THE NATIVE GAME. By EVELYN PLAICE. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1990. Social and Economic Studies No. 40. 150 p., photos. Softbound. Cdn$18.00.

The Native Game purportedly addresses how a small Labradorian community's past (and present) has influenced contemporary Indian/Settler relations. The author also seeks to analyze the role that individual family histories have played in the formation of contemporary settler perceptions of these relations. Utilizing the above two central themes, Plaice focuses her research on ethnic identity. Her stated objective is to confirm that ethnic identity is self-referential, that a changing social environment produces a fractured self-identity, and that ethnicity is a resource that can be manipulated.

Plaice is an outsider to the community, and although she speaks the language of the Settlers, she does not have facility in a Native dialect. The author encountered North West River, Labrador, when she first spent a year as a volunteer for the International Grenfell Association in 1974. She returned in 1976 and 1979, collecting more information that allowed her to complete her undergraduate honour's degree. In 1983 she returned for a six-month research stint, which led to her M.A. in anthropology. The data collected in this latter period is the basis of this book. Plaice immersed herself into this community, living six months in the community. Using participant observation, supplemented with unstructured interviews, the author collected data utilizing an extended case study methodology.

The book begins with a brief historical survey of outside influences upon the settlement and development of the central Labrador region. This chapter makes up nearly half of this small book and relies mainly on archival records and existing histories written about the region and the community. Twelve photographs depicting the period 1875-1958 complete the first section. The remaining seven chapters in part two are short (approximately 10 pages each) and provide attenuated overviews of a number of issues, e.g., physical layout of the community, analysis of kinship patterns in the community, occupational change in the community. The second half of the book ends with eleven photos covering the 1930-80s era.

Although this book considers the effects of macro-level conditions on the behaviour and attitudes of individuals and, as best one can tell, tries to integrate a macro-perspective with an action-oriented one, the author fails to achieve her goal. Two shortcomings lead to such a result. First, the author does not identify the mechanism by which macro-level conditions affect individuals. There is no systematic attempt to build a model or identify how these mechanisms work over time. Second, in positing micro-level action, no information is presented about variables influencing the behaviour of interest in a particular historical setting and information about the macro-level conditions. If a model had been set forth, it would have enabled the author to identify the mechanisms by which macro-level conditions affect individuals. This in turn would have allowed her to collect data on those mechanisms as well as assess how they changed over time.

A lack of detailed specification, operationalization of concepts and a lack of research design have all contributed to the inability of the author to systematically test her model. In the end, the reader is treated to a brief, superficial discussion of a number of issues related (some tangential) to the central thesis of the book. Unfortunately, little descriptive data is presented that could be of use for ethnographers. For example, precious little demographic data is presented to document the changing structure of the community — a key assumption posited by the author. Furthermore, little genealogy data is presented to assess the kith and kinship patterns established over time. Finally, the issue of reliability and validity of data go undiscussed. The book raises many more issues than it resolves. Its overall contribution lies in its synthesis of historical material. Unfortunately, the lack of methodological rigour raises serious questions about the conclusions drawn by the author. While this research effort may be viewed as sensitizing the reader to a number of issues about how communities influence the life of its residents, a new effort will have to be undertaken in order to answer them.

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Response from the author:

I wish to thank Dr. Frideres for his comments and criticisms of *The Native Game*, and I am grateful to the editors for this opportunity to address some of those criticisms. I am warmed by Frideres's comment that I raise more questions than I answer, and I take this as a compliment. No doubt it would surprise him to know that I did not necessarily set out with the notion of finding answers. Identifying appropriate questions to ask may be a task worthy of social scientific research, but "answers" are seldom the expected or intended result. Questions generate investigation and research, which should then result in a better understanding of the social world. Understanding, as opposed to answers, yields a clearer picture and a deeper appreciation of the world's social fabric where the issues under investigation may not require "answers" as such. Understanding is a matter of knowledge rather than of resolution. Indeed, to seek answers as the outcome of social investigations may be entirely inappropriate.

More particularly, Frideres questions the value of research and analysis done on a "micro level." Frideres has written elsewhere that he views this form of research as having little value when pitted against the enormous social problems inherent in Canadian multi-cultural society:

> ...the way the relationship between natives and the dominant group is viewed will partly determine the answers. Using a micro model (which concentrates solely on individual discrimination and prejudice because it is based on individual relationships) results in a solution centering around individual advancement, otherwise known as "individual entrepreneurship." (Frideres, 1974:157.)

Frideres prefers what he calls a "macro level" analysis, and he applies a "colonial" framework to explain Indian-white relations. His perspective is a valid one, but I feel that it cannot do justice to the study of cultures. In fact, it entirely misses the point of ethnographic research, and indeed of the aims of social anthropology as I understand them.

My interest is in understanding how cultures come about, and by this I mean how they are moulded and used among people, how they are lived, communicated and experienced. Cultures exist in thoughts, words and actions; they exist through the people who inhabit them, because, as Geertz (1975:5) has said, "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun." Or, again, to adapt an image of Wittgenstein's (1978:8), how much of the "ancient city" of culture can be appreciated from a "macro-level" when its old quarters, its irregular old streets, its modern suburbs and straight new avenues go unvisited and untrodden? Cultural identities are as baroque as languages. Cultures continue to evolve and shift, and culturally grounded identities continue to make multiple meanings out of the accreted jumble of change and experience. Settler cultural identity has its "old quarters," situated around the Hudson's Bay Company's storehouses — where the harvests of settlers' traplines once barely secured life's essentials, and it has its "modern suburbs" of ethno-politics and service industries. Like the new avenues in languages, these new experiences and new uses of cultural identity are subtly grafted onto old ways. Much of the richness and complexity of life — a world communicated in the shake of a hand or the wink of an eye or the choice of a route — would go unobserved or even misunderstood without recourse to small-scale, intimate, "micro-level" studies of culture.

Cultures are composed of the activities of people in their everyday lives, and although, as Frideres fears, economic and political "solutions" are seldom engineered nowadays on this level, to ignore the micro level is a fatal error. After all, it is the different cultures of the peoples of Canada that a "macro-level" analysis sets out to protect. We should allow ourselves the "luxury" of knowing a little about the cultures we champion. When one is talking about a group or a category — Indians, for instance — it is essential to know what is inside that category, and what keeps the tensions between it and surrounding or contrasting groups. A group or category and its distinctiveness is constantly maintained by everyday social activities and interactions, as Barth (1969) and Cohen (1985), among others, have so eloquently pointed out. Such groups, it then often transpires, are not so simply identified (or so simply administered).

The analysis of Indian-Settler relations in *The Native Game* starts out from the boundary that symbolically maintains distinctiveness between the two groups. However, unlike Barth and other writers on ethnic identity whose focus becomes the boundary itself, I choose to go behind the scenes of intergroup communication and focus on the way in which the members within *one* group manage their identity. Indians — the group with whom and against whom Settlers construct their identity — remain a "black box," invisible except in the ways Settlers talk about them. Contradictory statements about Indians become understandable when the whole range of interrelated perceptions which the Settlers hold about their neighbours becomes apparent and are used in maintaining Settler distinctiveness. In stepping back from, or, rather, looking *in* from, Barth's symbolic boundary, I immerse myself in the many perceptual worlds of the Settlers. And I do this because I think it is important to know something about the ways in which people appreciate ethnic difference.

In sum, I do not think that cultures can be studied at a "macro level." My analysis might call upon "macro level" developments to shed light on "micro level" events, but my interest is with a culture as it is constructed among the people who live it. I contend that, from a "macro level," a culture cannot be seen.

Frideres suggests, further, that I should have gone into the field armed with a model to test, that I should have applied the model more rigorously and come up with a more thorough application. But this was never my intent. I intended to immerse myself in Settler culture and I intended to have the analysis grow out of the field work. Hence, I allowed the experience of the field work and what I discovered there to suggest a model.

In methodology, aims and focus, I do not go the "right" way for Frideres and he is disappointed: whereas I focus upon the everyday interactions that go towards the maintenance of an ethnic identity, it seems Frideres would prefer me to have addressed the problems of class difference and the imbalance of power, something which is altogether different. I certainly do not suggest that my findings are applicable to every northern community or that they provide solutions to problems inherent in multicultural societies, but I still see value in looking specifically at an instance in time and space for an appreciation of the complexities of culture. I still value intensive *in situ* field work as a means of investigation and as a source of inspiration for analysis.

Perhaps the more tangible objections generated by Frideres's reading of *The Native Game* spring from deep-seated differences between sociology and anthropology. He is criticizing anthropological aims and methods in what is essentially an anthropological, ethnographic study of a particular culture. But I do not think that choosing one set of field work techniques or one type of analysis over others should exclude the necessity of others to exist. The social sciences are broader than Frideres's criticisms would allow us to believe. Indeed, epistemological and methodological pluralism is an important source of their vitality; and one set of preferences should not negate the freedom of others to interpret their fields of study in ways they see fit.

The crux of Frideres's criticism of *The Native Game* is not one of the content of the book, then, but one of the relevance of one type of research and analysis as opposed to another. The logic of *The Native Game* is, essentially, a grounded ethnography. I am an anthropologist, and my methodology is that of ethnographic field work. Ethnography as both a methodology and a form of interpretive analysis is close to a century old; it is a tried, tested and still very vibrant methodology for data collection (for recent appraisals see Clifford, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986). It is the key methodology of social anthropology because it allows for the observation of and participation in the everyday lives of people in the culture being studied. Frideres was hoping to find an altogether different study, a different book.

In the end it is difficult to counter Frideres's criticisms, therefore, because his analytic inclinations are so vastly removed from my own. *The Native Game* attempts to understand the maintenance of an ethnic identity by examining everyday, ordinary actions and conversations among people. The ideas for analysis grew out of involvement in, and observation of, a community at close range. As Wittgenstein put it: "In order to see more clearly...we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them *from close to*" (Wittgenstein, 1978:20).

Admittedly, I had some guiding questions and hypotheses when I entered the field — and these were in any case based upon ten years' familiarity with the community — but I allowed my interests and observations to be guided by what happened while I was there. I suggest one of many possible analyses of what I found and what I learned. And I believe in many different interpretations: no one single interpretation can possibly convey all there is to say about one culture, one community or one period in time. There is no such meaningful reality as the town of North West River: *the community is many things to many people*. All there is, in this instance, is my analysis — neither partial nor complete, neither encompassing nor definitive, neither insignificant nor entirely without value. *The Native Game* is one comment upon culture, ethnicity and identity, one I enjoyed thinking with, and however small, it is nevertheless a contribution to the ongoing conversation that constitutes the world in which we all live.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE FORT CHIPEWYAN AND FORT VERMILION BICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE. Edited by PATRICIA A. McCORMACK and R. GEOFFREY IRONSIDE. Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, 1990. 319 p., maps, illus., bibs. accompanying some papers. Price not indicated.

The Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference brought together a large number of people who shared a common interest: the history and heritage of the communities of Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion. The conference that celebrated the bicentennial of these two communities of Alberta's far north was an ambitious one. The format was an innovative one, bringing together not only academics and "experts," as is the case with most such conferences, but many residents of both communities who shared their personal histories and viewpoints. In fact each session was designed to include a resident of the community, a business or government person, and a scholar, ensuring a wide range of perspectives on each thematic topic.

The conference's goals were equally ambitious, as outlined by conference organizer R. Geoffrey Ironside (p.6).

> First of all, we hope it will provide greater understanding between people of different backgrounds and different experiences, a greater understanding about life in small, remote communities in Alberta and Canada and how it is necessary to listen to what the "north wind" is saying.... Secondly, we want to provide an expansion of knowledge about the histories, the economies, the geographies and the sociologies of these communities and regions about which so much is still unresearched and unpublished.

Do the proceedings succeed in achieving these goals — that is, in providing a greater understanding of life in the communities of Fort Vermilion and Fort Chipewyan and in providing an expansion of more technical knowledge about the communities?

In order to answer the first question, it is necessary to consider how well the oral presentations of community residents have been translated to the written medium. Not having attended the conference, the reviewer must depend only upon the written proceedings. While the voices of local residents provide a welcome contrast to the more academic presentations, much of the power of these voices has no doubt been lost in the transition to the written word. Furthermore, it