like that of *kinship*, the one centrally relies on the other. The concept of kinship has been, and continues to be, crucial in representing native politics (within U.S. administrative discourses, policy enacted by native nations, and popular narratives by natives and non-natives alike), and it offers a means of reimagining sovereignty by linking it to principles of collectivity and forms of sociospatiality displaced, disavowed, and/or disassembled by U.S. policy. Native “kinship” can index alternatives to the heteronormative ideal precisely because of their

historical enmeshment: the fact that the emergence and maintenance of the heteronorm depends on sustaining the broader rubric of kinship as a kind of conceptual dumping ground for anything that does not fit the dominant model of privatized *home* and *family*. This dialectical relation is why native socialities have been so attractive to non-natives as an imaginative resource to be taken up in challenging the naturalization of heteronuclearity (chapters 2 and 5). Although such counterhegemonic projects largely have reinforced rather than challenged state jurisdiction, the citation of native kinship systems has the potential to rework the framework of settler authority when articulated with sovereignty.

In her study of contemporary Seminole self-representations, Cattellino observes that many Seminoles understand the power for greater control over their own governance afforded them by the profits of gaming, which they name as *sovereignty*, as enabling them to return to clan-based principles assaulted by the United States in its mid-twentieth-century effort to train them in conjugal domesticity (in ways that resemble the allotment policy earlier implemented elsewhere). In fact, the general counsel for the Seminoles, Jim Shore, presents his work in terms of what can be characterized as kinship; as Cattellino describes his position, “Law is at the service of . . . an indigenous system of legal rule: the ‘dos and don’ts’ of matrilineal clans” (185). The effort to make visible and redress the imposition of nuclear homemaking helps reshape the meaning of *sovereignty*, drawing on the legal tropes of settler rule while opening them up to signify forms of native self-understanding not acknowledged by the United States as constitutive of political collectivity. Moreover, this way of articulating sovereignty can be read as drawing attention to the legacy of U.S. intervention into Seminole social life, staging the current performance of Seminole political identity in ways that refuse to bracket that history and that actually foreground it as a basis for formulating peoplehood in the present. Reciprocally, while the clan system functions as *tradition*, it does not appear as outside the history of settlement (a position that, as suggested earlier, can lead to an unacknowledged reification of settler ideals—like heteropatriarchy—as if they always-already were present). Instead, the citation of the clans indexes the specific ways Seminole peoplehood has been assaulted, creating a kind of continuity that is not outside of sovereignty but that inhabits that category in ways that highlight those elements tagged and targeted as deviant in processes of imperial interpellation.

Similarly, I less am seeking to offer *kinship* systems as a privileged model of contemporary *sovereignty* than trying to mark how the insertion of native peoples into Euramerican discourses of sexuality provides a central matrix through which the sphere of politics is defined. A kind of queer analysis that extends beyond discussion of the policing of homoeroticism and gender

expression, then, can aid in developing an immanent critique of the dimensions and effects of imperial superintendence, foregrounding the role of discourses of sexuality in U.S. regulation of what will count as native governance, as well as the related self-censuring that can guide native representations of *tradition* and *sovereignty*. Additionally, linking kinship to sovereignty within the critique of heteronormativity can help mark how efforts by non-natives to appropriate indigenous social formations fail to interrogate ongoing processes of settlement and the (limited) possibilities for political subjectivity they generate. Furthermore, conjoining discussion of kinship with sovereignty, or self-determination more broadly, helps mark and seeks to undo the work of the rhetoric of kinship, and associated tropes of cultural difference, in segregating nonliberal forms of indigenous sociality from the geopolitics of jurisdiction. Instead, *When Did Indians Become Straight?* insists that the interpellation of indigenous sociality as kinship through an enforced (if implicit) comparison to heterohomemaking works as part of the broader, ongoing process in which indigenous governance is managed through its translation into the terms of the reigning settler model of what can constitute political identity.

QUEER KINSHIP?

Retaining the concept of kinship and foregrounding it helps highlight both the ways native sociopolitical formations cut across the liberal division between social domains and the ways discourses of sexuality insert native peoples into a settler framework, which provides the terms for dominant and counterhegemonic articulations. Heteronormativity legitimizes the liberal settler state by presenting the political economy of privatization as simply an expression of the natural conditions for human intimacy, reproduction, and resource distribution; thus, the critique of heteronormativity offers a potent means for challenging the ideological process by which settler governance comes to appear (or at least to narrate itself as) self-evident. Much of the critique of heteronormativity as it has emerged within queer studies, however, focuses on how various kinds of populations are denied access to social resources based on their supposed failure to embody an idealized vision of conjugal domesticity, reciprocally attending to how that mapping of deviance does not simply position existing groups with respect to the norm but actually produces them as populations. Much of the work in queer studies focused on the United States, including that which takes up the notion of *kinship*, continues to accept citizenship as the implicit horizon of political possibility, addressing the effects of heteronormativity in terms

of exclusion from full participation in or recognition by the national polity. While implicitly drawing on the anthropological discourses through which the concept of kinship has emerged, this queer scholarship by and large does not acknowledge its connection to that intellectual history or the political struggles (including between settler governance and indigenous peoples) in which that intellectual tradition has been enmeshed. In this way, queer analyses of kinship and the use of kinship in defining and critiquing heteronormativity have failed not only to challenge the ways discourses of “kinship” work to incorporate indigenous peoples into settler frameworks but also to observe queer scholarship’s own imbrications in ongoing projects of settlement. A queer methodology organized around kinship that places native peoples at its center, however, does not take the (settler)state as its de facto frame, instead attending to forms of place-based political collectivity abjected or rendered unintelligible within U.S. governance. From this perspective, heteronormativity is not an internal set of distinctions within citizenship or among national subjects but a system that emerges in relation to the ongoing imperial project of (re)producing the settler state as against competing indigenous formations.

When engaging directly with the concept of “kinship,” queer studies scholars have tended to treat it as the central matrix of (hetero)normalization, exclusion from which constitutes queers as such. As Kath Weston suggests in *Families We Choose*, “By shifting without signal between reproduction’s meaning of physical procreation and its sense as the perpetuation of society as a whole, the characterization of lesbians and gay men as nonproductive beings links their supposed attacks on ‘the family’ to attacks on society in the broadest sense” (25), situating them “in an inherently antagonistic relation to kinship solely on the basis of their nonprocreative sexualities” (27). Queer subjects are those cut loose from genealogical imaginings, categorized as exterior to dominant formulations of *home* and *family*, in which heteroconjugality serves as the precondition for procreation itself. The disarticulation of queers from reproduction leaves them without a place in “society.” If queers largely are alienated from a national hegemony legitimized by references to the naturalness of nuclear modes of “kinship,” what political strategies are available to them? Put in very schematic terms, the answers largely have taken one of two paths: repudiate the features of normality, rejecting participation in dominant discourses; or seek to disjoint the terms of normality, creating a counterhegemony through the scrambling and selective recombination of its central features.

One of the most forceful, and widely cited, examples of the former strategy is Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s essay “Sex in Public.”³⁸ They argue for the importance of forms of “queer culture building” that “unsettle . . . the hierarchies of property and propriety that [can be]

describe[d] as heteronormative" (548). Such a challenge to the system of "national heterosexuality" contests the privatization of intimacy, or perhaps more precisely refuses the equation of intimacy with (marital) privacy that helps validate the dislocation of certain (perverse) persons and activities from public space and the displacement of issues of sexual freedom from public discourse.³⁹ As against this insulating fantasy—with its depoliticized, limited, and unevenly accessible promise of privatized fulfillment in relative isolation—queer sociality engages in a "world-making project" that engenders "modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as a birthright," creating an open-ended potential for association in which sexual connections are understood neither as exclusive to a particular kind of relationship nor as the privileged basis for residency or lifelong commitment (558). They add, "Queer culture . . . has almost no institutional matrix for its counterintimacies," creating *counterpublics* that "support forms of affective, erotic and personal living that are . . . accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity" while remaining unallied to the logics and apparatus of the state (562). In this way, they envision oppositional cultural formations that may exist within the nation but are not *national*.

While this formulation of "queer culture" can be subjected to Cohen's critique of an implicit queer/straight binary, and the attendant presumption of a symmetrical lack of privilege among all queers, what seems more striking to me is how it conceptualizes opposition to heteronormativity as the purging of those aspects of social life fused to each other within compulsory heterosexuality. If queers are abjected as such through their exile from kinship, the argument goes, they simply can do without it, have, and are the better for it. In addressing the problems generated by privatization, Berlant and Warner observe, "Community is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling, and kinship; a historical relation to futurity is restricted to generational narrative and reproduction" (554). This summary locates rather precisely the kinds of equivalence forged by institutionalized heteronormative ideologies. However, more than noting that these dimensions of social experience are conjoined in a particular normative configuration, in which each element comes to serve as a metonym for every other and for the whole, the article seems to accept this assemblage and to present "queer" as what exists outside or beyond it. The authors observe, "Making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation," suggesting that queer "world-making" takes place in a space beyond the chain of equivalence they cite. Defining that project as lacking any institutional infrastructure and as being "*unrealizable* as community or identity" casts it not simply as having no "necessary relation" to the assemblage, or *artificial unity*, of heteronormativity but as having no relation to any of its

constituent elements that would indicate belonging of one kind or another (to a kinship group, a household, a community). The effort to inhabit these forms in ways that disaggregate or reconstellate the terms of compulsory heterosexuality appears always-already doomed to failure, simply recapitulating normative (and national) structures: "Same-sex couples have sometimes been able to invent versions of such practices. But they have done so only by betrothing themselves to the couple form and its language of personal significance, leaving untransformed the material and ideological conditions that divide intimacy from history, politics, and publics" (562).⁴⁰ Although earlier indicating that "national heterosexuality" is not a "monoculture" due to the fact that "hegemonies" are "elastic alliances" (553), the article offers little sense that there is any elasticity within dominant strategies of normalization or that queers might stage counterhegemonic challenges so as to realign the "system of forces in unstable equilibrium" which comprises the state.⁴¹ This approach does not envision a process of hegemony-making, both that queers might utilize to alternate ends and in which queers might be implicated, instead portraying queer counterpublics as exterior to normativity—defining them as the inversion of its guiding principles and seeming to accept as axiomatic the notion that queerness necessarily exists outside of dynamics that could be understood as *kinship*.

The other prominent approach to that relationship has been to imagine the concept of kinship as something that might be *queered*, brought into a critical/oppositional relation to its dominant formulation so as to shift the terms of public debate and engagement. In *Families We Choose*, Weston argues that gay and lesbian efforts in the United States to create new forms of what they name as "family" require that the latter be thought of less "as an institution" than "as a contested concept" (3); she later indicates that her study "treat[s] gay kinship ideologies as historical *transformations* rather than derivatives of other sorts of kinship relations" (106), indicating the possibility of shifting the current "equilibrium" in ways that would "undercut procreation's status as a master term imagined to provide the template for all possible kinship relations" (213).⁴² From this perspective, the trope of kinship can be seen both as a key technology of heteronormativity and as registering the unevenness of its interpellations, opening the possibility of using a version of the kinship concept to make visible and legible social formations that contest the self-evidence of privatized (hetero)conjugalities. In this vein, Elizabeth Freeman in *The Wedding Complex* emphasizes the potential discontinuity between weddings and marriage, the former serving as a site for imagining and remembering an extensive matrix of associations, affections, and identifications seemingly foreclosed in the dominant, institutionalized ideal of companionate couplehood. She suggests, "The ordinary wedding seems to provide neither psychic nor narrative closure, but rather

an array of detachable narrative parts—characters, genres, story lines—that can be recombined into ‘proto-narratives of possible lives’” (xiii). The texts she addresses employ what she terms a “kin-aesthetic” as a way of “formalizing the very relationships that do not count as lawful kinship” (98), engaging in “queer” acts of imagination that have less to do with creating room for subjectivities predicated on same-sex eroticism than generating “fantasized, acted-out, and lived transformations of historically specific public symbolic fields” (51). While not discounting or subordinating the kinds of queer intimacy and sociality Berlant and Warner address, these other queer ways of narrating kinship emphasize a more elastic relationship to that concept as well as the political possibilities opened by seeing the aggregation of elements within the heteronorm as the result of an ongoing (set of) process(es), into which marginalized subjects can intervene.⁴³ The contours of “lawful kinship” may be *transformed*, or at least other possible configurations of residency, enduring solidarity, intimacy, eroticism, dependence, reproduction, child care, and resource distribution can be articulated through the prism of *kinship* in ways that contest the naturalized metonymic unity produced by heteronormative discourses.

If kinship can provide a vehicle for contesting modes of normalization, what are the limits of such counterhegemonic intervention? Or, more to the point, what are its conditions of possibility? To what extent is such a politics dependent on a (largely disowned) commitment to membership in the (settler) state? As noted earlier, Berlant and Warner present queer culture as something other than “national” even as their analysis remains very much specific to the United States and offers no alternative mode of political collectivity that could take the place of the state, thus implicitly framing their argument within the contours of citizenship. However, Freeman also seeks to present the queer(ing) imaginings she chronicles as separate from the regime administered by the state. Her call for an effort “to genuinely socialize the distribution of public resources by decoupling this system from marriage” is itself coupled to the idea of not “looking to the state for ‘recognition’” (216–217). Assuming that the state continues to serve as the mechanism for regulating the distribution of public resources, how is a call for alternative formations of resource allocation not about recognition by the state? The mode of that recognition may no longer be conjugal couplehood, including same-sex pairings, but does that make such a new configuration of entitlements and legal possibilities separate from the state? This formulation of “recognition” seems to conceptualize the state in fairly monolithic ways that are at odds with the vision of “detachable” parts in the discussion of weddings and kinship, and that totalization appears to be in the service of locating queer aspirations as distinct from incorporation into the logics of the “state.” What is at stake in positing this distance/difference? Gramsci

suggests that when groups cannot gain significant traction or representation within a given political system, “political questions are disguised as cultural ones” (149), situating themselves as outside a flawed political structure while advocating for political change in a register different than avowedly governmental discourses. Such a tactic can be understood as a maneuver within broader processes of hegemony-making, but presenting *queer* “cultural” projects in this light leaves aside the ways that the terrain of ideological struggle on which such projects are moving is delimited by the nation-state—taking place within its boundaries, dialectically affected by shifting legal and administrative formations, addressed in de facto ways to a national public, and articulating forms of belonging contingent on citizenship (or legal residency).⁴⁴ The difference between the interpretive strategies I have been discussing seems to be whether kinship is viewed as irredeemably bound up in state-managed norms or whether it can be seen as (part of) a wider set of possibilities that can be recombined in ways at odds with the heteronormative imperatives of the state.

Placing queer politics in a purely negative relation to the state in these ways, however, frames heteronormativity as an exclusion of queer subjectivities and modes of sociality, instead of exploring how these queer maneuvers with respect to (dominant and oppositional formulations of) kinship remain embedded within a sociopolitical geography shaped by state policy. In *Antigone's Claim*, Judith Butler explores the ways the rhetoric of kinship cannot be severed from the work it performs in defining the proper subjects, objects, and contours of state authority. She argues that Antigone's choice to bury her brother in defiance of the edict of the king has been interpreted in ways that portray “*kinship as the sphere that conditions the possibility of politics without ever entering into it*” (2 – emphasis in original), and in this way, “a certain idealized notion of kinship” is imagined as serving as the basis for “cultural intelligibility” (3). Raising the issue of hegemony, but in a different critical register, she asks, “What happens when the perverse or the impossible emerges in the language of the law and makes its claim precisely in the sphere of legitimate kinship that depends on its exclusion or pathologization” (68)? If Butler foregrounds how discourses of kinship shape what will be recognized as a legitimate political claim (or claim about what will count as “politics”), she also does not acknowledge the anthropological tradition and its use of kinship to name/interpellate native social formations.⁴⁵ Butler describes the kinds of possibility she envisions through Antigone as what happens when “an inhabitant of the form . . . brings the form to crisis” (71), obliquely echoing a Gramscian vision of counterhegemony. However, can native peoples be described in simple terms as “inhabitant[s]” of the “form” of the settler state? What kind of “crisis” for the state's legal and political discourses is generated when the speaker already is understood as

inhabiting a space defined by the state's mapping of its own territoriality and jurisdiction? To what extent does the "crisis" thus created itself depend on presuming the geopolitical identity and integrity of the state even as the precise relation between (the spheres of) kinship and politics is being contested and renegotiated? If, as Janet Jakobsen suggests, "the incoherence within the network can be played differently so as to shift the relations that make up the network itself" ("Queer Is," 526), what are the terms of participating in the "network" in the first place? If the "network" is the settler state, to what extent does "shift[ing] the relations" within it in order to achieve different policy outcomes depend on accepting the givenness of settlement? To what extent does such acceptance foreclose possibilities for indigenous self-representation and self-determination? What are the limits, or at least costs, of engaging in a process of (counter)hegemony-making largely structured around settler institutions and publics?

Taking the anthropological tradition and its imbrication in settler imperialism as a starting point shifts critical focus from the ways legal discourses promote "an idealized notion of kinship" for those already seen as *inhabitants* of the state, instead directing attention toward how the trope of kinship functions as a means of presenting indigenous peoples as domestic—as *inhabiting* land over which the U.S. government exercises legitimate authority. If heteronormativity shapes the terms of political subjectivity by contradistinguishing "kinship" from "politics," modes of collectivity that challenge U.S. claims to governance can be characterized as kinship, set in comparison (as failure/deviation) to the paradigmatic model of conjugal domesticity in ways that disallow them from signifying as governance. Narrating native social formations as kinship casts them as under "the law" of the state that encloses them, suggesting that indigenous efforts to "make [a] claim . . . in the sphere of legitimate kinship" still occur within the "language" of the settler regime—subordinating indigenous sovereignties to the presumed coherence of U.S. nation-statehood.

How do some renegotiations of the relation between "kinship" and "politics" depend on foreclosing or disavowing others? To what extent are queer critics' efforts to imagine themselves, and their *world-making* and *kin-aesthetics*, as separate from state projects dependent on disowning the ways their status as U.S. subjects implicates them in the ongoing dynamics and imperatives of settlement?⁴⁶ How might such counterhegemonic strategies rely on treating the jurisdictional field of the state as stable? In this vein, chapters 2 and 5 explore how non-natives have positioned native sociality as an imaginative resource for challenging the self-evidence of nuclear homemaking and organizing more inclusive oppositional movements, drawing on ostensibly more capacious and less reproductively oriented native notions of community while displacing the issues of sovereignty and the

legal status of indigenous geopolitical formations. Conversely, chapters 5 and 6 address how contemporary formulations of queer native identity (specifically Mohawk and Creek) and responses to it can be situated within the history of the U.S. assault on indigenous modes of peoplehood, exploring how native writers contextualize queer people within native *kinship* systems and thus connect homophobia to the process by which the settler state manages what kinds of indigenous self-representations will count as *politics*.

PERVERSITIES OF COLOR

Another way of placing native peoples within queer studies would be to address how their status as people of color positions them within the history of sexuality, applying the insights of queer of color critique.⁴⁷ Such scholarship foregrounds the role of compulsory heterosexuality in processes of racialization and the (re)production of white privilege, understanding racial differentiation and hierarchy as key components of heteronormativity. As Cathy Cohen has argued in ways discussed earlier, the term “queer” often is positioned as the binary opposite of straightness in ways that fail to acknowledge how putatively straight people of color continue to be characterized as sexually aberrant, a charge used to justify increased surveillance and state management and decreased access to social resources. Recent scholarship has developed this line of analysis, illustrating how discourses of sexuality, in Foucault’s sense, are implicated from the outset in projects of racial formation.⁴⁸ The creation of “homosexuality” as a distinct category, for example, cannot be separated from contemporaneous rhetorics of racial perversion and imperial progress. In “Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm,” Marlon Ross explores the ways that the invention of terminologies to designate nonnormative sexual identity in the late nineteenth century indicated not simply the fabrication of a new way of talking about “the body” but the eruption of a crisis within whiteness. He observes, “While the perceived racial difference of an African or Asian male could be used to explain any putatively observed sexual deviance, racial sameness became ground zero for the observed split between heterosexual and homosexual Anglo-Saxon men,” “such that racial difference necessarily overdetermines the capacity for sexual deviance as a bodily affair.” Moreover, if racial identity already is coded as a capacity for sexual normality, largely defined in terms of conjugal domesticity, the appearance of perverse deviance signifies in racial terms, positioning homosexuality in whites as a kind of *racial retardation* (168). The distinction between those who are straight and not, then, remains

always-already complicated by the ways the differentiation of persons based on object choice is predicated on being seen as racially capable of conforming to standards of healthful, disciplined, civilized sexual order in the first place; to be the subject of sexological designations like “homosexual” is already to be understood as potentially a competent participant in modernity, which nonwhites by definition were not.⁴⁹

Viewing the legacy of sexology, and its construction of sexual identity, in light of the copresence of ideologies of white supremacy suggests that heteronormativity entails not only the marginalization/pathologization of queer subjects but the simultaneous linkage of normality to unmarked whiteness in ways that consign people of color to an undifferentiated sexual savagery outside of the hetero/homo binary.⁵⁰ Attending to processes of racialization, therefore, helps indicate a significant distinction between heterosexuality and heteronormativity, in which even those persons whose object choice can be deemed “straight” are still seen as perverse due to the racial meanings attached to their performance of desire, homemaking, and family. As Roderick Ferguson argues in *Aberrations in Black*, communities of color in the United States historically “rearticulated normative familial arrangements and thereby violated a racialized ideal of heteropatriarchal nuclearity” (13). In this way, *kinship* can mark social formations that are deemed racially deficient and threatening to the nation due to their failure to conform to the nuclear model of conjugal domesticity: “African American familial forms and gender relations were regarded as perversions of the American family ideal . . . reproductive rather than *productive*, heterosexual but never *heteronormative*” (86–87). Populations of color, then, have their own “taxonomy of perversions” (78), or one might say the process by which nonwhite populations are defined as such involves representing them as perversely deviating from the bourgeois sexuality attributed to normative whiteness. In light of these histories of sexualized racialization, the specific discourses of perversion and familial pathology used to diagnose “the erotics of African American” social formations cannot be reduced to a variation on the sexological categories developed to describe Europeans and Euramericans; “we must reconsider explanations of sexuality that presume our emergence out of the same epistemological traditions, . . . and our production through the same methodologies” (78). The distinction between heterosexual and homosexual cannot capture the ways African Americans, and following the implications of Ferguson’s argument other populations of color as well, are cast as *abnormal*, as lacking *respectability*, due to their innate inability to conform to the model of national health illustrated by white nuclearity. Such a process “locates African American sexuality as wild, unstable, and undomesticated, . . . and therefore outside the bounds of the citizenship machinery” (87),

further explaining the ways they are excluded “as consequences of their own nonheteronormativity” (91).

If practices in and by communities of color are assessed through an enforced comparison to the *artificial unity* of (white) conjugal homemaking, the trope of kinship may be useful in marking that process of interpellation. Put another way, if racial difference partially is produced through that very (invidious) comparison—defining the meaning and contours of nonwhiteness by reference to the (potentially discrepant) ways various populations supposedly fail to meet the standard of bourgeois normality—then race can be understood as itself generated within the matrix of kinship. Using kinship in this way as a lens through which to trace the dimensions and effects of heteronormativity allows for an expansion of queer critique beyond analysis of the creation, dissemination, and management of the various forms of sexual identification that emerge from sexology. Instead, attention is directed toward the ways interwoven ideologies of household and family formation, privacy and private property, marital eroticism and intimacy produce a racializing “taxonomy of perversions” that is not defined by object choice and cannot be comprehended within a politics of visibility centered on the closet. To the extent that “queer” serves as an encompassing synonym for LGBT, the use of the concept of kinship to point to the multifaceted ways different populations are racialized as deviant indexes forms of subjectivity, sociality, and spatiality that are not *queer* but also are not heteronormative. Rather than foregrounding queer “culture” or “world-making,” or even a queer “kin-aesthetic,” queer of color critique points toward the ways the elements of *kinship*—such as residency, reproduction, and romance—provide a range of, in Freeman’s terms, “detachable narrative parts” that both serve as the basis for modes of racialization and potentially provide sites for oppositional organizing and collective subjectivity.

Like the oppression of African Americans, the dispossession of native peoples also has been justified by portraying them as primitively perverse, as needing to be trained in the ostensibly natural kinds of privatized intimacy organizing bourgeois family life, but unlike the emphasis on exclusion from citizenship that tends to predominate in discussions of other racialized populations *within* U.S. national space, Native Studies confronts the status of native peoples as separate polities, raising a series of questions about the relationship between discourses of sexuality and the recognition of tribes as political entities. In ways reminiscent of the strategy discussed in the previous section of separating queer cultural projects and formations from the state, queer critique focused on processes of racialization also tends to link heteronormativity with nationalism per se, seeking to displace statist structures but without envisioning an alternative mode of collectivity. For example, Ferguson argues that “revolutionary and cultural nationalisms”

have “measured the authenticity of subjects of color and defined the reality of minority cultures in terms of heteropatriarchy,” “suppress[ing] the critical gender and sexual heterogeneity of minority communities”; placing “black and Chicano nationalism” within this pattern, he suggests the need to “discard the myth of nationalism’s coherence and viability for understanding agency, culture, and subjectivity” (140–141).⁵¹ What space, both literally and figuratively, is there for indigenous peoplehood within this formulation? If “nationalism” is inherently (hetero)normalizing, what ways are available for naming and registering native collectivities within queer critical mappings, or is positing such “coherence” itself also seen as reinforcing oppressive *nationalist* logics?⁵²

Part of the difficulty here may lie in viewing all “subjects of color” as members of “minority cultures,” in the sense that doing so reinstalls the nation-state as the sole way of framing geopolitical identity rather than acknowledging the existence of competing forms of sovereignty and self-determination (especially that of native peoples) on lands claimed by the United States.⁵³ While the exertion of authority over native peoples certainly has relied on racialization, and the deployment of discourses of authenticity (especially with respect to “tradition”) also can have (hetero)normalizing effects,⁵⁴ the fact that the existence of indigenous polities precedes and exceeds the terms of settler governance raises the question of how to think about racialization in relation to native modes of governance. More specifically, are there possibilities for political collectivity—for native *nationalisms*—that do not reproduce existing state procedures for authenticating and adjudicating Indianness, that can acknowledge “gender and sexual heterogeneity” by refusing to measure social formations against a heteronormative standard? What role, historically and currently, do racial discourses play in interpellating such formations into the dominant heteronormative ideologies and institutional structures?

If racial identification and discourses of sexuality are intimately, inextricably interwoven, how are liberal social mappings—of what constitutes family, the distinction between public and private, the relation of reproduction to personal identity and inheritance—embedded in the understanding of native peoples as belonging to a *race*, their categorization as *Indians*?⁵⁵ As discussed earlier, the kinship concept emerges out of the ethnological narration of non-European peoples, particularly the indigenous peoples occupying land claimed by the United States, as failing to perform proper conjugal domesticity but also as lacking true governance because political processes were too intermixed with familial relations. This strategy of representation depends on portraying homemaking based on reproductive couplehood as the inevitable atom of social life, putting alternative social imaginings in relation to this unit. In the United States,

“race” as a kind of category has been understood and legally defined as a biological substance transmitted to children through procreative pairing, a key but unexamined part of the “Blood Is Thicker Than Water” doctrine Schneider addresses, and as such, discourses of race bolster the paradigmatic self-evidence of reproductive couplehood, reinforcing its centrality as the primary model for conceptualizing sociality. More than excluding populations defined as nonwhite from full access to social resources, racial discourses in the United States can be understood as circulating a grammar of reproductive union, positioning the intimate event as central to the construction of legal personhood inasmuch as racial identity emerges from the mixture that is conception and is defined in thoroughly genealogical terms.⁵⁶ As Schneider suggests, biology and genealogy are fused to each other within the dominant Euro-ethnoepistemology. Like *kinship*, no matter how much *race* is characterized as socially symbolic and not merely descriptive, it will continue to pivot around a biological imaginary, but more than that, it will continue to call forth the vision of conjugal couplehood upon which that biological imaginary relies. To clarify, as numerous scholars have noted (including Cohen and Ferguson), people of color in the United States have been denied access to legally legitimizing forms of kinship, like marriage, but my point is that, like the interpellation of non-European social formations as *kinship*, race in the United States definitionally relies on the couple-centered notion of identity/inheritance that always-already depends on the image of conjugal domesticity.⁵⁷

The concept of race, then, reinforces the “artificial unity” produced through discourses of sexuality while enabling social formations at odds with the state-sanctioned political economy of privatization to be characterized as (perverse) tendencies in the blood rather than as alternative modes of collectivity, decision making, and resource distribution to those of liberalism. Within processes of heteronormalization, race and kinship dialectically are entwined,⁵⁸ not simply characterizing populations and practices as deviant on the basis of race but employing the logic of race to interpellate *as kinship* sociopolitical dynamics that exceed state logics—to portray them as failed nuclearity within a conceptual framework in which the centrality of reproductive pairing appears as obvious. Put another way, if native people are understood as *Indians*, a category defined by the procreative transmission of a certain kind of “blood” (a point developed further in chapter 1), they can be characterized as (primarily) a racial population, which also means the following: they are not first and foremost *political* entities whose status is irreducible to U.S. jurisdictional formulations; their forms of sociality need not be interpreted as equally legitimate modes of governance to that of the United States; and modes of social organization in which reproduction, romance, and household formation are not utterly