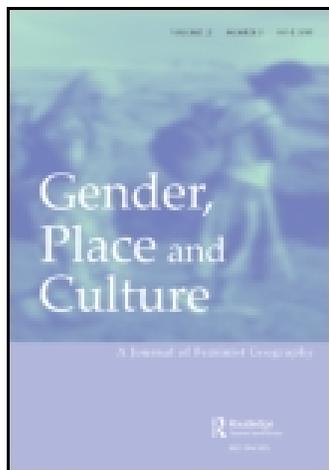


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## Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cgpc20>

### Response

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Published online: 26 Sep 2012.

To cite this article: Scott Morgensen (2012) Response, Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 19:5, 695-698, DOI: [10.1080/0966369X.2012.720524](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2012.720524)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2012.720524>

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the intended dialogue between Native and non-Native queers. Second, while I appreciate his carefulness in addressing the adoption of Native ceremony by certain groups within non-Native queer society, I was particularly disturbed that Morgensen did not speak out forcefully in criticism of the Bondage Discipline Sadism Masochism (BDSM) adoption of the physical sacrifices of ceremony (pp. 174–6), particularly those related to the Sun Dance. Such appropriations are an affront to Two-Spirit society who has worked diligently, through incorporating spiritual practices into our gatherings, to become integrated into Native American and First Nations ceremonial life. Affronts to these ceremonies run the risk of setting back our efforts.

Finally, when Morgensen states that '[i]n the space that opens up when non-Natives release attachments to place, while Native people contest how place might be known or controlled, a possibility of allied work for decolonization grows' (p. 227), I wondered how the author envisioned this work by non-Natives to release attachments to place to proceed? I have struggled with this in my own work and would enjoy an ongoing dialog within and outside geography over how this search for common ground might proceed, not only for Native and non-Native queers but also for all of us who share the messy, violent histories and contemporary realities of the settler-state.

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## **Response – Scott Lauria Morgensen**

### **Queen's University**

To enter this exchange is a privilege and a humbling experience. I appreciate these comments and the opportunity to engage them, and in a longer forum I would offer even deeper responses. Like my book, my comments perform critical reflection, which I hope indicates the generative effects of writing from spaces caught within colonial power, not as if to escape that power but to negotiate it with a critical difference.

My interlocutors' observations map important tensions in academia. What is a scholar's responsibility to write beyond academic registers, especially if one discusses communities that have been oppressed by academic knowledge production? In writing that implicates the scholar, what balance must be struck between self-examination and social documentation, or between linking accounts to one's own location or to further horizons? Our words suggest that such concerns, which we share, are sufficiently fraught that a correct answer for one of our projects might not model the same for another. I think our variety of claims actually helpfully illuminates the constraints of colonial power that still circulate around our efforts to create scholarship for social change.

When de Leeuw asks if my book's alignment with Indigenous people positions me beyond the colonialism it critiques, she names the crucial responsibility that allied critics bear to expose ourselves to our own criticism, thereby modeling how similarly positioned people may act. Hunt acknowledges that my book does not disavow my status as a settler needing critique, for by narrating my interpellation in the spaces I examine I am positioned

as ‘both insider and outsider’. I intended this effect to model how non-Native readers might re-evaluate their lives; and I explicitly extend this practice elsewhere (Morgensen 2009, 2011a, 2011b).

Oswin appropriately asks, given the book’s sustained critique of white and racialized non-Natives, if Indigenous people appear to be valorized as anticolonial critics. Valorization was not my intention, but such a reading is a risk that follows my methodological decision to center Indigenous anticolonialism. Given that *Spaces between us* is the first extended study to displace anthropological accounts of Native queerness with a settler critic’s response to Two-Spirit activism, I could not overemphasize the capacity of Native Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) and Two-Spirit people to challenge colonial discourses and rule. A pernicious legacy of anthropology is skepticism of ‘Two-Spirit’ as an inauthentic derivation of colonial terms; and in Indigenous communities, the assimilation of heteropatriarchy can have a similar effect. Against all this, I highlighted Two-Spirit’s discrepancy: a term fully articulate with colonial modernity, yet not dependent upon it, as it connects to subjugated Indigenous knowledges and their resurgence. Thus, rather than suggesting that Indigenous people always act decolonially, I specifically emphasized an ever-present *potential* in Two-Spirit identity to mark and critique colonialism’s existence. That claim is compatible with any evidence that Two-Spirit people have not acted decolonially. But the book centered instances in which they did because its core purpose was to critique the incapacity of many non-Natives to even acknowledge decolonization as a concern.

This thread evokes Hunt’s and Johnson’s reflections on the book’s limited attention to complexities within Two-Spirit identity, of which they and I are aware. Tensions exist between Two-Spirit identity’s invocation of tradition and calls by some queer Indigenous people to affirm recent or non-traditional identities (p. 86, n. 88); between the term’s urban, diasporic, or pan-tribal qualities and rural or tribally specific knowledges (p. 205); and around the incommensurability of Western sex/gender/sexuality and the traditions invoked by ‘Two-Spirit’, all of which may be effaced if the term equates with ‘LGBTQ’ and obscures persons who identify otherwise, or (as Hunt noted at the Association of American Geographers meetings) the partners of Two-Spirit people.

Indigenous activists and scholars address these tensions, as I am prepared to do when writing in responsible relationship to the Indigenous people whom my words would affect. To respond in this way reminds us that my book pursued a specific question while fulfilling its responsibility to Two-Spirit activists. Structurally, *Spaces between us* critiques colonialism among LGBTQ non-Natives; that is, its central object is non-Native. The book traces first how non-Natives performed colonialism, and then contrasts this to historical Two-Spirit activist critiques. In most cases, I was told by the Two-Spirit activists under discussion to address their public engagements with non-Natives, not their accounts of their Indigenous lives or communities: perhaps because the legacy of white gay ethnographers trespassing their lives is fresh, which lent a methodology of political responsibility particular weight at this juncture. My book conformed to this method in the absence of any invitation by Two-Spirit activists to discuss them otherwise. Thus, when I discuss tensions among Indigenous people – as in debates over gender/sexuality in Native HIV/AIDS organizing – I emphasize their implications for critiquing colonialism, not because this is all that I think they signify, but because critiquing colonialism was the purpose of citing them in this particular book.

I acknowledge with my interlocutors a danger if readers mistake the book’s cases as accounts of ‘Two-Spirit people’ as such, rather than of specific activist networks and the activist claims they made within earshot of non-Natives. Nevertheless, the book

announces itself as a history of social movements and asks readers to read it in this way. Such a focus cannot answer all my interlocutors' questions about Indigenous communities; but the book also anticipated this by naming its emergence within conversations. By continually naming interlocutors beyond the page, the book tries to counter any reading of it as 'definitive', and highlights instead its capacity to be interrupted by circulating narratives to which readers might turn.

Given this form, a clarification of my dialogic terms may be helpful. As the book explains, 'conversations' references not a freeing act but the very deliberations within colonial power that Native and non-Native people have not escaped. When I close by inviting non-Natives to return to conversation, then, I suggest this not as if it were a 'good' thing, but because it is necessary. Non-Natives remain constrained by discourses that anticolonialism calls them to challenge, which will follow only if they do not disavow that constriction but acknowledge and critically engage it. When I then invoke Joy Harjo's contrasting image of the 'kitchen table', as an Indigenous communicative space (p. 227) – Two-Spirit organizing being an example – I exhort non-Natives *not* to try to join it. By and large they have not been invited into that space, and I suspect any desire to participate will enact the cultural appropriation and disavowal of colonial power that my work critiques. *Spaces between us* thus posits, for non-Native and Native people, continued critical dialogs from within the power-laden conversations that relationally structure our lives, so as to clarify, disrupt, and transform them.

Our forum suggests the struggles of producing knowledge in a still-colonial situation. For instance, Hunt and Johnson consider a potential contradiction between my anticolonial stakes and my book's use of language that is inaccessible to nonacademic Indigenous people. I clarified my dialogic terms to indicate that I use them differently than their common meanings, which are cited by Hunt. But the impetus of her and Johnson's observations is crucial and deeply compels me, as a non-Native contributor to Native studies. My body of scholarship foregrounds work that is accessible to nonacademics, which I am compelled to write from my intersectional politics, working-class background, ethnographic ethics, and responsibility to Indigenous communities. At once, having advanced in the settler academy sufficiently to understand its workings, I respect the politics of challenging hegemonic discourses by convincingly addressing their practitioners in their own terms. These two forms of writing may seem contradictory, yet I dared to join them in one book. I am not arguing that the experiment was a success, only that I made the attempt mindful of its stakes. As a project meant to intervene in the power of an originally scholarly discourse, *Spaces between us* introduces a theoretical scaffolding across multiple inter/disciplines in 'Introduction' and Chapter 1. Yet 'Introduction' also opens with a story written to general audiences; and the majority of the book proper, including every social historical and ethnographic case, sets aside or backgrounds academic terms and uses a voice pitched to nonacademics. This tone defined the journal article on which Chapter 6 is based, which was given to the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center for use in their activism; alongside that chapter, I offer this article (Morgensen 2008) to Hunt as a text ready for application in Native HIV/AIDS organizing. I have received engaged responses from Indigenous activists to the sections of the book that discuss them, which indicates to me that the book reached a key nonacademic Indigenous audience to which it was responsible.

I often invite audiences to engage this book nonlinearly; and I especially invite Indigenous audiences to start by reading the sections on Two-Spirit and Native HIV/AIDS activism – closing each chapter, culminating in the last – because they were composed together, as a kind of alternative entry into a larger conversation. That conversation is not

meant to be a crowd-pleaser: calling non-Natives to confront their complicities; drawing Native people to study noxious cultural appropriations. I remain invested in Native readers leaving such discussions with welcome insights, given that the path to those insights traverses the colonial power they must critique. For that reason, I regret my failure to more forthrightly denounce the dire offense of Fakir Musafar's appropriation of the Sun Dance (pp. 174–6), as Johnson rightly insists I should have done. While my writing did critique Musafar, I believe here that I problematically re-entered a colonial comfort zone, where satisfaction in my ability to critique Musafar did not extend to the step that Native people actually demand of non-Natives: to fearlessly and vociferously challenge colonial violence from direct accountability to Native activist critiques. That ethics already imbues the book's accountability to Two-Spirit activists, and I will redouble my efforts to fulfill it while practicing respect, responsibility, and commitment to Indigenous leadership in work for decolonization.

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