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Narrative and the Maintenance of Great Lakes Native American Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship of the trickster character Manabozho to the maintenance of Great Lakes Native American cultural identity by using interviews and literary analysis. The interviews gathered statements from participants about their personal experiences with narrative, and the social context of narrative, within their tribes. The literary analysis examines three stories in the Manabozho cycle: “The Theft of Fire,” “Manabozho and Wolf,” and “The Flood.” The themes in these stories fulfill all four of William Bascom’s four functions of folklore. The hypothesis that narrative is a necessary factor of cultural maintenance has been supported by both the interviews and the literary analysis.

Keywords: oral tradition, narrative, myth, Manabozho, interviews, literary analysis, William Bascom, four functions of folklore, Odawa, Potawatomi, Chippewa, Ojibwa.

The Trickster and the Maintenance of Native American Cultural Identity

This project examines the relationship between narrative and the maintenance of Great Lakes Native American cultural identity. Previous research in the area of folktale analysis usually examines either the written form of the narrative or collects personal statements about oral tradition from members of a particular group. The methodology of this paper includes both interviews and an analysis of three stories from the trickster Manabozho's story cycle. The interviews provide social context for oral tradition and a first-person perspective on the importance of story in Native American culture. The interviews also illuminate the possible meaning of a series of folktales from the Manabozho cycle. The Manabozho stories provide specific examples of underlying meaning that is present in folktales. I posit that narrative within the Great Lakes Native American tradition is important to the maintenance of Native American culture predominantly because it provides an entertaining medium for cultural education and promotes a sense of identity within the tribes. This project seeks to affirm the importance of narrative to Great Lakes Native American culture by using interviews and literary analysis to discern how and why narrative maintains cultural identity.

The theoretical structure of this paper is rooted in the functionalist, or anthropological, framework of folklore analysis made popular by William Bascom, whose ideas stemmed from the teachings of Melville Herskovits and Franz Boas (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997). Adherents to this discipline believe that viewing the function of a tale, rather than its origins or patterns of diffusion, gives insight into the culture that produced it (T. Green (Ed.), 1997). The themes in the folktales being analyzed are categorized according to William Bascom's four functions of folklore, which are escape, validation, cultural education, and social control. These functions provide a scale that quantifies the themes and motifs present in the stories.

A Brief History of Story

The stories of mythological figures, such as the trickster and culture hero, are integral to the Native American tradition of oral story telling. Both the traditions and histories of native peoples are embodied within their myths and rituals. Understanding the stories of a people group contributes to knowing and respecting their culture as a whole while simultaneously providing insights about their daily life, social organization, and societal values (Brunvand, 1976). In general, myths explore the human condition and describe in detail what it is like to be a human within a particular culture (Armstrong, 2005). For the purposes of this paper, the terms story, narrative, and tale will be used interchangeably to mean a spoken or written accounts of connected events, accounts of imaginary or real people, and accounts of imaginary or real events told for entertainment.

Folklore, or the study of traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community passed through generations, is an echo of the past and simultaneously the voice of the present. It can be defined as the accumulated traditions of a community. Folklore includes literature, music, song, dance, foodways, and the arts as expressions of cultural ideals (Dorson, 1972). These performances persist because of, and through, human actions and interactions. Anthropologists and folklorists such as Franz Boas and William Bascom have used folklore to explain the organization of a particular culture and how individual pieces of a culture fit together, especially in non-literate societies (Thursby, 2006). Folktale, a facet of folklore, is oral literature. Folktales are usually imaginative and magical tales whose primary purpose is entertainment. The stories can be serious or light and may have a hero who, through a series of adventures, ultimately reaches his or her goal and learns a valuable lesson in the process. Many folktales have similar

structures but differ throughout the culture in content and style (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997).

Myths are stories that explain or celebrate the mysteries of human existence. They can be seen as either tales of gods and goddesses or as a "thread that holds past, present, and future together." These stories present a "pattern of belief that give meaning to life" and provide a "basis of identity for communities, tribes, and nations" (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997). At the center of each culture's mythology lies the need to understand the ineffable by looking for answers to the basic and essential questions of why we are here, how we got here, and what our purpose is in being here (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997).

Myths are a valid method of studying human culture because of their longevity (stories have existed as long as humans have) and their ability to be modified, utilized, and transmitted by different people over different periods of time (Dégh, 1972). This paper analyzes the relationship of the trickster character Manabozho to the maintenance of Great Lakes Native American cultural identity, utilizing William Bascom's four functions of folklore. I will use folktale as a window into the larger scene of Native American culture by examining the importance of myth as a whole and, more specifically, the importance of the trickster Manabozho's stories.

William Bascom's Four Functions of Folklore

By using Bascom's four functions of folklore I will quantify the themes of specific stories in Native American culture (Thursby, 2006). Bascom's functionalism gives a heightened esteem to folklore by deeming it a necessary factor of cultural stability. Not only do Bascom's ideas affirm the importance of folklore but they also provide a framework that can be used to discern the purpose of a particular folktale. The four functions specifically seek to explain how folklore

interacts with society to better understand the role of oral tradition in the maintenance of cultural identity.

The first of Bascom's suggested functions is escape, which states that folktales allow listeners to vicariously leave the weaknesses of their mortal bodies, the restrictions of societal constraints, and the limits of geographical boundaries (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997). Escape stories are used for entertainment and allow people to participate in actions considered taboo within their culture. These tales are often based in a mythological past (Bastian & Mitchell, 2004). In her book *Nonsense,* Susan Stewart states that there cannot be rational conceptions of reality without irrational conceptions as well. Thus escape tales can provide insight on how social life functions even if they are not true to life by distracting people from their personal reality with a world of story.

The second function is validation, meaning that folktales affirm traditional behavior within a group. These behaviors may include the rituals and institutions of the culture and the roles of those who perform and observe them. Stories, whether they are sacred or not, may serve as a practical guide to the "supernatural beliefs," sacred ceremonies, rituals, or the social structure of a group (Bascom, 1954). This function is usually associated with myth, stories that explain how and why worldly objects and events originated (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997). Because myths are associated with validation, this function may also contribute to the formation and sustentation of tribal identity. However, the recitation of myths only contributes to the development of identity and is not the sole or primary factor.

The third function is cultural (societal) education, meaning the method by which culture is transmitted to future generations. The tales of Manabozho, for instance, are often found in children's books (Snake, Yellowhead, York, Simcoe, & King, 1980; Leekley, 1965; McLellan,

1989; McLellan, 1990, etc.). Cultural education may be expressed through fables, stories that teach the young morals and values held by their community, and riddles, which are used to sharpen a child's wit (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997). Though these stories are integral in understanding the culture as a whole, they specifically serve the important purpose of transmitting culture to the younger generations.

The fourth function of folklore is social control. Social controls are the methods of ensuring conformity within the community with either rewards or punishments (Schloss & Murray, 2011). The allusions to future repercussions can be explicit but are more often implicit. The character in the story suffers from disobeying the rules of society or prospers by espousing societal virtues. The listener is then able to infer that he or she will also be punished or rewarded for committing similar actions. The relationship between the trickster character and Native American culture can be quantifiably examined by using this functionalist model of folklore analysis put forth by William Bascom (Bascom, 1954).

The Trickster

Most Native American groups have a figure in their mythologies described as the trickster, a type of character known for deceit and mischief-making (Lynch, 2004). The trickster is a complicated character that consistently has an inconsistent mixture of innocence and malicious intent (Thursby, 2006). Native American trickster characters usually take the form of an animal, such as Coyote or Hare (G. Jobes (Ed.), 1961). Though Manabozho is commonly called the Great Hare he is not necessarily in rabbit form. Rather, in Ojibwa story telling, he fulfills the role of "person" (meaning that he has human characteristics but is not necessarily a human entity) while having the ability to change his shape as desired (Hallowell, 1960).

Other tricksters, such as Gluskap, and Hiawatha, are often categorized as culture heroes, meaning characters that are "responsible for providing or creating distinctive aspects or benefits of a culture and the natural world through discovery or invention" (Bastian & Mitchell, 2004). These significant acts include, but are not limited to, the creation of humans and the world, discovering tobacco, naming the animals, stealing fire, or acquiring and teaching skills that are necessary for the survival of the native tribes (Lynch, 2004).

Trickster characters often perpetrate a wide array of comedic shenanigans, which are very intricate and may lead the trickster to become the victim of his own trick (Carroll, 1984). Manabozho's name may even derive from the Algonquian words for "a clown" (Chamberlain, 1891). However, the mischief making is rarely pointless and usually concludes with an explanation of natural phenomena that would have been observed by the original storyteller. Like Hiawatha and Gluskap, Manabozho fulfills the roles of both culture hero (in that he provides humankind with aid) and trickster (in that he is anthropomorphic, mischievous, and often finds himself in trouble) (Ricketts, 1966).

Manabozho

Manabozho, despite engaging in a variety of foolish escapades, is a powerful trickster-cum-culture hero whose story cycle is long and complicated. A story cycle is a collection of short stories that have been compiled and arranged by a narrator to serve a specific function (Mann, 1989). The stories in the Manabozho cycle can be taken alone, arranged by topic, or presented in semi-chronological order (Radin & Reagan, 1928). Manabozho's name has a multitude of variations (Menabozho, Nanabozho, Nanabush, Waynaboozho, Winabojo, Winebozho) that stem from differences in the Ojibwa dialect and the dissemination of his stories across geographical regions and generations (Lynch, 2004). He is often associated with other

culture heroes such as Hiawatha and Gluskap, which implies that their stories may share a common source.

Like most culture heroes, Manabozho's birth is shrouded in mystery. It is generally accepted that he had siblings although the number of siblings and their names vary. In Menominee legend, Manabozho's siblings are Little Wolf and Flint Stone. In some Ojibwa accounts, Manabozho has one other brother named Wabosso, who disappears, while in others he is counted as the oldest of three brothers: Chibiabos, Wabose, and Chokanipok (Lynch, 2004). Most accounts agree that Manabozho caused a great flood after killing the leader of the water spirits while searching for his lost brother. In addition to causing the deluge, Manabozho is credited with naming the animals, bringing fire to man, and discovering wild rice (Cole, 1982).

Although he provides valuable gifts to man (such as tobacco and fire) not all of Manabozho's exploits are magnanimous, beneficial, and benevolent (Greene, 1994). In numerous tales he holds a merciless grudge against another animal. In the story of the Great Hare and Buzzard, Manabozho tricked Buzzard and caused him to lose all the feathers around his head (Bastian & Mitchell, 2004). Manabozho also engaged in a ridiculous, one-sided feud with a baby, the only creature in the world who would not obey him (Cole, 1982). Despite being powerful entities, the tricksters' fallible personas allow the audience to relate to their antics.

The audience can identify with the character Manabozho because he eats the same food, lives in the same area, hunts the same game, fights for the same purposes, and sings the same songs as the people who tell his stories (Cowley, 1975). Although his mother died when he was a child, he acquired a family unit comprised of siblings, a grandmother, a father, and an adopted nephew. Manabozho's stories are interesting because he is not infallible, omniscient, or omnipresent but capable of being deceived, injured, weakened, tired, starved, and frozen. His

stories "come alive" because they occur in the natural environment that native storytellers are surrounded by and familiar with (Cowley, 1975). Manabozho's human characteristics allow the tribes to understand him and, through his adventures, understand their relationship to the surrounding world.

Methodology

Interviews

The interview process seeks to understand the relationship of individual members of the Great Lakes Native American tribes to tribal narratives and elucidate the social context that surrounds the telling of tales. The purpose of these interviews is to affirm that narrative is an important aspect of tribal tradition, discern the personal importance of story telling, and speculate on the future of oral tradition and the transmission of cultural values to subsequent generations. Each participant provides his or her own perspective on the importance of oral tradition and supplies the perspective of an individual who is part of Native American culture. Without understanding the meaning of folktales and tribal narratives to the people from their perspective, it is impossible to make an accurate interpretation of their stories (Nabakov, 2002).

The interviews were conducted over the course of one week with three individuals who are enrolled in the tribes of the Three Fires, which include the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi. Participant 1 (Alpha) and Participant 3 (Gamma) are both enrolled Ojibwa while Participant 2 (Beta) is Potawatomi. Alpha is female while Beta and Gamma are both male. The primary form of recruitment and communication between the researcher and participants was email. Each participant is a friend or acquaintance of the researcher, which led to his or her participation in this project. The interviews for Alpha and Gamma were conducted in their work offices while the interview with Beta was conducted via an emailed survey.

The interview questions were designed to stimulate conversation and provoke the participant's recollections about story telling and cultural education within the tribe (Handwerker, 2001). The interview questions asked about the participant's earliest recollections of story telling, discussed how stories are told within their respective tribes, and inquired about the deeper meaning of the stories as it influenced each participant personally. A full list of interview questions has been included in Appendix A. The transcripts of these interviews include identifying information about the research participants and, according to the consent form, will be stored anonymously by the researcher.

Literary Analysis

Several of the stories I have chosen for examination echo the themes and motifs of other tales from around the world. The story of Manabozho causing a worldwide flood and then finding land is reminiscent of Noah's ark in the biblical Old Testament or the tale of Deucalion and Pyrrha in ancient Greek mythology (Hamilton, 1942). It is difficult to think of Manabozho stealing fire from a surly magician so that his people can prosper without also imagining the Titan Prometheus bequeathing fire to mankind. While the tales may be similar to each other, the cultures that created these stories are, quite literally, oceans apart.

Native American stories are orally transmitted and, as discerned from the interviews, are not told in a ritualized manner. Most recitations of a story are left to the discretion of the narrator. Because of the variation in the stories' retellings, I could not use a single version of the stories taken from one source. According to William Blackwood in his article *Tales of the Chippewa Indians,* "Scarcely two persons agree in all the minor circumstances of the story, scarcely any omit the leading traits," which implies that the differences in narration do not arise from unauthentic literary sources but may be attributed to "decay of tradition" (Blackwood,

1929). Thus, it is possible to use several books with slightly different recitations of the same tales. Instead of one version of the story, I read several sources that included various versions of the Manabozho stories and averaged the main literary elements of the tale. This led to the development of one version of the story that included the most consistently repeated elements from each telling. The story versions recounted in the following sections include the most common elements from multiple sources.

While the interviews provide valuable personal perspective about the importance of tribal narrative, the close textual analysis of trickster folktales told by tribes in the Great Lakes region of the United States demonstrate how a story can convey deep meaning in an entertaining package (Edmonson, 1971). The process of text analysis included searching for similarities between retellings by examining the repetition of words, patterns in speech (such as the same introduction or concluding sentences a lá "Once upon a time"), and examining other elements that contribute to the overall structure of the story and point to the stories' underlying meaning.

The stories that I encountered most often in other sources are presented for examination in this paper and include "The Theft of Fire, "Manabozho and Wolf" and "The Flood." The "Theft of Fire" is a short tale about Manabozho stealing fire from a magician for the good of mankind. Both "Manabozho and Wolf" and "The Flood" detail the animosity that arose between Manabozho and the manitous that killed his adopted kin. These stories are in most books of Native American folktales and are popular tales from the Manabozho story cycle. Discerning underlying themes from stories in the Manabozho cycle provide specific examples of oral tradition's role in the maintenance of Native American cultural identity.

Findings: Presentation and Analysis of Interview Data

Alpha

Participant 1, who will be referred to as Alpha, is a female member of the Ojibwa tribe. Her particular group is located in Northern Michigan and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians in Southwestern Michigan (where she currently lives) facilitates her participation in Native American culture. The relationship of Alpha with a group technically outside of her own shows the interconnectedness of the Great Lakes tribal traditions that allows for a comparison of folktale from several different tribes that are related geographically and culturally. According to Alpha, she had very little interaction with her tribe and limited awareness of her place within tribal culture until the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act and 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act were passed. She enrolled with the tribe when she was a teenager and currently participates in tribal activities such as drumming, beading, and tanning although she does not consider herself an active member of the tribe. Alpha states that the distance from her tribe hinders her ability to interact with them. Although Alpha is unfamiliar with the Manabozho story cycle, she did recognize the name Nanabush (an alternative spelling of Manabozho's name) and was able to provide information about the process of story telling, the role it plays for her personally, and its purpose within Native American culture.

In her interview, Alpha provided information about the story telling tradition and reflected on her personal opinions about the purpose of story in her tribe. The stories themselves serve several purposes, such as increasing the listener's awareness of the natural world or emphasizing the theme of respect within the society. This belief is not only manifested in oral tradition but also in tribal dance and drumming. The drumming group that Alpha participates in has recently performed a piece about the importance of water. Water is a fundamental aspect of life and is under the care of the women in the tribe. Without it, no one can survive and thus it is

important to keep all the bodies of water clean to preserve life. The drum music that goes along with this story is representative of human existence in general as the piece starts smoothly and quietly and then rapidly crescendos to demonstrate the tumultuous nature of life.

Alpha stressed the importance of Native American identity, which is enhanced by story telling. The stories of the tribe provide a blueprint for "who we are" and a sense of place in the natural world. According to Alpha, there is not a ritualized method of telling most stories. The method of telling is left to the narrator so that he or she can convey a specific moral. Elders and shaman normally recite tales but there is not a designated storyteller. While there are celebrations for each of the four seasons, the longest and most involved stories are told during the winter months.

Because she was not raised within the tribe, Alpha feels she is missing a portion of her tribal identity. She did not recognize some children's stories associated with Manabozho although, after some discussion, she recalled the tales of creation and "Manabozho and Wolf." Alpha also does not speak Ojibwa but has taken lessons in Potawatomi. She mentioned that it is difficult for those who do not live on a reservation to have the same level of cohesion with tribal identity. However, despite designating herself as uninvolved with the tribe Alpha participates in several traditional activities such as making moccasins, beading, and tanning hides.

Alpha feels personally impacted by the tribal stories and enjoys the tales that "speak of the old ways." It is important for her to stay connected to the tribe because it provides her with a sense of identity. In her personal experience, Alpha believes that oral tradition is important because it educates the youth about their culture's traditional stories, practices, ceremonies, songs, dances, and drum pieces. Alpha believes that increased opportunity to publicly express cultural beliefs has led to more interest in cultural expression. She hopes that the more involved

the youth are in tribal events, the more the culture will be revitalized. Learning their native language will hopefully spark revitalization of culture within the tribe. Alpha hopes that the future generations will have a clearer sense of identity, take care of nature, and continue a tradition of respect for each other and the world.

Beta

Participant 2 (Beta) is a member of the Potawatomi tribe and has been enrolled his entire life. He considers himself to be from Potawatomi, Odawa, and Ojibwa ancestry. Unlike Alpha and Gamma, Beta responded to the interview questions via email. His responses to the survey are more condensed than the information gleaned from the face-to-face discussions with Alpha and Gamma. Beta considers himself an active member of the tribe and agrees that he is more involved now in tribal activities than he was as a child. He is currently employed by his tribe and attends a wide array of tribal functions, which includes powwows.

Unlike Alpha, Beta considers himself an active member of his tribe and has many recollections about tribal storytelling. Beta believes that stories are important to Native American culture as a whole but that they are not necessarily important to each individual, as most people do not engage with the culture at a deep level. In his childhood home, Beta's father told only bits and pieces of tribal tales. While attending "old youth camp events" he remembers that some of the storytellers would forget the progression of the story and pause often throughout the recitation. The stories were always told in English. Beta emphasizes the importance of language in the preservation of his culture. He believes that story telling influences his culture as a whole by communicating many morals, values, and histories but that they function as a factor of cultural maintenance most effectively when expressed in the indigenous language.

Beta did not provide a definitive answer about the change in importance of oral tradition in recent decades. He believes that geographical location and population density influences how the stories are told and the frequency with which they are recited. Not only does the popularity of stories vary regionally but the underlying meanings expressed in the stories also vary. The variations in traditional stories stem from the whims of the narrator. Like Alpha, Beta states that the morals are left to the discretion of the listener because there are no definitive versions of any story. While themes can be gleaned from English versions of these tales, Beta feels that the original language provides a greater depth of meaning than can be seen in a translation. Unlike Alpha who has a positive outlook on the future of story within the tribe, Beta is more ambivalent. He is not sure whether the importance of stories will increase or diminish and believes that it depends on the people, place, and time. The fluidity of the stories does provide a sense of identity for the tribe but it also makes it difficult to predict how future generations will interpret them.

Gamma

Participant 3 (Gamma) is enrolled within the Ojibwa tribe and awareness of his tribal affiliations did not develop until he was an adult. Like Alpha and Gamma, his family was not involved with the tribe as a child and he is more involved in tribal activities now than in his childhood. Beta's Native American ancestry is traced through his paternal lineage, as his grandmother was Ojibwa on both sides of her family. Although he is well acquainted with the customs and beliefs surrounding the oral storytelling tradition, Gamma does not consider himself an active member of the tribe because he does not go to the reservations. He would be more inclined to participate in tribal functions if there were Ojibwa events nearer to him.

Gamma agrees with both Alpha and Beta that there is not a designated storyteller in the tribe and that elders share stories most frequently. The only requirement necessary to become a storyteller is that the individual "knows what he's talking about," meaning that he or she can articulate the story clearly and express the desired morals. Not all stories have meanings and not all the meanings present in the stories are clearly articulated. Because the teller may change the details of the stories, the meaning can be entrenched deeply within the narrative. Gamma states that because Native American culture is orally based, the purpose of the stories is primarily to educate the tribes about tradition. However, he makes the important point that the stories are not told in isolation but communally. Thus, the tales provide a setting for bonding and increasing community cohesion.

The tales themselves, as previously implied, are not ritualized although dancing, singing, or drumming may accompany the recitations. They can be told anywhere because of the nomadic nature of the original storytellers. Both Beta and Gamma agree that the most popular stories are those that speak of creation, the origin of their people, and feats of bravery. Many of the tales discussed emphasize the importance of nature and the respect of natural things. In the origin story of horses, for instance, the horse was given to man as a tool. The horses, however, deserve respect by those who possess them because the Great Spirit gave them as a gift.

The theme of identity, as stated in the conversations with Alpha and Beta, was strongly emphasized in the interview with Gamma as well. The traditional stories tell the listener who he or she is as an individual and how his or her identity is affected by being a member of a specific tribe. The tribal narratives that inspire creativity, leadership, and bravery demonstrate how individuals should be as human beings. The stories about nature inform the listener of where he

or she stands in the universal "pecking order," which emphasizes respect for other humans and the natural world.

Gamma is not familiar with the stories of Manabozho although he did express some recognition over the alternative name, The Great Hare (or Rabbit). He stated that trickster characters such as Coyote and Rabbit are not generally "good" characters. Instead the characters are associated with the devil. The trickster stories often provide a warning that wards against inappropriate behavior of tribal members. Unlike Alpha, Gamma believes that these stories are told less often then they once were although he agrees with Beta that the amount of involvement is linked to proximity to the main tribe. He is optimistic about the role of story within the community. Unlike concrete skills such as the making of tribal regalia, beading, or tanning hides the ability to convey stories is an easier skill to acquire; stories are more likely to survive and thrive for future generations.

Additional Analysis

The themes of identity, community, and respect of both people and the natural world are present in each of the three interviews. All of the participants agreed that stories are told for both education and entertainment. Alpha and Gamma grew up independent from tribal activities and were unaware of their identities as members of the tribe until later in their lives. Neither speaks Ojibwa although Alpha has taken several classes and Gamma has integrated the language into the names of his children. Despite separation from tribal culture as children, both Alpha and Gamma have incorporated Native American identity and skills into their daily lives. Conversely, Gamma speaks Potawatomi and is very involved in cultural activities. Regardless of the age of integration, all three participants share similar sentiments toward the importance of story telling by stating that it is a necessary factor of cultural maintenance.

The participants provided insight about Bascom's four functions of folklore in their responses to the interview questions. None of the participants believes that tribal storytellers would accept that stories are told merely for entertainment. Alpha was particularly concerned with ascribing a flippant status to the culture's narratives. She believes that the stories may be presented in an entertaining way but that they are used more often for education. The function "cultural education" was affirmed by all three participants who implied that traditional narratives convey meaning to future generations about "who they are" as Ojibwa or Potawatomi. The importance of story to the development of cultural identity was emphasized in all three interviews. However, the recitation of story is only a small part of identity formation. Identity can be also be molded by the use of a specific language and participation in community events. Beta specifically emphasized the importance of language to cultural identity. When told in the original dialect, folktales also function to preserve and spread language to the listeners. Gamma mentioned that the stories are usually told in a group setting and may contribute to the cohesion of a particular community. Validation of cultural values was viewed as a positive purpose of story telling. The stories of origins, which fall under the category of "myth," were considered the most popular tales by both Beta and Gamma. Social control was not mentioned in any of the three interviews but may still be expressed in the stories analyzed below. While the themes of community cohesion, identity, and language transference are all valuable roles of folktale they are not discussed in detail by Bascom's four functions of folklore.

Findings: Presentation and Analysis of Literary Data

The Theft of Fire

"The Theft of Fire" is essential to understanding the trickster Manabozho's nature although, like most orally transmitted stories, it has characteristics that vary upon retelling. The consistent elements of the tale can be categorized with Bascom's functions. The tale is not

considered a myth in the sense that it is a sacred story, ritualized, or discusses the origins of the world or a particular group of people (Reichard, 1921). The story recounts a benevolent action (stealing fire) on the part of the hero (Manabozho). While he uses tricks and his special talent of changing form into whichever animal suits his purpose, Manabozho does not fool the greedy magician solely for the sake of comedy. Rather, he hopes to recover the fire that is taken from his people so that they do not suffer during winter (McLellan, 1990). The narration below is a compilation of several different children's books that recount "The Theft of Fire" in its entirety.

> The story goes that on a particularly cold and bitter day, Manabozho went to his grandmother Nokomis's wigwam. Everything around him was frozen so he stamped his feet and briskly rubbed his hands together to warm himself. He complained about the temperature to Nokomis and asked if there was any way to be warmer. She told him about fire, which would keep people cozy when it is cold. She said that once, a very long time before, fire was available to everyone as long as they kept it fed with birch bark, twigs, and sticks. The talk of fire sparked Manabozho's interest and he asked Nokomis where he could find it. She told him that he could not acquire it because an old man and his two daughters kept it carefully guarded. Despite warning Manabozho about the danger of taking fire from the old man, he would not be deterred. He was determined to take the fire and so he left his grandmother's home. He went to the edge of a large lake, wrapped his rabbit skin robe tightly around his body, and set off in his canoe to find the old man, his daughters, and the fire.
>
> While he traveled, Manabozho grew colder and colder, and wrapped his robe tighter and tighter around himself. He finally arrived at the old man's

wigwam. Quickly he turned into a rabbit and jumped into the frozen lake just before one of the old man's daughters came to draw water. Seeing the poor, shivering rabbit, the young woman fished him out and brought him inside. Her sister was very worried that the old man would awaken and be angry that the rabbit was in their home but her sister laughed at these concerns. Placing Manabozho, who appeared as a rabbit, next to the fire to dry the two sisters continued their work. The old man suddenly sat up and asked who had come into his wigwam while he was sleeping. The girls showed him Manabozho and told him not to worry. It was just a rabbit, after all. Grumbling, the old man returned to his mat but told the girls to be wary of the manitous (spirits), who could take the voice and shape of any animal. When Manabozho was finally dry, he sidled up to the fire pit and contemplated how to take a tongue of flame home. Deciding on a course of action, Manabozho quickly grabbed an ember from the fire pit and threw it on his back. He ran as fast as he could to his canoe with the two young women running, crying, and screaming at him to stop. Neither girl was angrier than the old man, however, who had warned them about the rabbit.

With his back engulfed in flames, Manabozho raced back to his grandmother's home. Nearing the wigwam, Manabozho yelled at her to prepare a place for the fire. As he sprinted toward her, Nokomis scooped the ember off Manabozho and into the kindling she had prepared. The burning on Manabozho's back did not stop when Nokomis removed the ember. He begged her to heal him because he had been badly burnt. She laughed, called him a fool, and turned away. Manabozho became quite angry and demanded she help him.

> Finally Nokomis reminded Manabozho that the rabbit shape he wore was not his own and that, if he would only change back into a man, he would no longer hurt. Realizing his mistake, Manabozho shucked the rabbit skin and stood once more as a man, proud that he had brought fire back to his people. The burn mark on his rabbit skin can be seen to this day. [1]

As discussed in the interviews, a narrator may alter the content of the story based on the size, age, or composition of the audience to convey a specific meaning. Details that may change include Manabozho's age (in children's stories Manabozho is often depicted as a child rather than an adult), the dialogue with his grandmother, how he travels to the old man's wigwam, the nature of the old man (he may be a magician or sorcerer), and the means by which the daughter rescues the rabbit can be shortened, lengthened, or even omitted depending on the narrator. However, the overall structure of the tale remains fundamentally the same.

The narrative is broken into several sections: Manabozho at his grandmother's home, the journey from her home, the interaction with the old man, the race back to his grandmother's wigwam, and the concluding interaction with Nokomis. The story is always set on a cold winter day to illustrate the necessity of life-giving fire, which initially prompts Manabozho to seek his grandmother's advice. Although he looks to her as a source of wisdom, Manabozho decides to steal fire despite his grandmother's warning. In each account, he turns himself into a rabbit and is brought into the old man's wigwam by one of the daughters. Some versions of the tale say that the young woman is very beautiful and later becomes Manabozho's wife. Despite little interaction with the plot in the story, the old man always knows that something is amiss in his home and he warns his daughters to be cautious of the manitous. Manabozho's method of stealing the fire by placing an ember on his back is also a consistent plot point as is the pain from

[1] (Greene, 1994 & Cole, 1982)

the burn and his extreme foolishness. In the end, he is happy and proud that he brought fire back for himself, his grandmother, and his people.

The first section of the story at Nokomis's wigwam sets the stage for the rest of the tale. Manabozho recognizes the problem of "cold" and seeks a resolution by asking his grandmother for advice. Nokomis is the Algonquian earth goddess who, in some narratives, is also the daughter of the moon (G. Jobes (Ed.), 1961). Her unique position as both a pseudo-deity (in the sense that she is superhuman and fulfills the role of "person" but is never defined as a "god") and the grandmother of the hero allows her to impart wisdom upon Manabozho, an important entity in his own right (Jones & Molyneuax, 2011). Nokomis plays the role of "conscience" or "wisdom" to Manabozho within his story cycle. Through her role as advisor, Manabozho's relationship with his grandmother can be seen as contributing to the theme of "elder veneration." This respect is not based in the idea that the elder is a deity but rather that the elder is capable of imparting wisdom that should be heeded. As discussed in the interviews with Alpha and Gamma, respect for people, especially elders, is necessary to achieve social harmony. This theme is additionally expressed in the old man's interactions with his daughters. In other versions of the story, the old man is a wizard or sorcerer who could have injured Manabozho had he caught him (McLellan, 1990). Like Nokomis who receives extra-natural insight because of her close relationship to the natural world, the sorcerer also represents a heightened connection to the surrounding environment. The old man was originally able to contain the fire and keep it for his own purposes, which means he is not totally powerless. He can be seen as a source of wisdom although he is often depicted as grumpy or doddering (McLellan, 1990 & Leekley, 1965).

The theme of elder veneration brackets the story at both the beginning and the end. Manabozho ignores Nokomis and steals fire. Although Manabozho does accomplish this

impressive feat on his own, his triumph is not without repercussions. As he races back to his grandmother's wigwam, the ember he stole slowly works its way through his skin and burns him. He was clever enough to retrieve the ember but not clever enough to remember to change back into the shape of a man. Despite Manabozho's wit and accomplishments it is the wisdom of Nokomis, his grandmother, that saves the hero in the end.

The motivation for Manabozho's quest to the old man's wigwam is not readily apparent. His journey may have been provoked by pride because he is a clever culture hero who can change his shape at will, the great-grandson of the moon, and the son of the Western Wind (McLellan, 1989). Conversely, he may have been motivated to steal fire solely because of his desire to help his people. However, both of the aforementioned scenarios are limited in their explanation of Manabozho's motives. His initial yearning to be warm is both selfish and selfless. He is immediately cold so he seeks his grandmother's advice to keep his body warm. However, in some versions of the story, Manabozho asks his grandmother how the people will survive with frozen drinking water and dead crops. Regardless of his motives, once the flame is acquired it becomes available to all persons. Like a human character, Manabozho is capable of a self-centered action that eventually helps others. This furthers the idea that Manabozho is a beloved character because of the audience's ability to relate to his motives and actions.

The "Theft of Fire" may serve several purposes according to Bascom's four functions of folklore. Told in an entertaining manner, this story can aid in the escape of those listening to it. However, according to the interview participants, stories are rarely told solely for the sake of entertainment. This story also informs the audience of certain expectations within the society such as listening to the wisdom of others even if an individual is certain he or she cannot fail at his or her endeavor. Thus, the tale also fits into the category of validation because it enforces the

necessity of respect. Additionally the story serves to explain both how fire came to mankind and why Manabozho, when disguised as a rabbit, has a discolored patch of fur on his back. The explanatory aspects of the tale fit into the validation function because it explains how two worldly objects and phenomena (fire and the color of rabbit fur) came to be.

Manabozho and Wolf

The composition of Manabozho's nuclear family is not consistently recounted between Native American tribes. It is never questioned that the hero himself is supernatural because Manabozho's father is the abstract personification of the immortal Western wind and his mother, though human in appearance, is the daughter of the Earth and the granddaughter of the moon (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984). Some accounts say that Manabozho's mother gave birth to multiple children while others depict him as an orphaned child without any immediate family. Regardless of the storyteller, Nokomis is an ever-present facet of Manabozho's life.

As a child, Manabozho believes that he is without a family and adopts a little Wolf who is also without kin (Judson, 2000). The two become as close as brothers, although their specific relationship can be told as either father and son or uncle and nephew. Because of his love for Wolf, Manabozho is tormented by the fear that the manitous (good or evil spirits that are objects of reverence) will act on their hatred toward Manabozho by harming his brother. When his fears are realized and Wolf is killed, Manabozho seeks vengeance against the manitous and inadvertently releases a great flood that covers the world (Leekley, 1965). After he has taken his vengeance, Manabozho creates land with the help of the animals. The story recounted below is a combination of the Menominee and Ojibwa accounts of Manabozho and Wolf. Like "The Theft of Fire" it fulfills several of Bascom's four functions.

Manabozho's mother was the daughter of Nokomis, also known as the Earth. From his birth, the Underground People constantly annoyed him and sought his destruction. While he was making an axe, he understood that the noise made by the flint against the stone was telling him that he was alone on the earth. He was without father, mother, brother, or sister. Even though he knew his grandmother, he was still pondering the truth of this statement when he heard the telltale rustle of underbrush that signaled a creature's approach. When he turned to look, he saw a Wolf who said, "Now you have a brother, for I, too, am alone. We shall live together and I will hunt for you." [2] Manabozho made Wolf a man, so that they could be alike, and they were happy. Manabozho told Wolf about the animosity between himself and the Underground People. He told him never to go across water, even if it was frozen. [3] If Wolf had to, he was to throw a twig onto the water, creek bed, or ice so that he could cross safely. One day, while Wolf hunted, he found himself looking at his home from across a frozen lake. Forgetting Manabozho's warning, Wolf stepped onto the water. When he had gone halfway across the ice broke beneath him. The Underground People pulled him under the water and he drowned.

Manabozho knew what had happened when Wolf did not return home that night and he mourned the loss of his brother. As Manabozho followed Wolf's hunting trail, he saw his brother's figure approaching. Wolf said that his fate would be the same fate all people would endure. Man would also die. Wolf's proclamation implied that people would be able to come back to life four days

[2] Ojibwa tales say that the two were as a father and son, or uncle and nephew.
[3] In Ojibwa lore, Wolf is also warned not to cross a creek or riverbed, even if it had dried over.

> after they had died, like he did. However, Manabozho told him to go to the place of the setting sun as the keeper of the dead. He charged Wolf to build a wigwam for others and a massive fire so they would know where to go. To this day, Wolf guides and protects those who die. When Wolf had gone, Manabozho swore to avenge his brother's death.[4]

This tale addresses two fundamental aspects of human life: the importance of family and the undeniable pull of death. As in most mythologies, death is not a natural part of the ultimate world for supernatural beings (Snake et al., 1980). It isn't until Wolf is murdered that death for humans becomes an inescapable reality. Even in this story, Wolf comes back to his brother after he had died. If Manabozho had not told him to make his home elsewhere, Wolf could have been restored. Thus the tale also explains why, when humans pass away, they do not return to their loved ones. This story provides an example of a benevolent action by Manabozho. By placing Wolf in charge of the Afterlife, his people have a protector that Manabozho loves above all others to guide them (Judson, 2000).

The dynamics of family are also addressed in the story of Manabozho and Wolf. One important note is that family, in this instance, is not necessarily a blood relative but also includes fictive kin who provide a much-needed support system to an individual (Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006). This story affirms the importance of familial relations and implies an aspect of protection when it comes to family. Later, after Wolf left, Manabozho married a girl sent to him by Gitchi-Manitou (the Great Spirit) because he had been alone and dissatisfied with life (Snake et al., 1980). Even though he is powerful, Manabozho felt unfulfilled without a family surrounding him. In his interview, Gamma stressed the communal nature of storytelling. In both the story and in the scene around its telling, familial cohesion is fundamental to tribal culture.

[4] (Judson, 2000 & Leekley, 1965)

The aspect of protection is also discussed by other stories such as Manabozho's journey to avenge his mother. Upon discovering that his father (the Western Wind) had violently abused his mother, a factor that may have contributed to her death, Manabozho set out to avenge her. His father realized that his son meant to kill him and protested saying that a manifestation of the natural world cannot be killed. To keep peace in his family, Manabozho went to live with his uncle, the Northern wind. The battle with the Western Wind also informs the audience that there are forces in the world that cannot be destroyed; therefore, it is necessary to live in harmony with them. In their interviews, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma also affirmed the importance of balance in, and respect for, the natural world.

The underlying themes in the story of Manabozho and his brother Wolf fulfill several of Bascom's functions. The question of what happens after death is explanatory and fits into the category of cultural education. It informs the listener about the beliefs his or her culture holds of the afterlife. Additionally the story provides an explanation of the next world and fulfills the role of validation as it discusses the event of death and its origin. The role of family is included in the function of validation, in that it affirms the emphasis on a strong family unit, and cultural education, to explain that even fictive kin are vital to families. This story is not a fable (a short tale intended to teach a specific moral or mode of conduct) because it is not told for one moral teaching although it does express morals that are valuable to the native storytellers (D. Leeming & M. Sader (Eds.), 1997).

The Flood

After the death of Wolf, Manabozho hunted down the leader of the evil manitous and killed him. This act of revenge upset the natural balance and covered the world in a vast ocean. As the earth filled with water, Manabozho realized that his actions would cause the death of

many creatures. By lashing together a raft made of logs and vines he manages to rescue some of the animals and float above the rising waters. This story discusses how the world we currently live in came to be and suggests that the character Manabozho is capable of realizing he's done wrong and rectifying his errors. As with the other retellings, this version of the story is a compilation of several narratives with the key features recounted here, which can be classified using Bascom's four functions.

> After killing the manitou that murdered his brother Wolf, Manabozho fled the area and sprinted away from the dead spirit's friends. As he ran away, he noticed that water was streaming past him and waves had begun to form. With the help of his friends, Manabozho made a large raft by lashing fallen tress together with vines. The raft barely held together as the floodwaters rose because it was covered in animals like elk, beavers, porcupine, muskrats, bears, and wolves. The birds that survived the initial deluge circled above the raft, only alighting when they were too tired to fly. The raft floated above the waters for some time as its passengers ate passing debris to survive. Although the waters eventually stopped rising, Manabozho noticed that they did not recede on their own. It took some time for the implications of his predicament to sink in but Manabozho eventually realized that the old world he had inhabited would not come back. Although he had inadvertently caused the flood it was up to him to return balance to the world. Spying Beaver and Muskrat, Manabozho developed an idea.
>
> Calling the two animals over, Manabozho explained his plan. He remembered some old magic that had been taught to him long ago. Manabozho told Beaver and Muskrat that he would be able to create new land if only he had a

little bit of the old earth. Beaver volunteered to retrieve the mud Manabozho desired. In case Beaver ran out of breath, Manabozho and the other animals tied many vines to Beaver's tail. Gathering his courage, Beaver eased off the raft and dove deep into the dark water. When Manabozho felt the rope go taut, he pulled Beaver up and hoped that he had succeeded in reaching the ground. But he had not. Panting and gasping for air, Beaver lay prone on the raft. He volunteered to try once more after he had recuperated but Manabozho knew that it was too soon for Beaver to dive again. Muskrat volunteered to go even though he was trembling and afraid. Manabozho told him that he would not be tied to a rope because it was too short to reach the earth far, far below them. Muskrat showed that he understood and then dove from the raft. A long time passed and Manabozho was worried about his friend. Finally, as the sun was beginning to set on the horizon the unconscious figure of Muskrat floated to the water's surface. He was on his back with his forepaws clenched tightly to his chest. When Manabozho dragged Muskrat onto the raft, he noticed that there, in his paws, were two small lumps of the old earth. [5]

Manabozho began to shape the mud in his hands by whispering secret words to it. He was careful to leave it damp, or else there would be no swamps in the new world. Eventually, it grew too big to be held and Manabozho placed the circle of earth in the water. In some places, the new earth gathered droplets of water, which would eventually become lakes. In other places, sticks had worked their way into the lump of mud and became tall trees. The circle of land began to

[5] In some stories, there is a third animal (such as a diving bird or a water-dwelling mammal) that goes into the water searching for soil.

spin and grow outwards until it could accommodate one small mouse. Manabozho told the mouse to run along the perimeter of the island so it would spin and grow even bigger. [6] As it grew, more and more animals were able to fit on the piece of land. When Muskrat woke up, he and Beaver were pleased by their role in creating a new earth. Finally, Manabozho stepped onto dry land and kicked the raft far into the remaining water. He would not need it anymore. [7]

The disaster of the flood occurred because of Manabozho's desire for revenge and an incomplete understanding of the natural world. His battle with his father, an immortal manitou, should have informed him that destroying spirits would lead to a disastrous imbalance in nature. However, like in "The Theft of Fire," Manabozho does not think before he acts. In the interview with Gamma, he states the trickster character provide examples about what humans should and should not do. In this case, humans should seek to protect the natural order and keep it in balance. The story of Manabozho and the flood is also an "origins story" that discusses the creation of a new world. It demonstrates the need for all people, even the strong such as Manabozho, to respect others and ask them for assistance. At any point, Manabozho could have turned himself into a fish to dive into the water on his own but he relies on the skills of Beaver and Muskrat for survival.

"The Flood" can be categorized by Bascom's functions as a story of cultural education, escape, validation, and social control. The theme of the new world fulfills two functions: cultural education and validation. The story explains the origin of the world and passes that knowledge to the youth of the culture. Escape, or entertainment, is also fulfilled in this story because the tale can be altered in length and detail to draw the reader

[6] Several versions of the story state that a wolf, not a mouse, runs the perimeter of the island. Manabozho knows that the land he created is large enough to accommodate new life when the wolf takes several days to return to the raft.
[7] (Leekley, 1965)

or listener deep into the web of narrative. Finally, this story mentions the danger of tampering with forces in the natural world. When Manabozho killed the manitou that killed Wolf, he unwittingly upset nature's balance and caused a great flood. Manabozho's actions fulfill the function of social control because they serve as a warning to the audience to respect the earth and the forces at work in it.

Discussion

I posited that narrative within the Great Lakes Native American tradition is important to the maintenance of American Indian culture predominantly because it provides an entertaining medium for cultural education and promotes a sense of identity within the tribes. This project affirms the importance of narrative to Great Lakes Native American culture by using interviews and literary analysis to discern how and why narrative promotes cultural identity. The interviews determined that the storytelling tradition provides an outline for how the tribes should interact with one another and with the natural world. Identity development, community cohesion, and respect of nature and other people are additional themes that were strongly emphasized by the interview participants. In the literary analysis, the Manabozho stories provided specific examples of how meaning is conveyed using Bascom's functions to categorize the underlying themes of elder veneration, the origin of fire, life after death, the role of family in tribal life, the necessity of balance in the natural world, and the reliance on a community into the categories of escape, validation, cultural education, and social control.

My hypothesis suggested that stories are important predominantly because they are explanatory and entertaining, which is supported by the interview participant's statements. However, I overestimated the importance of the trickster stories in the maintenance of Great Lakes Native American cultural identity. These stories are small parts of a much larger oral

tradition. The individual importance of this set of tales is less than if they were the only stories told. Additionally, the interview participants stressed the theme of identity repeatedly. Bascom's four functions allow for the formation of identity by the use of myths but story is only one contributing factor to the development of cultural identity. The entire field of "folklore," which includes all expressions of culture, when coupled with education, family life, and personal experiences all contribute to identity formation.

The methodology of this project could be enhanced by interviewing more participants from diverse demographics and by using a greater variety of Native American stories. The true impact of stories on tribal life would be more easily discerned with more interview participants from a wider range of ages and geographic locations. Because the Odawa tribe is predominantly in the North and this study was conducted in Southwestern Michigan, members of this tribe were not participants in the study. After talking with the interview participants, it became clear that additional interviews need to include Native Americans who were raised on the reservation as well as those raised outside of the reservation. While the participants in this study are between the ages of 30 and 60 years old, knowledge of tribal traditions may vary based on the age of the informant. A greater range of ages would provide valuable information on the importance of narrative throughout different generations and trace the importance of narrative across time.

This project is important to the field in general because it includes both personal perspectives of individuals from the culture being studied and a critical analysis of several traditional stories. The interview data confirms the conclusions drawn from the examination of the stories, even though they had been translated into English. The outcome of this study is significant because it validates the use of story as a measure of

cultural maintenance in both the Great Lakes tribes and Native American tribes in general. This project is intended to provoke more investigation of narrative within Native American culture by both non-natives and enrolled members of the tribes. Thorough investigation of the narratives of the Great Lakes Native American tribes will make the stories accessible to a broader audience while simultaneously keeping the underlying meaning true to the original narrators (Lessa, 1966).

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Questions:

1. What tribe do you belong to?
2. Do you consider yourself an active member of the tribe?
3. What tribal activities do you participate in?

General Questions about Native American Story Telling

1. Is there a designated storyteller?
2. Are there specific stories that can only be told at certain times of the year by certain people? Do all stories have to be told in a specific way?
3. What kinds of stories are told?
4. Which stories are your favorite?
5. Are these stories told in specific places or can they be told anywhere?
6. Why do you think stories are important to your tribe?

Additional Questions:

1. What do you remember about your childhood within the tribe?
2. Were your parents active in the tribe when you were a child?
3. What do you recall about story telling during tribal events?
4. What do you recall about story telling at home?
5. Are you familiar with the stories of Manabozho?
6. Why do you feel these stories are told over and over again?
7. How do you think story telling influences your culture?
8. Do you feel that stories are shared more frequently or less frequently than they were during your childhood?
9. Do you feel that story telling is important to your culture?
10. Why do you think cultural stories are told?
11. Do you feel that they impart any special meaning or feeling on the listeners?
12. Do you think the stories are told for entertainment or for instruction?
13. Do you feel like you learned anything from the stories? What have you learned from them?
14. Do you feel that these stories will continue to be important to your tribe? How do you think they will persist?