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Scientists and Storytellers: Feminist Anthropologists and the Construction of the American Southwest. By Catherine J. Lavender.

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homogenization. Although clearly outlining the efforts of many Native individuals and communities to assert educational self-determination, the authors suggest that many challenges still lie ahead. The book brings us up to the present day, with a grim look at the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This act places “minority” languages firmly outside of the safety zone and, through standardized testing, enforces just the sort of homogenization Lomawaima and McCarty warn against. Only when we cease to see cultural difference as a threat to nationhood, the authors claim, may lived experience begin to live up to the rhetorical ideals of democracy.

Lomawaima and McCarty’s work is remarkable in both its breadth of scope and clarity of purpose. Making use of the initial chapters to spell out their theoretical framework and provide detailed definitions of key terms, the authors’ arguments build upon a solid foundation. In their work, Lomawaima and McCarty draw upon a wide variety of sources, including federal documents, archival papers, life histories, and firsthand ethnographic research. Although chapters 2 through 5 derive largely from Lomawaima’s teaching and research and chapters 6 through 8 from McCarty’s ethnographic and oral history research, the writing of the two authors blends seamlessly. The authors recognize the difficulty of writing a “balanced” history of American Indian education, and strive to excavate and rehabilitate a story that previously has been suppressed.

*To Remain an Indian* is an important addition to scholarship on American Indian education. For further research in this area, key texts include Margaret Szasz’s *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928* (1999) and Gregory Cajete’s *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (1993). For texts dealing with specific tribes and schools, Amanda Cobb’s *Listening to Our Grandmothers’ Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852–1949* (2000) and Clyde Ellis’s *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893–1920* (1996) are particularly helpful.

*Alison Fields*

University of New Mexico

**Scientists and Storytellers: Feminist Anthropologists and the Construction of the American Southwest.** By Catherine J. Lavender. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. 256 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

In this thoroughly researched book, Catherine Lavender examines the lives and careers of four interconnected women anthropologists, who all carried out research in the American Southwest during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Ruth Benedict, Elsie Clews Parsons, Gladys Reichard, and Ruth Underhill were all trained at Columbia University under Franz Boas, and their work and lives intersect in many other respects.

Lavender is a historian, not an anthropologist, and this book is primarily a contribution to the history of anthropology rather than a source of ethno-

graphic information about the Southwest. Using archived field notes and other primary sources, she provides detailed and interesting accounts of each woman's life, sometimes offering suggestions about how personal circumstances, such as an unhappy marriage (Underhill) or a nervous disposition (Benedict) affected their careers. Her central goal is to explain the role these pioneering ethnographers played in shaping both an academic and popular view of the region, and in establishing the study of gender roles as a key concern of cultural anthropology. In doing so, they helped give women an early prominence in the discipline that is unique among the social sciences, even though all these women experienced significant discrimination throughout their careers. As Lavender points out, all four women believed it was their responsibility to mentor female anthropologists, and many students owed their career to the guidance of one or more of them.

All four were influenced by the prevailing notion that Native American cultures were vanishing and that their culture should be captured for posterity before it was too late. This view was not, of course, unique to women anthropologists or to the Southwest but created an urgent imperative across the nation. In documenting this, Lavender's book is a useful companion to Thomas Biolsi and Larry Zimmerman's edited collection, *Indians and Anthropologists* (University of Arizona Press, 1997), especially the pieces on salvage ethnography. Like many other authors, she shows how anthropologists of the period sought out the most "pristine" communities they could find, with a goal of describing truly "primitive" cultures and gleaned lessons from them.

However, Lavender's argument is new in that she shows how these women sought to make the case that such pristine cultures allowed for greater individual freedom and variation specifically in terms of gender roles and sexual mores. For instance, they were all very interested in women who held important political, cultural, or spiritual roles and in the man/woman or "two-spirit" individuals who are present and accepted in many Native American cultures. They then used their analyses to offer a detailed critique of patriarchy, arguing that it was not a natural state of being but rather one mode of gender relations that did not have to be and could be changed. Furthermore, they asserted that those cultures that had egalitarian gender relations were actually stronger, more stable, and more cohesive than those with patriarchal tendencies. In other words, gender equality was better for everyone and not just for women. As an example, Lavender references Reichard's work with the Navajo, in which she describes the transformation in "John," the son of her central informant Maria Antonia, whose life she details in her 1939 fictionalized biography, *Dezba, Woman of the Desert*. John insisted on attending a white school, where the patriarchal indoctrination led him to return home unhappy, confused, and defiant, weakening traditional bonds in a cohesive, matrilineal society.

Along the way, Lavender shows how important women ethnographers were in changing the very way ethnography was done. Although Benedict was more interested in comparisons across culture and the identification of psycho-cultural profiles, the others set themselves the goal of really understanding culture from the inside. Lavender detours from her central four

characters to offer a fascinating account of how another Boas protégé, Ruth Bunzel, developed techniques among the Zuni aimed at helping her learn the methods of women potters. Instead of merely observing and asking questions, she used *papier mâché* models and asked informants to develop designs or copy and compare designs with those from other regions. Lavender quotes Bunzel as saying, "I didn't know that I was employing 'participant observation' and 'projective techniques,' because I had never heard of these things" (100). However, Margaret Mead admired her approaches, and Reichard followed her in becoming apprenticed to a Navajo weaver. The ethnographer-as-apprentice model has now become standard in participant observation, as well as in feminist ethnography, but it certainly was not at the time, when mostly male ethnographers took a much more omniscient stance with their informants. I found this discussion of methodological approaches especially interesting and would have welcomed more detail in the book.

Another compelling, if unsurprising, thread in the book is the story of how all four women faced constant discrimination and belittling by male colleagues. For instance, the "old-boys" club of Navajo scholars that included Edward Sapir, Harry Hoijer, Berard Haile, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Leland Wyman constantly criticized Reichard's work on the Navajo. Lavender describes how Kluckhohn in particular seemed to disagree on principle with everything Reichard wrote, even attempting to discredit her chief linguistic informant, Adolph Bittany, as "a screwball" (97). Parsons, even after the remarkable 1941 achievement of being elected the first woman president of the American Anthropological Association, remained something of an outsider, spending her career as an independent scholar after early attempts to gain an academic post. Likewise, Underhill never managed to find a permanent teaching position. One is left with great admiration for Franz Boas, who made an explicit effort to advance women's careers. All these women owed a debt to Boas; for example, he chose Underhill over male students to study the Tohono O'odham, who were regarded as an especially "pristine" culture.

Finally, a central and important argument in the book is that the story of the Native American women may have been overshadowed as a direct result of the feminist agenda. In an interesting chapter, Lavender argues that the ethnographers (with the exception of Benedict, who preferred to interview men) systematically chose a certain type of woman as key informants. She describes these women as "executive females," borrowing the term from Underhill. These women not only held influential roles but also were overtly aware and often critical of gender roles in their own culture. Furthermore, their forceful actions and personalities were seen as overwhelmingly positive, not just for them but also for their families and communities as a whole. Through their descriptions, "feminist ethnographers created heroines who seemed to have figured out the answers to the struggles over gender roles that continued in Euro-American societies" (136) while glossing over whether these roles were in any way typical or created stresses in the community. For instance, Lavender points out that "feminist ethnographers might have asked, but did not ask, if executive females . . . were identified in their own cultures as masculinized, as were many executive females in Euro-American culture" (137).

Of course this general argument is a familiar element in the critique and reevaluation of ethnography that has raged in anthropology since at least the 1980s. This critique is essentially referenced in Lavender's title: Most anthropologists now agree that ethnography, whether feminist or not, is both scientific description and storytelling and that the identity of the ethnographer is a key element in the final narrative. Early male ethnographers produced accounts that were no less filtered through their own identity as privileged males with particular agendas. Lavender is not as clear as she might be on this point; the impression left is that somehow feminist ethnographers were especially prone to let their agenda shape their narratives.

Furthermore, Lavender's assertions of a significant difference between these ethnographic stories and the actual lived experience of Southwest women may be true, but she does not offer compelling evidence. More recent anthropologists, including Native American ethnographers such as Beatrice Medicine, have also painted pictures of cultures that offer great variations in gender roles and aspirations; the critique of patriarchy implied in such accounts seems valid. This is not to say that Lavender is wrong in arguing that early feminists may have been blinded to realities that were less palatable to their agenda.

The central message of this book is not a negative critique of these feminist pioneers. It is clear that Lavender admires and values their work, while at the same time arguing that they saw the Southwest through a particular prism that established a story about gender that is probably less nuanced than the reality of women's experiences. In the end, Lavender tells us relatively little about Native American women—but that was not her intent. Rather, she deftly and engagingly helps fill out the grand narrative of anthropology and anthropologists, especially the group of women who defied convention, listened to other women, and helped show the world that the ways of the West were not inevitable.

*S. Elizabeth Bird*

University of South Florida

**The Secret Powers of Naming.** By Sara Littlecrow-Russell. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006. 79 pages. \$16.95 paper.

My review copy of Sara Littlecrow-Russell's first collection of poems, *The Secret Powers of Naming*, arrived with considerable supporting matter. Accompanying the book was a letter from the publicity manager at The University of Arizona Press, a publicity rap sheet with a color photo of the author, a kind of publication *curriculum vitae*, and a press release leading with an endorsement from Joy Harjo, who also pens the book's introduction. So before I could even get to the poems, I had a fair amount of prose to confront, all of which tries to position Littlecrow-Russell as honest, gritty, and Alexie-esque. Harjo warns the reader that these "are not poems constructed of beautiful images, nor are they poems of redemption. There is scarce mystical panache. What you will find is hard-hitting, wise witness" (ix). Not surprisingly, the press release claims the