IN THE LATE 15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES, WESTERN IMPERIALISTS CAME INTO CONTACT with indigenous cultures in South and North America whose labors could be exploited and whose natural resources were coveted as prolific sources of economic value (Snipp, 1986a; Szymanski, 1983). Invading colonists related to the indigenous populations of these continents -- and to other indigenous populations throughout the world -- in terms of their economic worth and potential for exploitation. These groups were subjected to cultural genocide to facilitate and sustain Western capitalist expansion. As in Africa, Australia, and throughout Asia, the indigenous peoples of South and North America were robbed of their land bases; their traditional cultures were devastated, and, in some cases, destroyed.

Historically and today, tribal occupation of colonized lands in the U.S. has been viewed as an obstacle to profitable capitalist appropriation. The remedy has been the systematic removal of American Indian people through forced assimilation, involuntary relocation, the destruction of traditional tribal cultures, and extermination. However, the dominant culture has denied and concealed the genocidal actions committed against American Indians in the name of Western cultural progress. Instead, systematic violence and the theft of tribal lands have been reframed in terms of a storied mission of bringing civilization to the "new world" (Pfohl, 1994).

Western constructions of American Indians as racially and culturally inferior facilitated the colonization of Indian peoples and lands. Among the most devastating actions and policies toward tribal groups are the loss of traditional cultures, spiritualities, languages, and lands, the destruction of traditional tribal social and political sovereignty, and physical deprivation. These combine with economic deprivation, the dependence of American Indian Nations upon the federal government, and the persistence of cultural genocide.

This article examines the ways in which the historical domination and oppression of American Indians by Western nations created and continue to perpetuate crime and injustice in American Indian communities. American Indian communities today struggle to cope with devastating social ills that were practically nonexistent in traditional tribal communities before the European invasion. These include startling rates of alcoholism, family violence, incest, sexual assault, and homicide that are similar to and sometimes exceed the rates in white society. It is argued that the domination and oppression of American Indian Nations brought about economic deprivation, loss of tribal sovereignty,
increased dependency, internalized oppression, unresolved historical grief, and the normalization of violence, all of which contribute to crime in Indian communities today.

CRIMINOLOGY AND AMERICAN INDIANS

The correlation of race and crime is common in criminology today. Criminologists often assert that American Indians and other racial minorities are overrepresented in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Indeed, most of the literature on American Indian criminality quantitatively assesses the degree to which Indians are involved in criminal or delinquent activity. Official statistics such as the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) are used to determine Indian arrest and incarceration rates. However, such statistics can be deceptive. For example, UCR data do not estimate either offenses committed on reservations or criminal and delinquency arrests and subsequent processing by federal agents.

In discussing the problems associated with using official statistics as measures of criminal behavior, Bortner (1988) sets forth three interpretations of official measures. (1) They are an accurate calculation of the amount of illegal behavior taking place. (2) They reflect the discriminatory labeling of particular groups and individuals as criminal. (3) They combine the actual level of criminal behavior with the discriminatory practices of system officials. The interpretation takes on importance in practice. For example, if they are construed as reliable measures of criminality, law enforcement and other officials in the system may tend to target lower-class and minority groups that are overrepresented in the statistics. According to Bortner, this may perpetuate discriminatory treatment in the system: ...if official agents are predisposed toward suspecting and labeling minorities, males, and the poor, this predisposition plays a role in the production of official statistics. These statistics, in turn, provide justification for social control efforts.... These efforts then yield statistics that justify the basic assumptions upon which the efforts were based on in the first place.

Studies of American Indian criminality are not exempt from the problems and biases that result from reliance on official measures of crime and delinquency. Going by arrest and incarceration rates, criminologists have assumed that American Indians are overrepresented in the criminal and juvenile justice systems. One perspective suggests that Indians, like other minorities, are involved in criminal activity at higher rates than are Anglos. Thus, minorities are represented at disparate rates in the system because they commit a disproportionate amount of crime. Another perspective suggests that criminal and juvenile justice decision-makers are biased in their treatment of minorities. Criminologists in the U.S. have therefore largely failed to challenge a social structure that has allowed the genocide of Indian people.

In studying American Indians and crime, mainstream criminology has failed to explore factors beyond the environmental and social causes of crime. Few have transcended disciplinary concerns to consider the ways in which the U.S. legal system embodies and reflects differential power relationships between American Indians and other social groups. Criminology has failed to explore how the social and legal structure of society creates and perpetuates the domination of Indian people. Research largely ignores the near annihilation of American Indian societies and the destruction of Indian sovereignty. The knowledge and recognition of American Indian history and identity are imperative to such research, for the U.S. government has historically dominated and
oppressed Indian people and the political and legal systems continue to do so. To accumulate tribal land, the U.S. has decimated American Indian cultures. Meanwhile, criminologists have failed to address whether notions of "Indian criminality" have been arbitrarily created by those whose economic interests lie in Indian holdings (i.e., land, minerals, and other vital resources).

Criminology has unquestioningly accepted as objective and universal the legal truths and procedures upon which the American system of law is erected. Such ethnocentric views have stripped Indian people of their cultural beliefs, including their traditional justice systems. Criminologists have also failed to assert that tribes should be allowed to practice their traditional beliefs and methods of dealing with conflict and deviance within their communities. Mainstream criminology has thus championed the imposition of foreign laws and institutions upon indigenous people. To that extent, criminologists have contributed to the oppression of American Indian cultures and the genocide committed against them. In the following section, I discuss the ways in which the domination and oppression of American Indian Nations has led to their dependant political, economic, and social status.

HISTORICAL ERAS OF DOMINATION

Before the European colonization of South and North America, England, France, Spain, and other countries competitively expanded their domains by claiming title to lands not occupied by other European nations. In the 15th century, these imperialist nations unilaterally embraced ethnocentric legal "truths" to dominate, control, and exploit indigenous peoples and their lands. Under the "Doctrine of Discovery," colonizing nations granted themselves legal authority to inhabit and acquire "new" lands in the name of their sovereign polities. Under Western laws of occupancy and settlement, colonizing nations recognized the rights of American Indian peoples to inhabit or occupy their indigenous land. However, these imperial bodies asserted their own sovereign right and title to all lands purchased from, traded by, or vacated by the indigenous inhabitants.

The theft of American Indian lands was justified by Western law and by the dogma of the Christian church, which was eager to exploit the resources of the "new world" (Deloria, 1994). In 1493, Pope Alexander VI stated that all newly discovered lands could be colonized by Europeans if the indigenous, pagan inhabitants could be converted to Christianity. He indicated that the indigenous people of the conquered lands fell under the guardianship of the colonials, who had divine authority to convert the inhabitants. Under these papal opinions, Europeans viewed the invasion and colonization of South and North America, as well as the conversion of the indigenous people, as a "god-given" right. Tribal people were often deemed unfit to inhabit and utilize their indigenous lands unless they rejected their traditional lifestyles and spiritualities for Western culture, thereby accepting and participating in a system of private ownership and land appropriation that benefited the colonizers. Western social and military forces enforced the acquisition of tribal lands. For those not murdered or removed by armies, Christian missionaries and formal European schooling were used to instill Western worldviews and to promote capital exploitation.

Throughout North America, English, Spanish, and French colonials used conversion to Christianity and formal (missionary) schooling to indoctrinate Indian children into European culture and "guide them down the course of modern civilization"
(Hoxie, 1984). As they had done elsewhere in the world, Western imperialists used Christian institutions to replace the languages and thoughts of American Indians with those of the West. Indians had to be taught to think and construct Western thoughts and meanings, and speak Western languages in a process of embracing and internalizing Western constructions of Otherness. In short, Indian people had to learn that our social, political, and economic disempowerment was due, in essence, to our inferiority to whites (Noriega, 1994).

Christian clergy actively recruited tribal people into the missions and often held them captive (Brady et al., 1984). In the Southwest, Spanish missions strictly prohibited traditional tribal languages and practices. In many cases, Christian missionaries treated Indian people as slaves, exploited their labor, and used violence to gain Indian compliance (Anderson, 1991; Brady et al., 1984). Thus, from the European invasion through the 16th and 17th centuries, Western colonizers resorted to law and religious edicts to legitimate the piracy of tribal lands and domination of tribal people. Formal Western schooling, conversion efforts, and prohibition of traditional languages and practices also facilitated Euro-American domination and exploitation of tribal people and lands.

New justifications eventually emerged for the theft of land and assimilation of American Indian people into Western culture. In the late 1700s and 1800s, as Europeans and Americans relied less on theology and more on empiricism and scientific accounts, the racial discourse of Otherness shifted from what "god" said about American Indians to what "science" said. Science assumed Christianity's role in perpetuating genocide. For example, studies in early physical anthropology "indicated" that American Indians and other nonwhites were primitive and inferior when compared to whites (Riding In, 1992). Using Indian skulls obtained through decapitation and the desecration of Indian gravesites (Ibid.), science "found" differences in Indian crania that accounted for their disempowered status. "Scientific" accounts indicating the essential inferiority of Indians affected Indian policy in the following decades (Ibid.).

Throughout the 1800s, as the postcolonial population spiraled into the industrial era, the United States entered into over 600 treaties with Indian Nations. Under these treaties, the U.S. acquired huge portions of indigenous land, usually reserving only small, undesirable tracks for tribal settlement. Treaties such as the one concluded in 1794 with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois League) "protected" newly assigned tribal lands from encroachment. Over the next 200 years, however, the U.S. violated countless treaties, drastically reducing Indian landholdings for its own benefit.

As indigenous land bases decreased over time, Indian Nations, which for generations had provided for themselves, became unable to do so. They became increasingly reliant on government assistance. This dependency worsened as many tribal economies collapsed due to the near extinction of the Plains buffalo herds and the end of the fur trade. As Nations became increasingly impoverished, many were forced to sell or trade additional tracks of land. Loss of land and tribal dependency led to further marginalization and disempowerment as the government gained administrative domination and direct control over tribal lands, resources, and institutions. With the heightened power of federal authorities, the U.S. ordered the full-scale removal of Nations from their (economically profitable) homelands into areas deemed unfit for capital exploitation and white settlement.
The U.S. government removed Nations from their indigenous lands from Georgia and the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest and Southwest. It enforced relocation via homicide, starvation, and physical deprivation. Besides the countrywide mass executions of Indian people at that time, the U.S. Army burned tribal crops and dwellings, slaughtered tribal herds, and withheld food rations and medical supplies to coerce relocation (Rausch and Schlepp, 1994).

Conversion to Christianity and adaptation to Euro-American language, culture, and economy did not spare Nations from the devastation of Western expansionism (Ibid.). Throughout the 1800s, the U.S. Army tortured and murdered countless Christian Indian children, women, and men. Despite mass acceptance of and integration into Western culture, the Cherokee Nation was forcibly removed after the discovery of gold in their homelands. After being gathered and imprisoned, the Cherokee were forced to walk west to the Oklahoma Indian Territory in the winter of 1838, during which 4,000 members, or at least one-quarter of the Nation, died from exposure, starvation, or disease.

The U.S. courts also enforced tribal removal during the 19th century. Legal measures such as the outlawing of tribal governing systems facilitated Indian removal, white settlement, capitalist expansion, and Western domination. In the case of Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (30 U.S., 5 pet., 1831), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Cherokee Nation did not have legal title to its land, or the power to establish tribal laws and governments. This ruling was founded on the belief that American Indians were "unsophisticated" and incapable of self-sufficiency. In the opinion, Chief Justice Marshall wrote: ...they are in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian. They look upon our government for protection; rely upon its kindness and its power; appeal to it for the relief of their wants; and address the president as their great father.

Marshall's 1831 opinion echoed the paternalistic attitude of many Americans and set the standard for American Indian policy for the next century. As the U.S. expanded under industrial capitalism, laws and policies were passed that supported the further exploitation of Indian people and lands through assimilation.

In the late 1800s, Americans became increasingly disillusioned with the reservation system. Newspapers carried stories detailing massacres of Indian people who had escaped military custody and atrocities in the reservation system (Hoxie, 1984). Voicing dissatisfaction with Indian policy, the American public argued that it was unjust to isolate Indians without the benefits of the "civilized" world (Deloria and Lytle, 1984; Hoxie, 1984). The answer to the "Indian problem" became one of assimilation -- to fully integrate Indians into the dominant culture. Assimilation accommodated white society by encouraging Indians to give up traditional lifestyles "for the greater good: the expansion of 'civilized' society" (Ibid.: 39).

From the 1870s to the mid-1930s, assimilation took multiple approaches, with each striking deeply at the core of traditional tribal life. The Dawes Act of 1887 targeted Indian landholdings and reduced them from 138 to 48 million acres. This was accomplished through governmental confiscation and allotment -- dividing tribal lands into individual parcels and selling the surplus to white squatters. Moreover, the Major Crimes Act and Assimilative Crimes Act diminished tribal sovereignty by preventing traditional tribal governing systems from (formally or informally) dealing with conflicts between members on tribal lands.
Despite the devastating effects of vast reductions in Indian landholdings and the erosion of tribal sovereignty, the forced removal of Indian children to off-reservation boarding schools was undeniably the most painful and damaging aspect of assimilation efforts. Torn from their families and placed in boarding schools, Indian children were indoctrinated into American life. Upon arrival, children were given Anglo names and groomed in the styles of the dominant culture. They received a Western education and were isolated from the knowledges (songs, dances, stories, and practices) of their people. If caught speaking their tribal languages or practicing their spiritual beliefs, children were strictly punished (often severely beaten). Many spent their entire childhood (from age six to 18) in a boarding school without being allowed a visit with family.

Formal assimilation policies were temporarily suspended in 1934 with the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). The act sought to phase out off-reservation boarding schools and to institutionalize Indian education in reservation day schools (Noriega, 1992). Despite the opening of the new day schools, enrollment of Indian students in off-reservation boarding schools dramatically increased in the following decades (Ibid.). Furthermore, widespread physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of Indian students in boarding schools continued unabated by the act. Thus, the IRA failed to eliminate the genocidal effects of Indian education.

The IRA also ended the allotment of Indian lands and sought to restore tribal sovereignty by increasing tribal governing authority. One provision established self-governing tribal courts on Indian lands. However, instead of allowing the new tribal courts to embrace traditional tribal values and Indian beliefs, they were fashioned after the U.S. polity and echoed the dominant cultural values. Ending the formal allotment of Indian lands did not signal support for traditional cultures, but rather a further imposition of Western values and belief systems upon tribal people.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the public and influential members of Congress widely criticized the IRA and its restoration of tribal sovereignty (Fixico, 1988). These individuals supported assimilation, advocated the elimination of the federal trust relationship, and believed Nations could lift themselves out of poverty if governmental assistance were suspended. Consequently, a federal report released in 1949 recommended the "total assimilation of the Indians 'into the mass of the population as full tax paying citizens" and termination of the federal wardship status in 1953. Two decades after the cessation of formal assimilationist policies, the Termination Act passed. It ended federal recognition of certain Nations and eliminated aid and services in a renewed effort to assimilate Nations into mainstream America. In 1954, in an attempt to further erode tribal sovereignty, Public Law 280 passed; it transferred jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters committed on Indian lands in California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin from the Nations to the states.

Formal assimilation efforts continued into the 1960s with the Indian Relocation Act. Job-training schools were created in large cities and funds were made available for tribal members and their families to move to attend them (Churchill and Morris, 1992). To boost assimilation, many relocation programs required participants to sign an agreement indicating that they would not return to their reservations upon completing the program. Attempts to assimilate participants were reinforced through training-center courses that provided skills appropriate only for employment in large cities. Centers commonly offered training in air conditioning or television repair -- vocations useless on
most reservations. The act succeeded in luring tribal people away from their communities and by the 1980s, "more than half of the 1.6 million Indians in the U.S. had been scattered to cities across the U.S." (Ibid.: 16).

From 1950 into the 1970s, negative constructions of American Indian people affected not only the formal passage of federal acts, but also the informal actions of individuals interacting with tribal people daily. During this period, social workers, lawyers, doctors, and nurses acted upon negative images of Indian people and reservation life and removed thousands of American Indian children from their families and communities, believing that the children would be better cared for in white homes (Sowers, 1996). Ironically, as Blyer (1977: 4) points out, "Nations that were forced onto reservations at gunpoint and prohibited from leaving without a permit were now being told that they live in a place unfit for raising their children." Using high-pressure adoption tactics and "outright kidnapping," these individuals tore many Indian children from their homes and sold them on the "black" market (Sowers, 1996).

In an effort to end such genocidal child-removal practices, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1987. The ICWA gave tribal governments exclusive jurisdiction over Indian child dependency matters and established standards for the placement of Indian children in foster or adoptive homes. Although the act sought to reestablish tribal self-governance and prevent the breakup of Indian families and communities, Carol Chiago Lujan (1995) indicates that many removal efforts continue. Today, Indian parents continue to consent to adoptions after being persuaded by "professionals" who promise that their child will fare better in a white, middle-class family. Other critics argue that the U.S. government has failed to provide tribal court operations with the financial assistance needed to implement the ICWA.

Among recent federal Indian policies seeking to rectify past abuses is the Nixon-era Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975). This act restored tribal self-governance and the authority of Nations to administer their own affairs, but only in appearance. The Nixon administration used it to pacify and manipulate Nations; it was always a symbolic gesture, since much of the Nixon campaign was funded by corporations seeking to exploit Native resources (Forbes, 1981). More recently, the Indian Religious Freedom Act (IRFA, 1978) attempted to protect traditional Indian spiritual beliefs and practices, many of which had been criminalized (Churchill and Morris, 1992). This act sought to protect the use and possession of sacred objects, access to sacred sites, and the practice of ceremonial and religious rites. As with the other acts, the IRFA is widely perceived to fall short of its goals. Churchill and Morris (1992: 17) contend that the act is merely a gesture, for it lacks enforcement provisions. Court decisions since the act's passage suggest that the U.S. government and legal system protect neither Indian religious practices nor sacred Indian lands from continued white encroachment.

Nations are currently proposing to amend the IRFA in an effort to remove continued bans on certain spiritual practices and to protect sacred sites. They are also contesting state regulation of tribal gaming operations. Nations continue to protest state, federal, and corporate theft of tribal lands that were originally set aside and protected under the treaties of the 1800s. Using "eminent domain," however, the U.S. government declares that as a sovereign power, it has full authority to break all the treaties it has entered into.
A review of formal and informal American Indian laws and policies reveals that since contact, Western imperialism has devastated traditional tribal cultures and lifeways. Nations were stripped of the authority to govern as they had for thousands of years. Euro-American governments imposed Western systems upon Indian people and paternalistic administration of our Nations continues today. The theft of indigenous land, whether through forced military removal or governmental assimilationist efforts, has devastated tribal cultures. Traditionally, all Nations were socially, spiritually, and economically connected to their physical environments. For many Nations, loss of land meant the end of traditional economies and of spiritual beliefs and practices that were connected to the Earth. Loss of spirituality, combined with Western religious evangelism, has often meant the loss of the foundation of traditional Indian cultures.

Today, American Indian Nations remain depressed economically, politically, and socially. The disempowerment of Nations and the establishment of the federal trust relationship -- making them wards of the federal government -- placed Indian Nations in a complicated position of dependency upon their oppressors. This relationship promotes ongoing genocide.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND DEPENDENCY AS CONTINUED GENOCIDE

As Western capitalist imperialism expanded throughout the "New World," American Indian Nations were decimated and survivors moved into remote, undesirable locations where they remain excluded from the profits reaped from traditional land bases (Szymanski, 1983). Applying theories of internal colonialism, several authors explore the establishment of political and economic domination over colonized Nations and the resulting dependence upon federal and state governments. Matthew Snipp (1986a, 1986b) analyzes European relationships with Nations. He asserts that the increased dependency of Indian Nations enabled governmental authorities to disempower them by executing laws and policies that designated Indians as wards of the state and granted the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs patriarchal control over Indian lands, resources, education, and health care. Snipp (1986b) contends that as Nations became increasingly marginalized and reliant on governmental aid, tribal resources such as timber, water, oil, and minerals were appropriated for the sole benefit of the non-Indian economy. Such exclusion served to further deprive Nations and ensure their dependency.

The dependant economic status of American Indians has contributed to their high rates of poverty, unemployment, infant mortality, suicide, and alcohol use, as well as to low rates of education. This status has also led to wide-ranging, systematic violence by corporations and agencies of the federal government. U.S. corporations such as Kerr-McGee, United Nuclear, Anaconda Minerals, and Peabody Coal exploited Indian laborers and lands while knowingly polluting reservation air, land, and drinking water with toxic radioactive contaminants (Eichstadt, 1994; World Uranium Hearing, 1993; Churchill and LaDuke, 1992; Pino, 1995; Kane, 1987). Due to their dependence upon the often-minimal economic revenues from these ventures, disempowered Nations have been unable to protect themselves from lethal corporate exploitation. They are grossly unable to fund the multimillion-dollar cleanup of the contaminated radioactive wastes deposited by these corporations. Moreover, Nations exposed to radioactive contaminants have been unable to gain the attention of the medical community despite devastating rates of cancer and birth defects on their reservations.
Beyond lethal corporate exploitation, the dependant status of American Indians has led to systematic abuse by the Indian Health Service (IHS). Several authors have documented this abuse. According to Lujan (1995: 17), "American Indians residing on reservations who are dependant upon the Indian Health Service for health care are in a vulnerable situation and considered fair game for medical research programs." Carpio (1995) documents the involuntary sterilization of American Indian women by the IHS during the 1970s. Both Carpio (1995) and Lujan (1995) discuss the violation and exploitation of American Indians by medical science, underscoring that such studies often further damage Nations by reinforcing negative constructions of Indian people.

Author Iris Young (1990: 53) suggests that economic marginalization resulting from systematic racism is the most dangerous form of oppression, for through it, "a whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination." Recognizing the inhumanity of this deprivation, Young (1990: 54) argues that imperialist governments such as that of the U.S. often offer services or welfare payments to groups it deprives; such provisions "produce new injustice by depriving those dependent on it of rights and freedoms that others have." Young describes the added deprivation created by dependency:

“Being a dependant in our society implies being legitimately subject to the often arbitrary and invasive authority of social service providers and other public and private administrators, who enforce rules with which the marginalized must comply, and otherwise exercise power over the conditions of their lives.... Dependency in our society thus implies, as in all liberal societies, a sufficient warrant to suspend basic rights to privacy, respect, and individual choice.”

Recent welfare reform poses particular problems for those on the reservation, making American Indians even more vulnerable economically. This reform was designed for recipients in urban areas where the low-wage labor market has grown consistently over the past five years. Because reservations are typically located in isolated areas having extremely high rates of unemployment and limited labor market opportunities, as well as inaccessible returns on education and job training, these reforms will further disadvantage American Indian recipients. Thus, American Indian people will continue to be placed in increasingly vulnerable economic, political, and social positions, making them susceptible to extreme deprivation. Such deprivation directly affects the level of crime and violence within a given community.

GENOCIDE IN AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES TODAY

Contemporary American Indian communities suffer from startling rates of alcoholism, family violence, incest, sexual assault, fetal alcohol syndrome, homicide, and suicide. These rates, which are similar to and sometimes exceed those of white society, are even more distressing since these social ills were nonexistent in traditional tribal communities before the European invasion. Ronet Bachman's (1992) exploratory study recognizes family violence, homicide, and suicide within contemporary Indian communities to be serious concerns. The extent to which American Indians experience these and other social ills is difficult to determine. More central to understanding
internalized oppression among Indian people, however, is that problems that were infrequent or nonexistent in traditional Indian communities are now familiar.

In their groundbreaking works, Maria YellowHorse BraveHeart and Lemyra DeBruyn (1995, 1996a,b) understand the widespread social ills plaguing American Indians as manifestations of internalized oppression. For them, experiences of racism and internalized oppression contribute to the social ills among Indians because of Western imperialism, assimilation, and Indian identification with the dominant codes. Causal factors leading to high rates of depression, suicide, homicide, domestic violence, and child abuse among American Indians, they believe, "can also be attributed to the processes of internalized oppression and identification with the aggressor."

For American Indians, knowledge of our historical and continued oppression is experienced as a profound anguish. Shirley Hill Witt has described the memory of genocide and tribal extinction among Native Americans as a raw, unhealing wound. For Duran and Duran (1995), this pain is a "soul wound." The genocidal efforts of Western imperialism, they contend, have inflicted "a wound to the soul of Native American people that is felt in agonizing proportions to this day" (Ibid.: 27). Our experiences of colonization and disempowerment under patriarchal capitalism are silenced by white society. Ongoing cultural genocide is concealed by the dominant culture in the master narrative of "discovery" and "manifest destiny."

The dominant culture does not recognize or validate the pain of American Indians. BraveHeart and DeBruyn (1996b) assert that American Indians have been socially constructed as incapable of experiencing emotional responses to pain and suffering. They contend:

> The historical view of American Indians as being stoic and savage contributed to a belief on the part of the dominant society that Indian people were incapable of having feelings. This belief system intimates that Indians had no capacity to mourn and, subsequently, no need or right to grieve (BraveHeart and DeBruyn, 1996b: 11).

Drawing upon the literature on Nazi concentration camp survivors, BraveHeart and DeBruyn's "Historical Unresolved Grief Syndrome" distills the "historical trauma" American Indians experienced under cultural and economic imperialism. Alcohol abuse and other social problems affecting Indian people are symptomatic of past and present traumas, of the dominant culture's denial of the harms inflicted upon tribal people, and of the invalidation of Indian pain (BraveHeart and DeBruyn, 1996a,b; BraveHeart, 1995).

American Indians, like others who internalize the dominant subject position, express pain, grief, and rage toward ourselves (internally) and within our families and communities (externally). Turned upon ourselves, these emotions take the form of depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide. BraveHeart and DeBruyn's (1996b: 5) understanding supports the view that alcoholism among Indians is "a self-destructive act motivated by depression and grief...resulting from internalized aggression and internalized oppression." American Indians sometimes manifest internal oppression toward their families and other Indian people in physical assaults, homicide, and violence against women and children. In reference to domestic violence in American Indian families, Duran and Duran (1995: 29) observe that the root of anger is the oppressor, but
"any attempts at catharting anger to its root result in swift retaliation by the oppressor... making it safer to cathart anger on a family member...."

Violence within American Indian families can be understood as a normalized community experience due to their mass victimization within Euro-American society. The Euro-American educational system is one source of such victimization. In boarding schools in the U.S. and residential schools in Canada, many children experienced physical and sexual abuse (Indian Country Today, 1999; Emerick, 1996; LaPointe, 1987). Boarding school teachers, staff, priests, and administrators often physically and sexually abused students, justifying these violations at times as disciplinary measures. In several boarding schools in the U.S. and Canada, 60 to 70% of all students were beaten or raped (Emerick, 1996). The staff and administrators also forced Indian children to administer assaults upon one another (Emerick, 1996; LaPointe, 1987). For many, violence became a way of life since they spent their entire childhoods in boarding schools. Nearly all the adults living in several tribal communities today were abused or witnessed the abuse of others when they were school children (Emerick, 1996). Charlene LaPointe (1987), a survivor of boarding school atrocities, asserts that the experience of violence (abuse of their own persons or that which they were forced to administer) shared by generations of American Indians in boarding schools has normalized child abuse and family violence within Indian families and communities today.

Removal of children from their communities and placement in often-harmful environments, coupled with the erosion of traditional extended-family systems, has confounded the childrearing responsibilities and abilities of Indian parents today. Childremoval policies and the boarding school era affected many Nations. Except for small babies and toddlers, many Indian communities were virtually childless for long periods. As generations of Indian children grew up in boarding schools and other off-reservation placements, Indian parents (and communities) were displaced from childrearing responsibilities. In recent decades, with the closure of many off-reservation boarding schools and passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978), many Indian parents suddenly became responsible for raising children. These "unparented parents," often having been raised in neglectful or abusive placements themselves, were now expected to raise their own children in the absence of appropriate experience or guidance (Fischler, 1985). For Indian parents, childrearing in a nuclear family setting is even more difficult, given shortcomings in parenting skills and the lack of traditional networks of emotional and economic support that extended families provide (Gale, 1987).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

American Indian communities are experiencing high rates of crime and other social problems that were nonexistent before Euro-American colonization. Criminality and other social problems among American Indian communities are often assessed in terms of Indian involvement in crime or the decision-making practices of justice system officials. The approach taken here is that social problems in American Indian communities, including crime, must take into account the economic, political, and social relationship of power and domination that characterizes the history of the encounter between American Indian Nations and U.S. federal and state governments. After 500 years of colonial domination, American Indian Nations remain in a state of dependency
and continue to experience startlingly high rates of poverty and unemployment, as well as low rates of education.

Crime in American Indian communities can be understood both as a response to continued economic deprivation and dependency and as an expression of historical trauma, unresolved grief, and normalized violence. Thus, to effectively deal with crime in American Indian communities, policymakers and justice system officials must address power inequities within the political, economic, and social structures in the U.S. Concerted efforts to reaffirm American Indian tribal sovereignty are also critical.

Added material
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FOOTNOTE
1. BraveHeart (1995: 6) describes historical trauma as the "collective and compounding emotional and psychic wounding over time," which is "multi-generational and is not limited to one's individual life span."

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res, but rather a further imposition of Western values and belief systems upon tribal people.

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