

Representations of Native American two-spirited males through Critical Linguistics is a multidisciplinary dissertation that uses theories and methodologies of critical discourse analysis and semantics to study an anthropological phenomenon. This research focuses on the representations of Native North American gender-crossing and -mixing males in historical and anthropological literature. These people were formerly institutionalized and integrated in their tribal cultures and social fabric through religious beliefs and customs, gender-based work roles and sexual practices. With the destruction and disintegration of traditional indigenous communities, and the Natives' subsequent acculturation into Euro-American life, the traditional form of this third-gender status more or less disappeared from public view by the early 1900s. Around 1990, this identity resurfaced under the new label *two-spirit*. The term refers to male and female spirits or essences in one individual. This pan-Indian term has largely replaced the former terms applied to these people by people of European origin, the most frequent of which was *berdache*. My research focuses on the way these two-spirited males have been represented discursively in historical sources, and terminologically by anthropologists who have had to rely on these sources. Recent anthropological literature has suggested that these historical sources and the terms have distorted and thus misrepresented gender-crossing males and their community roles. Yet, no published study has explored how this ethnocentric bias manifests itself in the language used to represent these people.

My study takes a critical perspective to analyze attitudinal and other ideological elements that affect the representations of two-spirited males. The aim is to explore the often confusing and slowly evolving long-term portrayal of two-spirited males in historical and contemporary discourse. The methodological tools applied are derived from critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA), which specialize in exploring the link between discourse and society, ideological representations of cultural groups, and the use of sociopolitical power through discursive means. The first part of my study consists of a detailed textual analysis of well-known historical sources collected in Katz (1976/1992). Particular attention is paid to the discursive similarities in the historic representations through intertextual and interdiscursive analyses, and the thematic organization of the texts. Contradictory aspects in the representations are explored by breaking down the surface level statements into their underlying propositions, while determining the rhetorical moves and shifts in contexts that take place in the texts. Ideological evaluations underpinning the propositions are also explored through the concept of social or institutional subject. That is, the authors not only construct their topic but also construct themselves through the norms and expectations of their social and institutional background. Thus, the attitudes they express are likely to be more social than personal. The second part of my study examines the terminological representations used in the historical sources, and in the subsequent anthropological literature. These representations are analyzed semantically and etymologically, but from a critical angle that includes the social context of their use, and other aspects related to ideology and use of power, such as connotations, frequency of usage, and naturalization of the terms. Comparisons between the terms illuminate each term as a separate temporal stage in the historical context of its era, and highlight aspects of the status perceived as the most important ones at each stage. The latest terminologic change from *berdache* to *two-spirit* is also examined from a more sociolinguistic perspective as access to empowerment; i.e., the social resources and the

mentality of the current academic context required for an ethnic and transgender minority to be able to have their voice heard. The long-term perspective (c. 500 years) taken in my research underlines the fact that this formerly institutionalized transgender phenomenon not only belongs to the past, but also continues in its revived form today. The active role recently taken by contemporary indigenous Americans in shaping the representations of these individuals is a most clear indication of the vitality for this identity today.