

Sixty six ways to get it wrong: A response to Banerjee and Linstead

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Abstract

Gail Whiteman learned to be a beaver trapper by working in the field with a Cree tallyman in Eastern James Bay, Québec. An account of her managerial experiences and some potential lessons for organizations were reported in Whiteman and Cooper (2000). Central to her managerial experience was the sense of being ecologically embedded – literally being grounded in the local ecology. From that experience we suggested that resources are more likely to be cared for if managers have a strong ecological sense of who and where they are. Banerjee and Linstead (2004) have provided an extensive critique of our article. We itemize the sins with which we are charged and provide responses to the more central criticisms. We close by reiterating the purpose of the original article and what we continue to believe are the virtues of the main points.

Sixty six ways to get it wrong: A response to Banerjee and Linstead

Traditional ecological knowledge and the management practices of Indigenous people are new terrain for management scholars. Indigenous approaches to management have only rarely been mentioned in the management literature, most often using second-hand data or anecdotes (e.g., Egri, 1997; Lewis & Stewart, 1958: 17; Moore, 1998; Shrivastava, 1994: 719; Weick, 1979: 263). The key contribution of our *Academy of Management Journal* article (Whiteman and Cooper, 2000) was to introduce Indigenous management as an empirical topic for study by business management scholars and to provide an ethnographic description of the ecologically embedded management approach of a Cree tallyman, Freddy Jolly. We also developed a set of research propositions to help guide further empirical study of our grounded theory concept of ‘ecological embeddedness.’ A recent article in this journal (Banerjee & Linstead, 2004) joins the discussion.

In their sophisticated and highly detailed critique of Whiteman and Cooper (2000), Banerjee and Linstead (2004) charge us with many things, from masking and subverting Indigenous culture, being rooted in neo-colonial thought, having limited relevance for current management theory and practice, to advocating sustainable management practices as some kind of universal panacea, and assuming a relatively seamless, unproblematic knowledge appropriation and transfer process. The criticism is extensive and the charges are itemized in detail in the Appendix. In the interest of being succinct we summarize the criticisms as theoretical weaknesses, methodological and

representational flaws, and substantive shortcomings. We will focus on each of these in turn.

Theoretical Weaknesses

Neocolonialism and critical theory.

One of Banerjee and Linstead's central criticisms is the absence of both neo-colonial theory and critical theory in our article. In addition to having our roots in neocolonial thought and our appropriation of Cree cultural knowledge, we are said to (ironically, as it turns out) ignore the histories of colonialism, reproduce the hegemonic process of colonial settlement, and have a consciousness that remains embedded in its own neo-colonialism.

We of course agree that it can be valuable to debate how Cree traditional ecological knowledge and management practices have been affected by their colonial history. We thank Banerjee and Linstead for raising this point explicitly. However, by keeping this critique at an abstract level, Banerjee and Linstead missed an opportunity to examine how site-specific colonialist forces (particularly through the historic and ongoing vehicles of natural resource development in James Bay) may have affected Cree management practices. They set up our article as a straw man for a critical theory critique of colonialist discourse on sustainability. By doing so, the James Bay Cree tallyman, Freddy Jolly, gets lost in the critical theory rhetoric. In an article about embedding, Freddy and the Cree disappear.

The Banerjee and Linstead article provides a nice example of the Cohen and March (1974) garbage can model (where chronic problems and perennial solutions circulate endlessly), this time in the form of attaching a standard critique of anthropology

to a specific piece of field research. They provide a familiar retelling of usual criticisms of ethnographic work (see, e.g., Putnam, Bantz, Deeetz, Mumby & Van Maanen, 1993). Much time is spent on generalities, and very little time on the Cree. Rather than regarding the Cree as a culturally specific people made up of individuals, communities, and histories, they treat the Cree en-masse as symbols of generalized colonial repression, with ourselves as appropriators.

Certainly our field work illustrated that the Cree have a deep familiarity with colonial forces. In the past, Cree tallymen (like most Indigenous peoples) did not often enter into dialogue with corporate managers or government officials, even when their worlds collided. For example, the late Robert Bourassa, premier of Québec from 1970 to 1976, was the key political force behind the much-opposed James Bay Hydro-Electric Project. While Premier Bourassa (1973) had many supportive comments to make about Indigenous culture in his book *Power*, the discussion between Indigenous peoples and external managers during this period was lopsidedly unequal. Phase 1 of the James Bay Hydro-electric Project proceeded during negotiations and **“Canada made it clear that if we [the Cree] did not proceed with the agreement process, unilateral legislation would have been imposed on us in any case”** (Chief Billy Diamond quoted in the Grand Council of the Crees of Québec, GCCQ, 1995: 253, bold in original). Furthermore, "It is the firm view of the Crees that the Agreement was negotiated in 1974-75 under circumstances that were clearly inequitable, highly pressured and, in a number of key respects, unconscionable" (GCCQ, 1995: 252). Throughout most of the 1970s and 80s, cross-cultural dialogue was either non-existent or primarily through the court system. One doesn't need to be a critical theorist to see this as colonialism.

As with all ethnographers, Whiteman arrived in the field with her own conceptual baggage (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) which originally focused on this very issue. As an environmentalist searching for a dissertation topic, Whiteman conceptualized James Bay as a powerful site in which to study the impact of large-scale, externally driven economic development from the local Cree community's perspective. Whiteman hoped to examine the human experience of living next to one of the world's largest hydro-electric dams, one that was actively opposed by the community. The consequences of imposed development were her foreshadowed research question (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

After her field work began, Whiteman realized that these developmental activities seemed to have cumulative and inter-related effects on both the Cree culture and the natural environment, at least from the perspective of the Cree. Anthropological research confirmed that Cree elders viewed the James Bay Hydro-Electric Project as just one example of an ongoing relationship with 'white men' (Feit, 1985). As her field work progressed, the Cree that she interviewed tended to frame discussions of development against the 'way it used to be' (i.e., the way the land was traditionally managed). In time, it dawned on Whiteman that she had no real conceptualization of this traditional management approach and that perhaps this was a critical research question in itself.

While aware of the impact of development on the Cree, Whiteman's dissertation (and our subsequent *AMJ* article) shifted focus to describe this cultural approach to management. We agree that research findings on the impact of development on Cree tallymen are important. Indeed, Whiteman (1999; 2004a) explores the impact of historic and future impacts of natural resource development on the Cree tallymen, who are also the focus of our ecologically embedded article. Such research is particularly relevant now since the Cree are currently facing more large-scale hydro-electric development.ⁱ

We believe that academic research that describes the tallymen's management approach (such as our *AMJ* article) also makes a contribution. For instance, it may help corporate executives better understand this divide.ⁱⁱ Such research can also help to legitimate Indigenous approaches as 'valid' management frameworks that cannot simply be swept away by colonial habits. It can also provide the Cree with important baseline information on the tallymen's approach that can be used to evaluate future social and environmental impact assessments, such as the one currently underway with the recently proposed Eastmain 1-A and Rupert diversion project by Hydro Québec (Whiteman, 2004a).

In summary, we are charged with being neo-colonialists. We point out the irony of the criticism and plead not guilty. The field work began as a response to the colonial expropriation of land in James Bay. It ended as a story about Freddy Jolly and his appreciation of what it means to be ecologically embedded. We left out a general critique of colonialism in our *AMJ* article because we preferred to focus on another topic: to introduce the concept of ecological embeddedness and Indigenous management to management studies. Certainly this topic deserves a lot of different kinds of analysis, including a neo-colonial deconstruction. In that vein, we encourage scholars who wish to critically study Indigenous management to not limit themselves to theorists such as Saïd (1979). There are many thoughtful Indigenous scholars such as Vine Deloria Jr. (1995), Paula Gunn Allen (1986), José Barreiro (n.d., 1990, 1992) who could effectively be used as an Indigenous foundation for such critiques. In summary, we agree with Banerjee and Linstead that it is important to examine the intersection of postcolonial forces and Indigenous management. We just don't think this should be the goal of every paper.

Grounded Theory vs. Theoretical Critique.

In their article, Banerjee and Linstead spend the majority of the paper providing a theoretical critique of our grounded theory. We believe that a stronger critique of our work would emerge if researchers were to do what the more effective empirical critiques of Margaret Mead did: go to the same field, collect data, see how this new data differs with the first case, and then link these back to the difference in theoretical lenses (i.e., ours as supposedly neo-colonist and others as perhaps post-colonialist).

Instead Banerjee and Linstead comfortably settle into the role of armchair theorists. They do what John Van Maanen called “library work” in his debate on critical theory and ethnography (Putnam et al, 1993: 229). While we accept that theorizing from existing neocolonial and critical theory texts about other empirical texts can have value, we believe that a more powerful critique of our article would have been to go to James Bay and actually collect first-hand data and then write a non-realistic tale from the field that is not steeped in neocolonialism. They could then use all the suggestions they have for us. This empirical grounding would have made the Banerjee and Linstead critique more convincing and, more importantly, enriched our understanding of traditional ecological knowledge as a framework for management. This is, after all, the idea in play. We encourage scholars (including Banerjee and Linstead) to go into the field and do so.

We believe that this is a particularly important task for researchers who come from colonized cultures themselves (e.g., Behar, 1996; Gunn Allen, 1986; Pinto, 2000). Future research on the Cree from a post-colonialist and/or critical theory perspective would benefit from a field-based approach, merging Indigenous theory with participant-observation, rather than comfortably remaining in the library. (Parenthetically, we also

wonder how Freddy Jolly would feel if he knew that other non-Indigenous academics were saying we couldn't do what we did because of a neo-colonial philosophy. ⁱⁱⁱ)

Methodological and Representational Criticisms

Representational style.

Banerjee and Linstead argue that our grounded theory of ecological embeddedness is “presented as a true account of ‘realities’ of the field and the categories which the authors generate from Whiteman’s own textual account are treated as though they were the categories which the natives themselves would develop” (Banerjee and Linstead, 2004, p. 9). We agree that in the main we presented what Van Maanen (1988) would call a “realist tale from the field,” although the inclusion of a long excerpt from Whiteman’s ethnographic field notes also contains confessional elements. Banerjee and Linstead seem to take umbrage at both this type of narrative style and the focus of the study: on describing the ecologically embedded management approach of a Cree tallyman and not describing the colonial legacy that the Cree have faced.

Regardless of narrative style, we support the view that ethnographic writing is not about ‘truth-telling’ and Whiteman’s dissertation explores this at great length, particularly in the usage of poetry, photography, and semi-fiction as other forms of ethnographic discourse (see Whiteman, 1999, pp. 51-64). Whiteman has also published other non-realist ethnographic articles using the same data, including a semi-fictional account (Whiteman, 2004b) called ‘Why are we talking inside? Reflecting on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and management research.’ She has also written a realist tale that describes the impact of development on Cree tallymen (Whiteman, 2004a).

In our *AMJ* article we consciously tried to put the ethnographer's personal voice within the text. The publication of an extensive excerpt of Whiteman's field notes was an attempt to place the ethnographer within the text as a human being. She is not in hiding, not an objective observer. Our article is not intended to present 'truth' from an objective scientific reality. It is our interpretation of a variety of field experiences. It is one story that emerged from one person's experiences in the field.

Banerjee and Linstead also critique us for treating the Cree tallymen as the exotic native "Other." We do not agree. Freddy Jolly, our key informant, figures prominently in our article as an individual, and not an abstract Other. Instead, in our reading of their text, Banerjee and Linstead seem to treat Freddy as the "Native-Other". We also believe that the authors seem to treat us as if we were yet another kind of "Other": the neocolonialist-academic-anthropologist Other. We can't find ourselves within the Banerjee and Linstead critique (except at the end where they congratulate Whiteman on her ability to gain access to this difficult field setting and note that Cooper has given up catch and release fly fishing). We are not treated as individuals who undertook a study and reported back using, in part, first-person language.

Appropriation and Masking of Indigenous voices

Banerjee and Linstead say that we are guilty of cultural misappropriation of knowledge, and representing our own voice as if it were Indigenous (see sins #10, 37 and 44, Appendix). We strongly disagree with Banerjee and Linstead that the style of our article implies that "natives" would develop the categories that we develop. Why would they, when they already have their own cultural categories embedded in Cree language

and ways of thinking about the world? We don't believe that the Cree would say what we say: it's our interpretation of what they said and what Whiteman experienced as it relates, in our academic opinion, to the field of management.

Throughout her field work, Whiteman actively utilized respondent validation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In particular, she discussed many of her emerging thoughts with Freddy Jolly and others, who agreed, disagreed, or made fun of her evolving grasp of Cree culture. Whiteman also sent copies of a journalistic article that she wrote for *Native Americas* (Whiteman, 1998) to many of the Cree participants in order to gauge their response to her emerging analysis. In addition, on her dissertation committee we invited two external advisers: one, an Indigenous scholar from Cornell and the other, an expert anthropologist on the Cree. The interpreted text put forth in our article was based, to some degree, upon a dialogue between people who differ in many ways, including the culture from which they emerged

Embedded within the Banerjee and Linstead critique is the charge that non-Indigenous peoples can't learn from Indigenous peoples. Again we disagree. This position is solipsistic and rigidifies boundaries, making it difficult for people who differ to talk to each other. Our field work indicates that the Cree are themselves multicultural: they use a rifle to hunt and practice traditional ways. Whiteman's field work indicated that the Cree believe that their culture can learn from other cultures while maintaining cultural integrity without pretending to be something it is not. Our informants said that the key thing is that if you take, you must also give back.

We agree with Banerjee and Linstead that "there can be no innocent discourses about Indigenous peoples" (p. 10). But, we might ask rhetorically, "can there be innocent discourse about anything"? We believe that people who differ can learn from others and

try to communicate what they have learned to others. As authors of an academic narrative, we accept responsibility for our interpretation of these viewpoints. Consequently, we are pleased to participate in this dialogue in *Human Relations*.

Lack of Reflexivity.

Banerjee and Linstead also call for more self-reflexivity from scholars such as ourselves. It is hard to disagree with calls for more self-reflexivity in ethnography. But Banerjee and Linstead have a somewhat narrow view of reflexivity. Reflexivity in ethnographic research is not simply about reflecting upon historical power relations. Self-reflexivity also demands that the authors reflect and disclose their own selves within the text (e.g., see Behar, 1996; Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Our *AMJ* article could have benefited from more than this. We tried to do some of this through the first person account of Whiteman's field notes. We certainly could have gone farther. For instance, it would have been valuable to provide some contextual information about the non-Indigenous cultural background of both authors, similar to what Banerjee did in (albeit briefly) an earlier article (1998), and what Whiteman (1999) did (and does more of in her article in *Journal of Management Inquiry* (Whiteman, 2004b)).

Yet we feel that Banerjee and Linstead do not hold themselves to the same standard in their critique of our paper. The style of the Banerjee and Linstead critique is not particularly self-reflective, and uses a distant, objectified third-person voice. While the authors may well be post-colonialists, they do not locate themselves anywhere in the text, don't speak with an 'I' or a 'We', never refer to Freddy (our key informant) by name, and consistently use the objectifying third person.

We are left asking: Who and where are Banerjee and Linstead? What is their conceptual baggage (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) and their cultural hot buttons? How do these influence their reading of our text? Reader response theory (Rorty, 1991) suggests that when authors publish a text, they simultaneously let go of their text, and let go of the meanings made within it. The audience infuses the text with meanings based upon their own experiences, perspectives and biases. Reflexivity, then, is also the responsibility of the readers. The authors do not control this or that specific meaning. And so we are not surprised that Banerjee and Linstead, as readers of our text, have infused ‘our’ article with ‘their’ meanings (that we don’t share and were not part of our ‘intended’ meaning). That of course does not mean that such meanings (theirs or ours) are necessarily invalid.

Despite their critique on insufficient reflexivity, Banerjee and Linstead position themselves as objective academic voices. We (Gail and Bill) agree that we could have offered more reflexivity in our *AMJ* text. But we also feel that a lack of reflectivity detracts from the Banerjee and Linstead critique. In this spirit we highlight and disclose our own emotional upheaval in first reading Banerjee and Linstead’s (narrow) categorization of ourselves as neo-colonialist scholars. Given the broader context of this dissertation work (and related publications), we felt that this seemed to be rather large label to use without some sort of appreciation of the collective body of work that we have published on the Cree specifically, and on the impact of development on Indigenous peoples more broadly (e.g., Whiteman, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Whiteman & Cooper, 2000; Whiteman & Mamen, 2002a; 2002b).

Power Relations in Fieldwork.

Banerjee and Linstead argue for the need to identify power dynamics within field relations. We agree, again. While space constraints precluded discussing power dynamics in our article about ecological embeddedness, power relations were a central part of Whiteman's field relations. We thank Banerjee and Linstead for this opportunity to discuss this point in some detail. The following section is based largely upon Whiteman's (1999) doctoral dissertation. It is, accordingly, written mostly in the first person singular.

At times, my field relations were affected by the ghost of colonialism and the historical and current inequitable interactions between the Cree and non-natives from the south and east. The Cree, as a nation and as individuals, were well aware of past (and current) power imbalances between themselves, the Canadian and provincial government of Quebec, and the many companies who were operating (or hoping to operate) on their lands. Many, including Freddy Jolly, had intimate experience with 'white' injustice and had survived abusive relationships such as those inherent in the residential school system in Canada. The James Bay region continued to be significantly affected by economic development activities that stem from outsiders who largely controlled resource use. Within the field site, there was a certain general tension directed at non-Natives. Socio-economic and environmental impacts from mining, forestry, tourism, and hydro-electric dams all added to the emotional mix of James Bay.

In the field, colonialism was not something that could be ignored. But it was also not the defining point of most people's lives, particularly in the bush. In situations where these issues were raised, humour was often useful. In fact, the comedy of my last name often helped break through cultural barriers. It allowed people to joke about who and what we were, and then move beyond it. When something went wrong and I was present,

people would quickly say, "It's the white man's fault." And we would all laugh. In these situations, being a woman helped – Cree men could joke about the white man, connect it to my name, and not worry about really offending me – after all, it wasn't like they said it was the white woman's fault.

Despite these experiences, the colonialist/neo-colonialist power issue was not the most problematic issue in my field relations. Instead, another dimension of power – gender -- seemed more problematic. This deserves some discussion here.

A feminist research ethic "calls for collaborative, trusting, non-oppressive relationships between researchers and those studied (Fonow & Cook, 1991, pp. 8-9). Such a model presumes that investigators are committed to an ethic that stresses personal accountability, caring, the value of individual expressiveness, the capacity for empathy, and the sharing of emotionality (Collins, 1990, p. 216, quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 22). These research values were, and are, highly appealing to me. I did not perceive the Cree hunters and trappers as "simplistic" or unidimensional, abstract managers. Instead, I perceived them as individuals, as experts in their field, which they indeed were (and are).

A commitment on the part of the researcher is only one part of a feminist research equation. Collaborative, non-oppressive relationships are also reliant on the attitudes, behaviours and expectations of participants. My relationships with the Cree changed dramatically over time. I entered the field as an outsider, an urban, white woman -- the wife of yet another white male teacher from the south. By the time I left the field, I was still a white woman, but I had developed many different kinds of field relations. In some instances, with Freddy Jolly and Lillian Diamond, I was a friend, a confidant, a trusted researcher and collaborator. With others, I was an interested student who was beginning

to understand Cree ways of life and management. For many, I remained the wife of a teacher (but an unusual one who had spent a lot of time in the bush).

Since much of my research was conducted with Cree men in what appeared (at least to me) as a paternalistic environment, I had to work hard to avoid an obvious gender set-up. I was only partially successful. For instance, the teaching role of my (now ex-) husband Barry seemed to both help and hinder my ability to achieve access and manage field relations. On the one hand, he had the ability to introduce me to a number of local people, both Native and non-native. On the other hand, my 'student' status, lack of a tangible job, and the simple fact that I was a woman quickly started to marginalize me into a 'house-wife' role. People did not initially take my research seriously. During the time I spent at the bush camp, many community members joked that Barry had lost his "cook" and seriously inquired about who was doing his laundry while I was away.

To some extent, I overcame this by identifying myself with, and through, Freddy, my key informant. Thus, I traded being "Barry's wife" by becoming "Freddy's student." In both cases, I recognize the humility of possession; however, on a practical level, the role of "Freddy's student" opened up many more doors than did "Barry's wife." Field relations, including my relationship with Freddy, were often marked by sexism, clearly a form of oppressive behaviour. In the small Native communities of James Bay, there was a tangible barrier to be faced by an outside white woman researcher, particularly when my study focused primarily on an exclusively male cultural role -- that of the tallyman.

My field relations, then, occasionally erupted with intense emotional outbursts. I did not remain neutral and on a number of occasions lost my temper over what I perceived to be a sexist incident. For instance, on occasion Freddy demanded that I get up from the table and get him salt and pepper, even though it was just as convenient for

him to fulfil his own needs. Freddy perceived himself to be the "head of the household" and both he and his wife Annie Jolly told me this many times. Similarly, when Freddy visited me in Toronto, he asked that I do his laundry (which I refused to do). On another occasion, Freddy tried to lend my skidoo to a young Algonquian boy who was visiting. Freddy initially felt that I should readily give up a chance to go hunting (a male prerogative) and instead stay at home and cook for their return. I was renting this skidoo and I refused to accept this.

We fought heatedly about what I perceived to be hierarchical behaviour. Freddy argued that I was trying to be a man. When I replied that I was simply acting like a "free woman," he replied that I was "messing up" his head. We agreed to disagree but later I tried to utilize the eco-feminist argument that (some) men oppress women in a similar way in which (some) men try to dominate nature. I suggested that Freddy would not want to treat me in the same way in which southern developers mistreated the bush. Surprised, Freddy quickly agreed with this. He said, "I don't want to disrespect you, bush lady."

The point of these stories is not to determine whether Freddy was wrong or whether I was (one of my external examiners remarked on the rudeness of my refusal to do his laundry since he was my guest in Toronto). A more interesting methodological question is to try to assess whether Freddy and I were able to resolve such power relations during my fieldwork. I believe that we were successful in this. We remain friends and continue to collaborate.

Despite the existence of a variety of power dynamics within the field setting, we chose to focus our *AMJ* article more narrowly. We agree with Banerjee and Linstead that a discussion of power relations (whether they relate to post-colonialism – Banerjee and Linstead's issue -- or gender – Whiteman's issue) is valuable to ethnographic work on

Cree tallymen. We reiterate the limitations inherent in one paper: you can't do everything.

Substantive Conclusions

Banerjee and Linstead argue that there is no substantive value to the findings of our study because of the above criticisms. That is, the concept of ecological embeddedness has no value for management studies. Secondly, they criticize us for not building sufficiently upon existing literature (mostly Banerjee's work) on sustainability. Finally, they suggest that Cree tallymen are not 'real' managers, and thus have little to offer corporate executives. We believe that Banerjee and Linstead appear to jump to conclusions that go beyond our data and how we believe we presented that data.

Taking the last point first, it is not surprising that management studies have ignored native approaches. Given the conventional image of the manager as executive (e.g., Drucker, 1995), it may not be immediately clear to some scholars that a native hunter is, in fact, a manager.^{iv} Yet, the boundaries between these groups are not so distinct. Mindful that the origins of 'mand' refers to the word for hand, 'management' can be defined as a specific approach or practice to organize resources to effectively achieve a goal (Drucker, 1986). Thus, Indigenous approaches to subsistence can be viewed as an important yet unstudied cultural approach to management. One of the key contributions in our article is precisely this point which challenges the conventionally but widely held belief that only certain types of managers – i.e., corporate managers – are worthy of study by our field. We reject this view and continue to believe that it is valuable to understand the practice of management wherever it is found.

With respect to non-substantive findings, on page 13 a seemingly genuine question is asked by Banerjee & Linstead: “What, we might ask would an ‘ecologically embedded’ manager who can ‘walk out on the land’ look like in a modern organization?” An interesting question that could invite a thoughtful response. Instead, Banerjee and Linstead follow this with “Given the hectic worklife most managers in organizations face would a 15-minute power walk in the woods (a not inconsiderable task in downtown Los Angeles, Tokyo or Mumbai) be necessary and sufficient for ‘walking the land’”? This sentence is offered as a rhetorical device that dismisses our work as superficial and disingenuous.

Not only did we not suggest anything like this, but, in fact our propositions (taking them seriously for a moment) clearly suggest the opposite: a long-term personal experience with the land is a critical dimension of ecological embeddedness. This rhetorical approach seems to empower Banerjee and Linstead while at the same time dismissing our substantive findings in a discursive power game. We believe a stronger critique would have been to empirically study whether or not our research propositions had value.

In general, the dismissive tone of Banerjee and Linstead’s article does not lend itself easily to scholarly debate. It drips with sarcasm, a narrative style which distances, not enjoins. For instance, Banerjee and Linstead accuse our article of “being hopelessly imbalanced” (p. 10). While the article may or may not be imbalanced, we don’t feel that it can ever be hopelessly so, particularly since its key contribution is to introduce TEK to the field of business management scholars. We look forward to work that can refine it, critique it, pull it apart and strengthen it. Imbalances can be viewed as opportunities for

knowledge creation in the interest of rebalancing, rather than simply as a rhetorical means to truncate academic dialogue, limit learning, and unnecessarily polarize the debate.

While we do not yet empirically know if this is the case, we continue to believe that the concept of ecological embeddedness may have value beyond the Cree. We remain convinced that our substantive contribution remains open to empirical investigation. Banerjee and Linstead's central criticisms – that we do not take a neocolonialist theoretical stance, don't offer sufficient reflexivity, and do not link to Banerjee's work on sustainability -- are not sufficient grounds to reject our research propositions. Only empirical work can establish whether these propositions have merit. Lest these propositions get lost in political and methodological critique, we would like to re-present them here.

The Virtues of Getting the Main Point

Our *Academy of Management Journal* article suggested that for a manager to be ecologically embedded is to personally identify with the land, to adhere to beliefs of ecological respect, reciprocity, and caretaking, to actively gather ecological information and be physically located in the ecosystem. Since the Cree tallymen have historically been sustainable managers of natural resource (Berkes, 1995; 1999), we suggest that their degree of ecological embeddedness may be linked to their sustainable management practice. We argue that there may be some important implications for the broader field of management, which deserve future empirical study. Among the implications are these four propositions:

Proposition 1. Managers who have a strong personal identification with local ecosystems (a sense of being a place) have greater commitment to sustainable management practices, compared with managers who are less ecologically embedded.

Proposition 2. Managers who believe in ecological reciprocity, ecological respect, and ecological caretaking are more likely to be committed to sustainable management practices, compared with managers who believe less in ecological reciprocity, ecological respect, and ecological caretaking.

Proposition 3. Managers who gather management knowledge through firsthand experience with local ecosystems develop a greater sense of being a place and have a greater commitment to sustainable management practices, compared with managers who do not gather environmental information through experience.

Proposition 4. Managers who are physically located outside in their local ecosystems develop a greater sense of being a place and have a greater commitment to sustainable management practices, compared with managers who are physically located inside buildings.

Again, we don't know whether any of the above propositions have value for management. But we do emphasize that they can be empirically examined. We don't know if 'walking outside' would change the awareness, attitudes or behaviour of Western non-Indigenous managers. It might. Thoreau seemed to think so (Thoreau, 1863/1968). Whiteman's personal experience suggests that it is possible (i.e., it changed her personal mindset (see Whiteman, 1999; 2004b). Despite Banerjee and Linstead's dismissal, we believe that it is worthwhile to empirically ask if being on the land has effects on identification, commitment, respect, and caretaking for the land.

We believe that our description of TEK as an ecologically embedded approach to management remains valuable to both the Cree and to non-Indigenous managers. Such academic descriptions can help to resolve the difficulties that corporate managers may face when confronted with Cree (and perhaps other) perspectives on development. More broadly, our article has the potential to help corporate executives understand Indigenous peoples better, particularly when they are attempting to consult Indigenous peoples on natural resource development (see, e.g., Whiteman and Mamen, 2002a/b). We also think the study of ecologically embedded management remains an important topic for management studies. As such, it requires many different approaches, including a neo-colonialist and perhaps gender critique, but need not be restricted to these lenses. Ultimately, its academic value (aside from historical description) lies in future empirical studies of how the concept of ecological embeddedness may, or may not, be useful to Indigenous managers and to non-Indigenous management as they struggle to find their own sustainable ways of managing.

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Appendix

A list of 66 criticisms that Banerjee and Linstead made of our article, more or less seriatim and verbatim:

- We mask and subvert Indigenous thought
- Our theorizing is rooted in neo-colonial thought
- Our work has limited relevance for current management theory and practice
- We disembled an Indigenous land ethic
- We provide a caricature of Indigenous behaviour
- Our consciousness is unreflexively embedded in its own neo-colonialism
- We fail to recognize the deeply problematic nature of current anthropological practice
- We provide a reductionist and romanticized picture of native ontologies
- We ignore histories of colonialism with which Indigenous peoples have had to contend
- We appropriate cultural knowledge from Indigenous communities for the benefits of others
- We conflate management practice with the management practices of Indigenous peoples
- We practice a form of displacement that is both decontextualized and ahistorical
- We display insufficient self-reflexivity
- We don't acknowledge the unequal relations between ethnographer and subject
- We follow the pattern of reinforcing the positional superiority of western knowledge
- We don't address the problematic nature of ethnographic authority
- We don't recognize the discursive nature of anthropological practice
- Our conclusions show a tendency toward abstraction, generalization and ahistoricity
- We disapprove of inauthentic practices such as snowmobiling
- We dismiss the importance of the displacement of the Cree
- We are unwilling to acknowledge the oppressive dimensions of Cree experience
- We feel it necessary to point out that the Cree are not perfect
- We feel it necessary to find an excuse for the absence of virtuous homogeneity in the Cree
- We play into the hands of racists and assimilationists, leaving them room to feel comfortable

We demonize the market, thus giving critics grounds to dismiss our arguments

We detach the Cree from their history

We display no awareness of anxiety about our hegemonic mode of representation

Our categoric externalization disguises the process of settler-colonial incorporation

We obscure the political and ethical tensions that underlie ethnographic investigations of indigene

We present “the Cree” as abstract, ahistorical “others”

We fail to acknowledge the ironies of anthropological field research

We write as if the categories we use were ones which the natives themselves would develop

We present ourselves as natives by proxy

We elide the distinction between the ethnographic “text” and the “text” created by the other

We privilege our text above “external” factors such as from want or geo-political coercion

We reduce complex forces to a series of projections of individual psychological states

We appropriate the Cree and the critical potential of anthropology itself

Our functionalist psycholism reproduces a self-alienating epistemology

We think of self and environment as separate

We author the Cree

Our so-called “dialogue” is hopelessly imbalanced

Our references to colonial encounters are rooted in the past, rather than ongoing practice

We position ourselves and our readers as global citizens of a consensual culture

We appropriate, steal and adapt ideas from native cultures to benefit the West

We over-simplify issues

We produce a kitsch and sentimental anthropology and management theory

We disarm our critique and lose critical power by rendering native practice relevant and palatable

Our ontological introspection is limited

We package and transfer without understanding that Indigenous knowledge production is local

We fail to relate our findings to anthropological studies of managers or ecological understandings

We seem unaware that it’s not necessary to study Indigenous managers to learn ecological beliefs

We display an environmental idealism

Our managerial implications are particularly problematic and naïve

We have not sufficiently thought through the managerial implications

We seem to propose a packaged spirituality or designer tribalism for modern Western managers

We don't display an understanding of the complexities involved in what we propose

We propose a quick fix approach to modern environmental problems

What we propose is a travesty of the Indigenous environmental ethic

We fail to link with existing literatures on sustainability and individual environmental concerns

We show a remarkable lack of integration with current research on corporate environmentalism

We seem to advocate "sustainable management practices" as some kind of universal panacea

Our ecological embeddedness disembeds Indigenous economic and social life

We downplay issues of who controls the research process to the point of their disappearance

We assume a relatively seamless, unproblematic knowledge appropriation and transfer process

We fail to address the fact that standards of living and life spans are still low and short

We are conspicuously silent on the socio-economic consequences of colonialism

ENDNOTES

On 7 February 2002, the provincial government of Québec and the Grand Council of the Cree of James Bay entered into an agreement giving Cree consent to Hydro-Québec's proposed Eastmain hydroelectric project and the diversion of the Rupert River, in exchange for \$3.5 billion in Canadian currency (U.S.2.27 billion) over fifty years. Despite agreement at the Grand Council and local chief level, there was a significant portion of the local Cree population (perhaps 31%) and several Non Governmental Organizations that opposed the project. Currently, the project is at the environmental impact assessment stage, which will be completed in 2005. Although there has been a tremendous amount of past and future development in the James Bay region of northern Canada, there has been very little empirical research that examined the impact of economic development on Cree tallymen, who are the senior grassroots managers of this vulnerable ecosystem. A recent paper by Whiteman (2004a) attempts to fill this gap by providing ethnographic research on the impact of past development on Cree tallymen from the perspectives of the tallymen themselves. She also draws implications for environmental impact assessments in the region and, more broadly, for the future study of ecologically embedded managers like the Cree tallymen.

ⁱⁱ Whiteman would like to emphasize the importance of this point with a personal example. In March, 1999, she made a presentation in Ottawa to the Minerals, Economics and Management Society conference entitled "The Difficulty in Dialogue: When Traditional Knowledge Enters the Boardroom." The audience was largely practitioner-based with mining executives and government policy makers. She received very solid feedback from this group and one government policy maker told her that he understood Voisey Bay (a very contentious Nickel mine project which the Inuit in Canada vehemently opposed) much better after her presentation and wished he had this awareness during the negotiations.

ⁱⁱⁱ While it would have been useful to talk with Freddy about this, a visit to James Bay was not possible because Whiteman was heavily pregnant with her second child and could not travel back to the sub-arctic in time.

^{iv} For instance, at a number of Academy of Management meetings, Whiteman has personally encountered such confusion. As one professor succinctly put it, “What does a study of a hunter have to do with management studies?”