Translation and Interpretation of Ella C. Deloria's "A Sioux Captive Rescued by his Wife"

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In general, Native American communities provide a tradition of education for children based on oral narrative and storytelling. Oral narrative is indispensable in the understanding and maintenance of cultural traditions (Egan, 1987; Goody, 1995; Havelock, 1986) and displays cultural differences through language (Hymes, 1981) as well as providing the means for the continuation of community beliefs and traditions. Nora and Richard Dauenhauer (1990) note, Tlingit stories connect people and are "like a gaff hook reaching out across a distance and becoming hooked with another person who is hooked" (p. ix). Jerome Bruner (1986) identifies narrative as a way to put "timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place" (p.13). Narratives and stories engage others in multi-layered experience and provide the opportunity to bridge differences between peoples.

The transcription, translation and interpretation of Native oral literatures has not always provided fair and accurate representations of the multiple meanings and teachings present in the texts. "The apparent lack of literary value in many past translations is not a reflection but a distortion of the originals, caused by the diction process, an emphasis on content, [and] a pervasive deafness to oral qualities" (Tedlock, 1982b, p. 74). Substantial contributions to the field can be found, however, in the work of Dennis and Barbara Tedlock (1983), Brian Swann (1992), Dell Hymes (1981), and recently, Julian Rice (1994). For the most part, however, the translation and interpretation of traditional narratives has not been pursued or utilized as a form of literature (Swann, 1992; Rice, 1994). In addition, the direct implications of stories and narratives with regard to traditional ideals and values have been, only in a few instances, based on sociolinguistic and cultural perspectives.

This paper presents a free translation, analysis, and interpretation of "A Sioux Captive Rescued by his Wife" (Rice, 1994), a Lakota narrative transcribed and translated into English by Ella C. Deloria in 1937. Multiple methods of verse and narrative analyses were used in order to arrive at an interpretation based on multiple perspectives. Through the use of various methods, it was possible to arrive at an interpretation that reflects Lakota traditions and culture. The methods clarified the cultural constructions and social relationships present in the narrative, and elucidated traditional beliefs and ideals.

Preliminary Remarks

Ella Cara Deloria

Ella Deloria (An'pe'iu Waste Win, 'Good Day Woman') was born in 1889 on the eastern South Dakota Sioux reservation of Yankton, and was known throughout the Sioux reservations as having an interest in storytelling. Many times relatives would come and tell her a traditional story so that she might write it down. She believed it was important to record the language and stories, and in a letter to H. E. Beebe in 1952 said, "I actually feel that I have a mission: To make the Dakota people understandable, as human beings, to the white people".

Until recently, only small portions of her work have been published: a Dakota Grammar, written with Boas (1941) and reprinted in 1982, Dakota Texts, 1932/1978, and a fictional story published posthumously, Waterlily (1988). Julian Rice has edited three volumes based on her work, Ella Deloria's The Buffalo People (1994), Deer Women and
Elk Men (1992), and Ella Deloria's Iron Hawk (1993). These texts present a glimpse at Deloria's life time work which includes hundreds of pages of transcription and translation completed during her association with Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Alexander Lesser, and Margaret Mead. The singularity of her work, and the excellence with which she pursued it, characterizes her efforts as a significant achievement in the preservation of a North American Indian language. In an afterword to Waterlily (1990), Raymond DeMallie notes, "a written record of such magnitude and diversity does not exist for any other Plains Indian language" (p. 236). Deloria's work is exceptional due to her precise documentation and literary skills, knowledge of the language, and most importantly her dedication to Lakota people.

Ella Deloria completed the original transcription and translation of "A Sioux Captive Rescued by his Wife" in 1937. It was told to her by a relative, and published as one of the stories in Ella Deloria's The Buffalo People (Rice, 1994). It is the story of a Lakota woman who loves her husband deeply and is willing to risk her life to save him. She is an independent person, capable of achieving great things in the service of those she loves, therefore, an exemplary role model of a traditional Lakota woman deserving respect.

Personal Context

I began this project as a graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara in the Graduate School of Education and Religious Studies Department. I was completing advanced degrees in the study of Native American traditions, and began work on a North American Indian language. As a beginning language student, I believed a translation project would help me to learn the grammar, vocabulary and the structure of Lakota language.

This project became more than a vocabulary and grammar exercise aimed at learning Lakota language. I became fascinated with the language, the process of storytelling and performance, and the use of oral narrative within Lakota culture. This paper is the result of much study, and I am satisfied with the outcome. However, I know that when I reread it in the future, I will see some things differently and some will be glaringly obvious. Since I am not Lakota, I am certain that there are aspects which I have not defined or identified. As with many beginning translation projects, I didn't understand some things as well in the beginning as I did at the end of the project. Even now, I am sure errors remain, and I apologize for any misrepresentations.

The study of any text in another language is always difficult and during the course of this project, I struggled many times with my own urge to retreat to Deloria's English translation. However, I hope you the reader find as I did that the multiple dimensions that are present in "A Sioux Captive Rescued by his Wife" can only truly be appreciated by using both the original Lakota transcription and the English translation. I believe, as Dell Hymes (1981) notes, that we cannot simply analyze speech, or interpret author's voice, or seek surface cultural images; we must strive to attain many different styles and forms before we can reach any depth of understanding.

Method

The interpretation of the narrative was based on three levels of analyses: 1) a literal translation of the Deloria Lakota transcription; 2) a textual analysis of Deloria's Lakota transcription and English translation; and 3) Lakota traditional concepts and values implicit in the text.

Literal Translation

The literal translation utilized three primary sources: Boas and Deloria (1941), Dakota Grammar; Buechel (1970) Dictionary of the Teton Sioux; and Rice (1994) Ella Deloria's
the Buffalo People. A table of three lines was prepared: first, the Deloria Lakota transcription (Rice, 1994); second, a phonemic and morphemic breakdown of the words; and finally, a literal translation of the word fragments. The following is representative of this level of analysis:

**Tankši,** woyakapi iyagnin
kinship term wo ya ka pi iya gni
younger sister I tell state of being they to speak, go to one’s own

s’a keyapi kanke lecala
always that say they and so, and then this, that little while ago

Blo-ok’eta wai k’un ei heca anugopian
Potato Creek I his, hers at such like give ear to, listen

waun yunkan le oya ka pi
1st person also, then this to relate a story, stick to, state of being they

nawahun ca eya tanyan nahiaj...:yanawahun ca eya tanyan
na wa hun nah tak ya
and I tell you that some, any well I something say

mic’ila le wagli yelo
mi c’ila wa gli
my, mine desire, want this I arrive at home emphasis, stress

He leceiu keyapi’:
he le ce tu ke ya pi
that this, that right, correct this to say they

Wicasa won Kangi-wicaśa wayak’a
wica sa Kangi wica sa wa ya ka
a man/Lakota man a certain one Crow man one tie up state of being

yuza pi ‘ske’.
yuza pi
by pulling caught hold of they it is said.

My younger sister, they tell me you are one the lookout for stories right along, so this time I was at Potato Creek I kept my ears open and heard this legend which I think I have done a good job of stamping (engraving, printing) on my mind, and I have returned. It was like this they say: A man was captured by the Crow (Deloria, in Rice, 1994, p. 30).

**Textual Analysis**

The theoretical perspectives that guided the analysis were based on: 1) William Labov (1972) and Michael Toolan (1988), narrative structural analysis; 2) Dell Hymes (1994), poetic organization and structure; and 3) Dennis Tedlock (1983), oral expression.

**Oral narrative structure**

This level of analysis presents structural and temporal representations in the narrative.
William Labov's "fully-formed oral narrative analysis" method (Toolan, 1988, p. 152) was used with the Deloria English translation and the free translation to identify the components of the narrative. Labov (1972) describes the components of a "fully-formed oral narrative" as abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda (in Toolan, 1988, p. 152). The abstract introduces the story, the orientation indicates who, what, where, and when, and the complicating action is described as the "obligatory nucleus" of the story in which most of the fixed narrative clauses appear (Toolan, 1988, p. 153). The storyteller evaluation statements are "all the means used to establish and sustain the 'point', the contextual significance and tellability, or reportability of the story" (p. 156). These statements indicate the storyteller's perspectives or feelings about the story, and can occur anywhere in the text, but primarily in the orientation. Finally, the result or resolution is the conclusion of the story, and in the coda statement the storyteller signals that he is finished speaking.

Poetic organization and expressive analysis
The Deloria Lakota transcription was used for this level of analyses since it is through features in the Lakota language text that many structural and cultural characteristics are evidenced (Hymes, 1981, 1994). "By structure, I mean here particularly the form of repetition and variation, of constants and contrasts, in verbal organization" (Hymes, 1994, p. 42). In addition, the Lakota transcription has a natural meter within the text, "and the elements that appeal to the esthetic sense of the hearer [could] not be appreciated" (Hymes, 1981, p. 7) without it. This approach to verse analysis is important for expressing the poetic language of Lakota stories, and the relationship between language function and form (Hymes, 1981). "When we analyze a narrative in terms of poetic organization, we gain insight into the story told; at the same time it is the story itself which provides the overall organization of the narrative" (Hornberger, 1992, p. 441). Further, "the treatment of oral narrative as dramatic poetry has a number of analytical advantages" (Tedlock 1983b, p. 71) such as an understanding of the use of repetition, alliteration, and content analysis.

The verse analysis of the narrative was based on several guiding principles that provided a framework for structuring the narrative: 1) the lines of the narrative were organized in terms of the relationship between the lines; 2) the identification of words that indicate the end of a phrase or the beginning of additional information; 3) an examination of the poetic units that emerged in two to four unit sets; and 4) commentaries made by the original storyteller. After the text was organized in a poetic structure, it was analyzed based on the work of Dennis Tedlock (1983a), which illuminated the affective and expressive dimensions of the narrative. According to Tedlock (1983b), "what oral narrative usually does with emotions is evoke them rather than describe them directly" (p. 71). This is evidenced through the use of linguistic features and the repetition of phrases in Deloria's Lakota transcription.

Lakota Exegesis
Finally, the narrative was reviewed in terms of Lakota exegesis, which elucidated cultural traditions, values, and beliefs. This level of analysis illuminated aspects of the narrative from two perspectives: first, the use of specific words in the Lakota text that refer to Lakota traditions and beliefs; and second, a discussion of their cultural significance. This provided a broader interpretation of the text as a traditionally-based narrative, and "an approach to the sociolinguistics of language in which the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values" (Fasold, 1990, p. 39). For in order "to understand a narrative, of course, one must grasp the intentions and expectations of protagonists, the engine of the narrative usually being the thwarting of those intentions by circumstances and their rectification in the denouement" (Bruner, 1996, p. 177). This could not be
accomplished without language, various methods of interpretation, and an understanding of cultural values. As Hymes (1981) notes:

Interpretation which excludes speech falls short, as would a treatment of painting that excluded paint. Interpretation which seeks only an individual voice, the author's or the interpreter's, falls short as well. Interpretation that attends only to what is culturally defined, excluding both the mode of existence of the work and the personal voice...yields only a surface image (p. 9-10).

A discussion of the findings are presented as follows: 1) a free translation, 2) the oral narrative structure, 3) the poetic and organizational structure, and 4) a discussion of the findings based on Lakota exegesis.

Translation and Discussion

Free Translation

"A Sioux Captive Rescued by his Wife"

1. My younger sister, I was at Potato Creek a little while ago and I heard a story that I want to share with you. I tried to listen and pay close attention so that I could tell it to you accurately when I arrived back home.

2. This is the way it was told to me and has been told for many years. A Lakota man was captured by the Crow people, and they took him to their camp and held him prisoner.

3. They took him to a camp where the Crow were living, and, as if in a bad dream, they treated this man very badly as was done long ago. They tied his arms down as they say, with "arms outstretched", so the story is told.

4. And this is something important to talk about. I believe this was the way it was back then, but I have never seen such a thing with my own eyes. It was said long ago and has been often repeated. So it seems that it really did happen this way.

5. Not just the arms, but both arms and legs are pulled and tied apart! It was done purposely in such a way so that the toes barely touched the ground, and gradually the person sinks closer and closer to the ground.

6. This was done where everyone could see the captive and dance around him. They could inflict pain on him and everyone could praise the captors, so the story goes.

7. Now this torture had been going on for many days and nights, and the dancers must have been very tired and exhausted from their arrogant and vain celebration. So, everyone was sleeping except for six old men who were watching the captive. They were old Crow warriors and guarding the captive reminded them of their youth and their victories when they went on war parties.

8. Now the captive had a wife he was living with who loved him so very much—so much so that she cried and cried for him.

9. Finally, as the story goes, she decided to go and bring him home. She took two very fast and swift horses, one that she rode and one that she led behind her. Then, as the story is told, she started off to get him back.

10. Now when she arrived at the enemy Crow camp, her husband was in a very weakened state. She tied the horses within a hollow so they could not be seen. Then, I suppose, she figured out a plan of how to save her husband. That is the way it has been told. She decided she would go to the middle of the tent area within the camp. I believe this would be very hard to do without being noticed.

11. Now it was near sunset and this woman had to go slowly, using cover, and walking carefully so as not to be noticed. I do not know how this Indian woman was able to...
do this! She took a shawl and put it tightly around her shoulders, and picked up a rotting piece of wood about the size of a baby. In her arms, it looked like she was walking with a baby and the shawl was covering the baby’s head.

12. She went right into their camp as if she were any other woman with a sick child that was crying. She was rocking the child and singing a lullaby — holding this rough piece of rotting wood and trying to get it to go to sleep — holding it just so and singing as she walked along!

13. She was as brave as any soldier. From a distance, these people didn’t notice that she was not a Crow woman putting her child to sleep. Anyway, she was very thankful to have managed to convince them so well that not one of them noticed her.

14. So in this way, she went around the outside of the camp circle very confidently. Not one of them thought of her as someone other than a mother who was very concerned and affectionate with her child and singing it to sleep.

15. In this way, she walked all around the camp and returned to her starting point. By then she knew where her husband was being kept. In the center of camp there was a lot of excitement around one tipi and so, in the darkness, she went to take a look, supposing the greatest excitement would have been around her husband. She knew she could mingle with the people and not be noticed.

16. The people were all crowding to see the captive and she stood with them trying to see something of what they were looking at.

17. She had an idea that it was her husband and she was anxious to see him. Then, she saw her husband hanging there in the midst of the tent with his arms tied — weak and abused — unable to see or perceive anything.

18. Now, he must have been like this for many days with the rope pulling at his feet for his face was very thin and drawn and he looked very bad. It had been a very great ordeal, that could be seen in his face and he was shaking and trembling like a tree in the wind.

19. He wore a loin-cloth around his hips and, otherwise, he was naked. His stomach was so sunken that his ribs seemed to stand way out.

20. When she saw him, so pitiful, she wanted to cry out and to go to him, but she stood back, only moving slowly among the crowd.

21. How in the world did she keep her presence a secret! She continued to walk around until she understood how he was tied; and after awhile, she quietly left that place and went back to her horses.

22. Now she prepared everything so that she was ready to leave in a hurry. She put a knife in a leather cord around her waist so that she could cut her husband’s ropes and then she returned to the center of the camp.

23. By now, it was night and since this had been going on for many days already, most of the dancers had gone home early. She continued to walk around as if she had no particular place to go, carrying the rotting piece of wood for a baby.

24. Even if someone did notice her, they would not perceive any purposefulness in her movements. They would only see a woman outside walking and rocking her baby.

25. I think, if these two lived, it would be through her bravery and strong heart that these two would be able to survive. At least that is the way it has been told.

26. Anyone might have been afraid in that place and thought, “If any of these Crow people find out or think I am not one of them, I do not know what will happen.”

27. Ho! But perhaps, while this woman was there she tried not to think of this.

28. And, also at that time — I think I can say this — she had a lot of patience and was not in a hurry no matter how sad she was. She only wished to be able to make small movements, little by little, with great detail and without giving anyone cause to notice or see her.
29. Ho! Because of the long time she had been there, she was tired, but she continued to walk and caress her rotting wood until, slowly she was able to get closer to the place where her husband was staked and stretched.

30. Now then, the old men who were guarding him were without a doubt very tired as well from all the long days of activities and they were all sleeping.

31. Her husband was the only one awake and still standing -- so from a distance she motioned him and said endearingly; "Old man, it’s me -- I have traveled a long way and come for you. Stay awake and don’t let anyone hear us."

32. Then, for those that were guarding him, she took a sword that was sticking in the ground in the center of that tipi and repeatedly struck all the old men in the head with it. I speak the truth!

33. Then, as the story goes, she took the hair from all six of them right then and there.

34. Shaking and trembling -- she cut the straps that they had tied her husband with and they left. She took back her husband from his captivity and started off for home.

35. Somewhere in the darkness, they found their way to the place where she had the horses. She sat her husband on one of them and sent him off for home.

36. And then, she went all the way around the camp circle again for the very last time with the rotting wood. But everything was quiet and so she started for home. This is the way it has been told.

37. Younger sister, one thing I forgot to say. When she cut off the old men’s heads it wasn’t until the second time going around the circle and after sending her dear old man home that she scalped them. I got the story a little mixed up.

38. Ho! That woman makes me laugh — to have a husband that she loved so dearly and valued so highly that she would do what only a man can usually do, is something! And that’s the way the story has always been told.

**Oral Narrative Structure**

The narrative contains all of the components described by William Labov (1972) and Michael Toolan (1988) as the components and features of a narrative, and are discussed based on Lines 1 through 38 of the free translation. In Line 1, the storyteller begins with an introductory statement and an appropriate greeting for his audience. In this way, he requests an extended period of talk, signals his intent, and expresses his concern over his ability to retell the story with precision. Ella Deloria is the only member of the audience, she listens attentively, and then transcribes the text of the story at a later time. In reality, there are two storytellers and two audiences to this story: first, the original storyteller with Deloria as the audience; and second, Deloria as storyteller and we the readers as the audience. This is not readily apparent since Deloria transcribed the text as she heard it with the original storyteller’s evaluation statements as part of the story. It is not possible to know precisely which emphasis was added by Deloria and which was included in the original version. However, Deloria was sensitive to Lakota traditional ethics of listening and respected as a careful ethnographer. Her transcriptions include gender specific endings in statements made by the male storyteller, and she added terminal glottal stops to the Lakota transcription to indicate pauses and timing present in the oral presentation.

The storyteller’s opening statement signals the beginning of a story, and in Line 2, he presents the abstract: the story of a man captured and tortured by the Crow. The storyteller comments on the truth of the story and his position regarding that truth. Lines 3 through 13 orient the audience to what is happening to the captured Sioux man, where it is happening, who will help him, and what happens when his wife arrives at the enemy camp. During this orientation phase of the story, the storyteller’s evaluation statements occur more frequently than during the complicating action phase and are used to build anticipation. The evaluation statements signal a change from narrative time to current time and reveal the

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storyteller's feelings about the woman, the story, and what is happening. Few evaluation statements occur within Lines 14 through 34, the complicating action phase of the story, yet, statements describing the wife's actions leading up to the event are greatly increased. From the title, the audience assumes the resolution or conclusion of the story will be how a woman rescued her husband from the Crow. The actual resolution, however, is different from the direction indicated in the title, abstract, and narrative clauses within the complicating action. Lines 35 through 37 of the story reveal an unanticipated result and describe the wife's actions after she frees her husband. The culminating action, which is the killing and scalping of the old men guarding her husband, is an action normally attributed to a man, and yet in the story it is completed by a woman. The actual premise of the story is the bravery of a woman and how her actions are out of the ordinary for a woman. The coda statement in Line 38 reveals the storyteller's belief that this is an important aspect of the story. He comments on the irony of the situation and how it makes him laugh (with pride) to think of a woman being able to perform these actions.

Poetic Structure and Expressive Analyses

The poetic organization and structure in the Deloria Lakota transcription based on the verse analysis (Hymes, 1982, 1994) and vocalized and expressive analysis (Tedlock, 1983a) illuminated certain features in the text. The story is structured in even meters of twenty quadruplets and one sextuplet, with the exception of paired lines containing the storyteller's comments. The beginning of the stanzas are generally marked by words such as, now, and, also then, thus, and then. The poetic organization of the text is different from the direction indicated in the title, abstract, and narrative clauses within the complicating action. The following is a portion of the transcription structured into quadruplets:

Wicasa wan Kanji-wicasa wayaka yuozapi 'ske'.
Takte ekta heca tipi wan el akipi ihniibapice s'ke kwapini
na ehamni ikce-wicasa kin 'Yukagaal Okatanpi'
eyapi kin hecaki-cunpi 'ske'.

Yunkan he iaku kapi owakaahije kin leceiu'; ecin iunweni miye ista un
heca wansi wanblakesni eyas oyakapi eciyatanhan leceiu'.

ISio nupin yukagaal iyakaaskapi na cece nupin nakun;
na eya maka yela eyas sipa ecela tokecela maka
icahkya he ogna eglepi'.
Hecunpi na ohomni iwakcpi na yakakaizapi 'ske'.

A man was captured by the Crow, and held prisoner.
They took him to whatever place the Crow were living,
and there they treated him as in a nightmare,
and they did to him what was known in the old days
as being tied outstretched.

According to my understanding of it, that means this; of course you must understand I have never seen such a thing, but this is judging by descriptions of it.

Both arms are pulled to an outstretched position and also the legs and the toes barely touch the ground and in that way they are set up (Rice, 1994, p. 30).
Stanzas of four and six lines coincide with Lakota cosmology. The numbers four and six have particular significance in Lakota traditions: for instance, the four directions, four primary colors, four divisions of the sacred, and in many other cultural expressions. The number six signifies similar aspects and, in the case of the four directions, includes above and below.

Another feature of the quadruplet is the use of 'ske' or 'ke' to end phrases within the narrative. In the opening lines, the storyteller begins with a description of the action and ends with 'ske' which signals the type of traditional story to be told. The use of 'ske' emphasizes the dramatic and special quality of the story being told and heightens the excitement at the introduction. The storyteller uses the word yelo, which mildly emphasizes his belief that the story is an important one to tell, and that he will be able to tell it well. He concludes this opening, however, with a statement ending in 'ske', reinforcing his personal opinion that this was a most unusual woman.

Through the first four quadruplets, the storyteller uses 'ske' to end the quadruplet, and this is the exposition or orientation to the events of the narrative. The storyteller is gaining the audience's attention by emphasizing the importance of the story. In the complicating action portion of the narrative, the storyteller switches to the less emphatic endings of 'ke', 'ye', 'hecinkte', and 'tka'. During this portion of the narrative, the wife's actions are recounted and the storyline is presented to the audience. The wife's actions are of less importance to the meaning of the narrative and the resolution of the story, therefore, the use of less emphatic endings is appropriate in a Lakota story. The storyteller returns to the use of 'ske' to end the quadruplets toward the end of the story, again emphasizing the unusual qualities of the woman and the dramatic aspects of the story.

Another feature of the quadruplets is the use of a terminal glottal stop to signal the end of a phrase. The stops provide emphasis, narrative pace, and sense of timing (Tedlock, 1983b) for the listener (or reader). The terminal glottal stops highlight each quadruplet, and accentuate "the narrative pause with a physical cessation of breath" (Rice, 1992, p. 285). As the story continues, the use of glottal stops varies between one and two per quadruplet until the storyteller reaches the twelfth stanza, and the only sextuplet in the poetic organization of the narrative. In this stanza, the emotional and physical intensity of the husband and wife are the highest and the last word of every line, with the exception of the fifth line, is marked with a glottal stop.

Mtihuha wan niityapehanc cegnak-ya un na paiyuksa hacocola'.
Niige ohap iyayan na tucshu kin yugwezap s'e tanin'.
Wanyakita na iisikila un ceya iyaya tka ca tokekela oigluspe'.
Inahma s'e tokeške yuwipi kin ko ables nazin';
Ina eya wakhan hidap iyayin
na manini Sunkakan wicakisle un heciya ki' (Rice, 1994, p. 28).

He wore a breech cloth and binding around his hips, and from there upward he was bare; his stomach was caved-in and his ribs stood out like ridges.
She almost cried out for pity on seeing him, but she restrained herself. Unnoticed she stood observing just how he was tied on; and when satisfied she left and went back to the horses (Rice, 1994, p. 31).

In this stanza, the storyteller is sharing the most emotionally charged sequence of events for the characters. He describes the intense suffering of the husband and the wife's horrified response when she sees the man she loves so dearly abused and tortured. After the last line of this stanza, the storyteller returns to the use of one or two glottal stops per quadruplet for
the remainder of the narrative.

Essential for a thorough examination of the narrative according to Hymes, Tedlock and others is an oral performance. "The inflections of song, the rhythms of drum and dance, the delicate and insubstantial gestures of the teller, are impossible to replicate" (Huntsman, 1992, p. 90) and their absence is certainly missed. Therefore, a limitation of this level of analysis is the lack of an oral performance that would illuminate the verbal artistry of the storyteller, and the audience response.

**Lakota Exegesis**

The Lakota text was examined for the use of traditional words and phrases and is discussed in the following areas: The story introduction; the use of 'ske'; naming; and traditional perspectives.

**Story introduction**

The narrative begins with one of the most basic Lakota concepts, that of kinship. The storyteller addresses Ella Deloria as Tanksi 'younger sister'. Tanksi is used by a man for a female relative who is younger than himself. Although the term in English refers to a sibling within an immediate family, in Lakota this kinship term is part of a group of terms describing relationships, and are gender and relationship specific. The notion of relative carries more connotations in Lakota than in English usage. Relative can connote association by marriage, respect for an individual, or relative through friendship, as well as blood relative (U. C., Boulder, 1976; Powers, 1986). Deloria addresses the storyteller as tiblo 'elder brother', and indicates that he was "the husband of the widow of a certain man who called Vine [Deloria] younger brother" (Rice, 1994, p. 33). In the nineteenth century, it would not have been proper for Ella Deloria and the storyteller to speak (Deloria, 1988; Rice, 1994), however, when she recorded the story this prohibition had been relaxed.

Traditionally, storytellers are held in high esteem and listening to them without interrupting is important so that the audience remembers the story accurately. The storyteller alludes to his concentration on listening to the story when he heard it. By telling Deloria this, he is saying that he specifically listened very well so that he could faithfully retell it to her. The term, yelo at the end of this sentence is a male gender ending signifying his belief that this is so, an assertion of which he is fairly certain but not emphatically so, emphasizing his belief that he will do his best.

**Use of 'ske' 'it is said'**

The storyteller begins with a declarative sentence, and says this is the story of a man, a particular man who is unnamed, and is from a long time ago. He uses 'ske' to end the introduction and to emphasize the story's importance as a traditional story. Deloria indicates that 'ske' is used particularly with myths (Rice, 1992, p. 285), and the storyteller refers to this as a ehanni about an ikce-wicasa 'common man'. In Lakota oral tradition, ehanni refers to stories of a long time ago, generally creation stories in which the "principle characters are spirits" (One Feather, 1974, p. 2). Humans were not created at this time and were not characters in the stories. This narrative is most likely from a category of stories known as ehanni wicowoyake, which are stories from the more recent Lakota past. They are based in historical fact, actual lives, and are documented in the wanfentyu yawa 'winter counts' or 'oral history of the people.' Therefore, by telling the audience that this is ehanni and ending the sentence with 'ske', the storyteller is saying this is important to listen to because it tells of Lakota history and classifies the type of story to be told.

The continued use of 'ske' through the exposition segment of the story marks the significance of listening to this historical and traditional story. When the storyteller returns to the use of 'ske' at the end of the story, he emphasizes the traditional aspects of the narrative as well as the unique characteristics and unusual qualities of the woman. This
added emphasis does not change the importance of the middle of the story. It may indicate, however, the lesser importance of the woman’s actions that lead to her husband’s rescue as opposed to the significance of the story itself, the woman’s bravery and her adherence to the Lakota virtues. “Labov’s assumption that what is said (by yourself or others) will not be the core of the story; that rather, what is done (by you or others) will be” (Toon, 1988, p. 157) may not be accurate for this narrative. Although the wife’s actions were important, the theme of the story is the qualities of her character as a Lakota woman that are exemplary and make this an important story to retell.

**Naming**

The storyteller reinforces the significance of the woman by using specific terms such as *Lakota winyan* ‘Lakota woman’ to emphasize her importance. *Lakota winyan* is a specific term of address, signifying the importance of this character to the narrative. Later in the story, the storyteller again emphasizing her importance by indicating his personal belief that she is a very brave woman, *Lila ohiitka nacece*. Bravery is a culturally defined virtue which is important to be found in both men and women. The storyteller reemphasizes the woman’s bravery through the use of the term *cante i’zine* ‘to have a strong heart’.

Terms of address or naming in other stanzas of the narrative continue to be a significant dimension for identifying traditional aspects. Several terms of address are used for the husband throughout the narrative depending on who is speaking. The storyteller uses *wicasa wan* or *i:ke-wicasa* ‘common man’ when discussing the husband. This term has historical significance and refers to certain creation stories (see One Feather, 1974), and is used by Lakota people today in reference to themselves. However, when the wife’s actions or feelings are involved the storyteller uses the term *hingnaka* ‘husband’. A wife would use this term when speaking to someone else about her husband. In the narrative, when the wife speaks directly to her husband, the storyteller uses the term *wicati ca* ‘old man’, indicating their special relationship and her feelings of deep affection for him. Deloria (1988) says this is a term of endearment and the traditional way married couples speak to each other.

**Traditional perspectives**

In the story, the storyteller describes how the woman walks around the camp circle to avoid detection. The use of *howokawni* ‘outside of the camp circle or circle of tipis’ and *wicoti kin* ‘inside the camp circle’ may refer, indirectly, to the intelligence and wisdom of the woman, and a Lakota virtue. *Howokawni* is the area that the wife’s presence would be the least likely to be detected for several reasons. First, there would be the fewest people on the outside of the camp circle, and second, in many plains Indian traditions the interior of the tent circle has specific ways to be entered and an outsider is recognized immediately for violating the custom. The woman uses her intelligence to follow these traditional guidelines in order to avoid discovery. Additionally, for the Lakota, the *wicoti kin* represents the safety of family and community and the greater symbolism in Lakota tradition of *cangleska wakan* ‘the sacred hoop’. When the woman makes her final pass around the camp circle, she goes inside the circle, indicating bravery and daring, and by using the term *wicoti kin*, the storyteller may also be referring to the wife and her husband returning to the safety of their own camp.

The storyteller addresses the importance of patience and the wife’s ability to wait patiently for a chance to help her husband. He says, *ho ina’ini kes takah’iscilaka eti iyukican’isi ecun khipan oyuwanai tka’,* meaning she did not let sadness or pain at his suffering overwhelm her actions, but continued with patience to do small things that wouldn’t be noticed. More generally, she was stoic and in control of her emotions so that
she might be of the greatest help to her husband in this dire predicament. She continued in a small way, controlling her actions, moving carefully, and remaining patient. In order to do this, she assumed an appropriate Lakota woman’s role by providing comfort and nurturance to a child.

Other references to Lakota cultural beliefs, perspectives and values are embedded within the narrative. The most significant reference is to the four Lakota virtues: respect, generosity, wisdom, and bravery or fortitude. The woman exemplifies all of these virtues and demonstrates the qualities all Lakota women should strive to achieve. She shows respect for her husband by the way she treats him and honors his place in her life. She respects herself and does not succumb to needless crying over what she has lost, but instead, takes two horses and goes out to find her husband. She generously gives of herself through her efforts and desire to save him. She develops a plan that requires wisdom, patience and restraint so that she is not discovered. If she fails, both will be lost, but as the storyteller says, she “must not have dwelt on this” issue. Instead, she pursued her goal slowly, cautiously and with patience. Finally, she exemplifies a brave Lakota woman with a strong heart who is able to endure suffering and to see a loved one suffer without dwelling on herself or her emotions. It is through her respect, bravery, generosity, and wisdom that they both are saved.

Conclusion

This paper presents the interpretation of a Lakota story using multiple methods of analyses and description. The methods are only a means “to the understanding of human purposes and needs, and their satisfaction; ... an indispensable means, but only a means, and not that understanding itself” (Hymes, 1986, p. 70). We must consider why we do it and who will be affected by it. This paper attempts to view a traditional narrative from many perspectives and, like stories and narratives themselves, cannot hope to provide all perspectives. The ultimate purpose of stories is to share between teller and audience a unique and personal experience, which can never be conveyed in one interpretation. In our efforts to save, recall, transcribe or possess American Indian literature, we must remember that our interpretations are not definitive, and only through conscientious dedication and reflection can we hope to be of service to the Indian communities who provide the narratives. As Brian Swann (1992) reminds us, for Western civilization “the fact that we can no longer ‘possess’ is what affords value” (p. xvi).

It has only been within the past forty years that Indian philosophy, literature, music, and educational values are regarded as intelligent and insightful. “The fact that their languages had value ... that Indians had a literature of great significance took longest to be acknowledged” (Swann, 1992, p. xiii). The difficulties of translation and interpretation have been compounded by Eurocentrism, and moral and political agendas. Early translations of Indian songs and stories generally did not include accurate transcriptions, and meanings were derived from interpreters. Multiple agendas, literary interpretation, and missionary zeal infused the narratives with elements that are difficult, if not impossible, to extract from the texts. Supported by Franz Boas, many early translations omitted strong emotions and an emphasis on feelings. Elia Deloria’s Lakota transcriptions, however, maintain the strength of character, affect, and distinctive nuances that are present in the language. In “A Sioux Rescued by his Wife” the affective responses and emotions of the main character are emphasized. Her actions are a response to her strong feelings for her husband, and true to Lakota philosophy, the importance was not in how she was able to accomplish the rescue, the importance was in the completion of an unselfish act based on her love and generosity. These are significant aspects of Lakota culture, which are present in the narrative and add meaning and depth to an interpretation of the text.
References


