

March 24, 2023

Joseph P. Gone, Ph.D.  
Harvard University

# RE-COUNTING COUP:

## *Communicating Indigenous Vitality in the Age of Historical Trauma*

1

## Opening

- Goals of Presentation
  - Explore some modern & traditional forms of **Indigenous life narrative**
  - Juxtapose two prominent *speech genres* in Indian Country
    - Modern: *Historical trauma* narratives
    - Traditional: Northern Plains *coup tales*
  - Suggest that these are antithetical types of self-representation
  - Propose that a *neo-traditional* form of the coup tale may serve Indigenous *self-determination* better than historical trauma

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

2

2

# Indigenous Historical Trauma

## Round 1



**AMERICAN HOLOCAUST  
ONE HUNDRED MILLION  
NATIVE AMERICANS KILLED**

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

3

3

# Indigenous Historical Trauma



March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

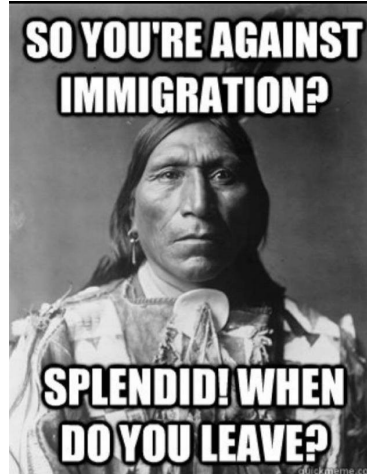
4

- Historical Oppression + Psychological Trauma
- Purpose
- 4 Cs
  - Colonial injury
  - Collectively experienced
  - Cumulatively escalating
  - Cross-generationally transferred

4

## Indigenous Historical Trauma

- Widespread Circulation
- Sociopolitical Functions
  - Seizes Moral High-Ground
  - Legitimizes Claims
  - Refashions Identity
  - Remakes the Self
- Genealogy
  - Trauma Discourse
  - Therapy Culture



March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

5

5

## Indigenous Historical Trauma

- What does it mean when...
  - Entire generations of Indigenous people are said to suffer from *historical trauma*?
  - Community healing projects uncritically promote core elements of *therapy culture*?
- What might indigenous self-determination in response to colonization look like if we:
  - Celebrated **mastery** much more so than **fragility**?
  - Cultivated "**survance**" rather than "**victimry**"? (Vizenor, 1999)

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

6

6

# Recounting the Coup Tale

## Round 2



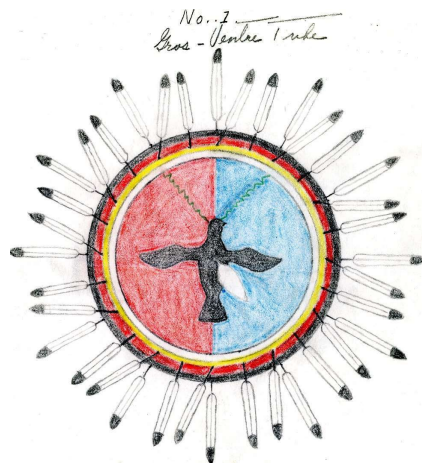
March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

7

7

# Recounting the Coup Tale



- Life History of Bull Lodge
  - Prominent *Aaniih-Gros Ventre* Leader (ca. 1802-1886)
  - Textual Origins (*Gone, 2006*)
    - Fred P. Gone & WPA (1941-42)
    - Garter Snake Woman
  - Death Bed Narratives (*Gone, 2011*)
    - The Autobiographical Impulse?
    - An Alternative Account?

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

8

8

## Recounting the Coup Tale



- *Aaniiih* War Deeds
  - Cultural Ideals (*Fowler, 1987*)
  - Narrative Exemplars
    - Bull Lodge  
(*F. P. Gone, 1942; J. P. Gone, 2006*)
    - Watches All  
(*Kroeber, 1908; J. P. Gone, 2014*)
    - **Red Whip**  
(*F. P. Gone, 1941*)

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

9

9

## Recounting the Coup Tale

- *Aaniiih* War Deeds (cont)
  - Conditions of Narration
  - Conflicting Legacies
    - Mastery
    - Violence

How to preserve **mastery** while repudiating **violence**?

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

10

10

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

### Round 3



March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

11

11

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

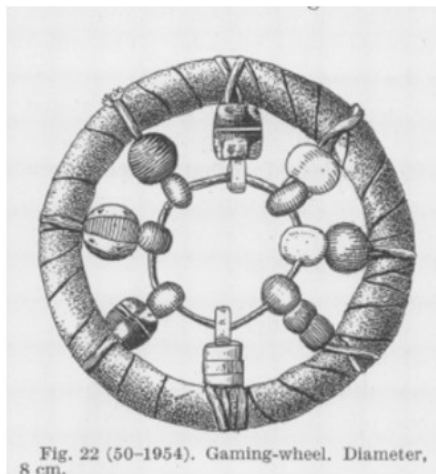


Fig. 22 (50-1954). Gaming-wheel. Diameter, 8 cm.

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

12

- The *Aaniih* Wheel Game  
(Flannery & Cooper, 1946)
  - High Stakes Competition
  - Enemy-Friends
  - Role of War Deeds
- How could concentration on a war deed alter the outcome of this game?

12

## Reassessing the Coup Tale



- Four Intersecting Concepts in *Aaniih* Cosmology (Cooper, 1957)
  - Life
    - Gift from Supreme Being
    - Exogenous to humans
    - Dependent on *wish* of Supreme Being
    - Source of all good things
    - Incompatible with bad things

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

13

13

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

- Four Intersecting *Aaniih* Concepts (cont)
  - Wish: expression of personal desire thru intense concentration of thought
    - Eight Attributes
      - Exercised by Supreme Being to control cosmos
      - Attribute of all persons (whether human or other-than-human)
      - Ability that can be cultivated toward greater potency

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

14

14

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

- Four Intersecting *Aaniih* Concepts (cont)

- Wish (cont)

- Eight Attributes (cont)

- Domain of human conflict through contrary wishing
      - Resonates with / “calls for” action by other-than-humans
      - Additive across persons for greater efficacy
      - Expressed verbally through utterances of blessing & cursing
      - Grounded in interpersonal relationships & interactions

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

15

15

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

- Four Intersecting *Aaniih* Concepts (cont)

- Power: ability to bring the world into alignment with one's wishes

- Exercised through concentration of thought
    - Supreme Being as Prime Thinker
    - Ranking of Beings by power
    - Lowly humans depend on prayer & ceremony

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

16

16



## Reassessing the Coup Tale

- Four Intersecting *Aaniih* Concepts (cont)
  - Speech
    - Vocabular utterance of thought
    - Conveys a person's thought into the world
    - Connected to life thru breathing and breath
    - Thought plus breath (mediated by language)

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

17

17

## Reassessing the Coup Tale

- Four Intersecting *Aaniih* Concepts (cont)
  - Speech (cont)
    - Singing as most elevated form of speech
    - Lessons from ceremonial practice
    - Category of moral action
    - Powerful speech genres

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

18

18

# Reclaiming the Coup Tale

## Round 4



March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

19

19

# Reclaiming the Coup Tale

- Functions of *Aaniih* Coup Tales
  - Narratives of Agentic Triumph Over an Enemy
  - Two Functions
    - Commemorating Brave Deeds
    - Harnessing "Power"
      - Dispensation of enlivening power (e.g., naming, ear piercing)
      - Neutralization of destructive power (e.g., war dangers, taboos)

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

20

20

## Reclaiming the Coup Tale

- Functions of *Aaniih* Coup Tales (cont)
  - Beyond **narrative representations** (i.e., this or that series of happenings)...
  - ...Toward **narrative efficacy** in the world (i.e., altering reality in some desired way)...
  - ...Through **narrative recirculation of LIFE** (i.e., transference of residual vitality from past actions to present lives)

March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

21

21

## Reclaiming the Coup Tale

- A Neo-Traditional Approach
  - Repudiating Violence
  - Preserving Preoccupation with Achievement & Mastery
  - Identifying Modern Contexts for **Eruptions of Liveliness**



March 24, 2023

Impact of Intergenerational Trauma on the Tribal Workforce (EBCI TERO Conference)

22

22

## Closing

For more information related to this presentation, visit my website at:

[gonetowar.com](http://gonetowar.com)