
Material Hardships and Cultural Resilience: The Role of Traditional Practices in Momaday's '*The Indolent Boys*' and '*Children of the Sun*'

Nadia Anjum¹, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Bhatti², Khurram Shahzad³

¹Lecturer (visiting) English Department Battagram Campus, Hazara University and Ph.D. Scholar Main Campus ,Hazara University, Mansehra Pakistan, ravianz903@gmail.com

²Professor, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan, ali23232@gmail.com

³Independent Scholar, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan khuram.221@gmail.com

DOI: <https://10.71145/rjssp.v2i2.93>

Abstract

This study investigates the perpetual association between socialist-style material difficulties according to Marxist literary analysis alongside cultural endurance shown by Raymond Williams in (The Long Revolution 1961) through N. Scott Momaday's dramatic works *The Indolent Boys* and *Children of the Sun*. Traditional cultural practices enable struggling groups and marginalized communities to form identities and recover through cultural adaptations to material changes. Through their parallel explorations of Native American community struggles the plays demonstrate contrasting methods of cultural resilience where *The Indolent Boys* displays individual responses while *Children of the Sun* shows community-based approaches to trauma recovery. Through *The Indolent Boys* viewers explore Native American historical trauma which resulted from economic abandonment and forced cultural assimilation and institutional exploitation that removed children's cultural and personal integrity. Through his play *Children of the Sun* Momaday illustrates the Kiowa people's declining status by showing them suffering from land disintegration alongside resource shortages and disruption of traditional ways of life which put cultural survival at risk. The research demonstrates how cultural traditions enable Native American groups to maintain their cultural identity and create community connections which safeguard Native heritage in ongoing battles for survival.

Keywords: Material Hardships, Cultural Resilience, Traditional Practices, Momaday's '*The Indolent Boys*', '*Children of the Sun*'

Introduction

As an author Native American poet and playwright N Scott Momaday created indelible images of native people in American literature. As he writes he explores how cultural and historical dimensions coalesce and how material realities exist for Native Americans. This paper discusses Momaday's theatrical production of both *The Indolent Boys* and *Children of the Sun* in which the actors must employ cultural norms to address their financial woes. By characterizing the economic hardships and cultural resilience in their conceptions, this work shows how Native

American cultures reclaim their vitality in their customs. This study examines how theatre offers delicate literary perspectives about these plays between examining their current applicability to the Indigenous people in the various contemporary society.



Figure 1: Map of Native American Territory: These numbers could explain the position of the communities depicted in the works of Momaday as the visualization for the reader.

Literature Review

Two literary works of N. Scott Momaday namely “The Indolent Boys” and “Children of the Sun” focus on material want (”), on the other hand, examines how Native American traditional culture can sustain its potency even in the face of colonial disruptions. Scholars have endorsed on how Momaday blends traditional Native American storytelling with the European techniques of writing to create a unique rhetorical, name supportive of culture maintenance.

Material Hardships and Historical Context

Within the context of the late 19th-century boarding school era Momaday examines through *The Indolent Boys* the material challenges Native children must endure after forced family separation. Documented extensively for its destructive effects on indigenous communities we know this time as the assimilationist period. Native boarding schools aimed to eliminate American Indian cultural heritage through strict official discipline and unhealthy facilities combined with strict prohibition of indigenous traditions according to Lomawaima (1994). Through his play Momaday explores the enduring metaphor of how the young мальчикей symbolize the troubles faced by all Native populations. Miller (1996) shows how historical policies of assimilation caused both physical suffering and emotional damage to Native children.

Cultural Resilience through Traditional Practices

Through the continuing practice of traditional activities Momaday celebrates his people's ability to defend their heritage. Through the protagonist's discovery of ancestral traditions and myths in *Children of the Sun* his lived experience discovers both restoration and outlets for growth. Many

indigenous peoples depend on storytelling because Deloria (2003) explains it maintains collective memory thus protecting indigenous identities against outside threats. Momaday's use of imagery, such as the sun as a symbol of vitality, underscores the enduring significance of spiritual and natural connections in Native traditions (Velie, 2005).

The Role of Language and Storytelling

Through integrating Native oral traditions Momaday shows how language functions as a resilient tool. According to Womack (1999) the reconstruction of original language and story structures functions as a fundamental method for fighting cultural extinction. The play presents Western storytelling modes against Native storytelling modes to examine the conflict between Native American verse and Anglo-American culture. According to Allen (1986) Native writers connect their identities through cultural frameworks to reclaim their ancestry.

Contemporary Relevance

The subjects of societal lack of resources along with cultural sustainability portrayed by Momaday within his work retain their current importance. According to LaDuke (2017) modern scholars confirm indigenous communities endure structural discrimination while their traditional ways provide pathways toward both environmental stewardship and cultural recovery. Through his plays Momaday works to demonstrate how indigenous knowledge systems meet today's critical problems endures indefinitely. Through storytelling rituals and natural world connection Native American communities transform their material struggles into cultural preservation opportunities. These artistic works extend valuable insights into cultural resilience and indigenous literary traditions which academic fields studying Native Americans and post-colonial theory and literature actively study.

Framework: Material Hardship and Cultural Resilience

According to Material hardship theory as developed from Marxist literary criticism economic hardship together with institutional oppression creates obstacles that prevent people and social groups from reaching stability and contentment during their lifetime. The difficulties of economic deprivation transform into poverty and joblessness and shortages of fundamental resources. American Native communities face added difficulties because of enduring historic wrongdoings including the forced removal of lands coupled with government-imposed cultural assimilation and institutionalized discrimination. The continued impact of colonial actions has established an elaborate framework of suffering that undercuts Native Americans' economic stability which remains problematic today (Brady & Carney, 2016). *The Indolent Boys* explores these historic conditions in Native American Boarding schools persistently. A careful analysis of significant dramatic moments connects material hardship concepts to structural inadequacy through studies of the characters including Bronx and Darwin and their mothers Maria and Rachel and school leaders Mr. Threadgill and Mr. Stuyvesant. Regarding cultures' adaptation against adversity we find cultural resilience demonstrated as their power to preserve and transform themselves (Kovach, 2010).

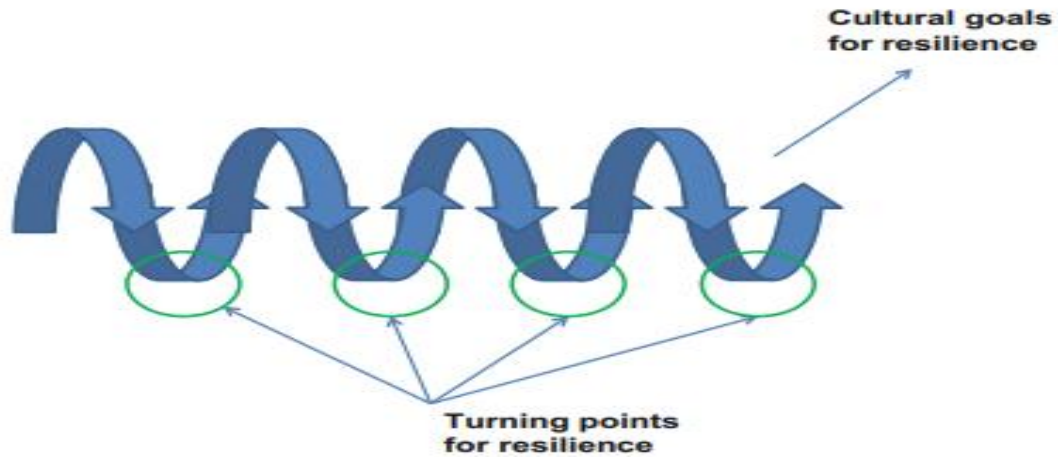


Fig. 17.1 Coils as an image for culturally-specific trajectories of resilience

Dynamic real-world cultural practices operate as lifelines enabling communities to survive crises through their ongoing evolution. Our traditional communal gathering practices and narratives along with rituals continue to function as survival tools against экономическую and социальную прикладным давлением. Traditional practices allow communities and their individuals to preserve both individual and collective identity alongside cultural continuity which develops hope and communal unity in demanding times.

Table: Comparative Overview of Material Hardships and Cultural Resilience from ‘The Indolent Boys’ and ‘Children of the Sun’

Aspect	Description and scene	Examples from Literature
Material Hardship	Socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, forced assimilation etc The superintendents’ monologue and speech reflects economic neglect of native communities	Reflects systemic inequities faced by Native American communities (Brady & Carney, 2016). Dialogues: “We have done the best we can with what we have been given.” “These children are the future of their people, but they must first learn to be civilized”.(scene 1)
Historical Injustice	Long-term impacts of colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural displacement.	Examined through themes of dislocation and trauma in Indigenous narratives (Momaday, 1971). Dialogues: “They say we are lazy, they say we do not care. But they took them from us and left us with nothing.”(scene 1.Act 2)
Cultural Resilience	The ability of a culture to sustain itself and adapt in the face of adversity.	Embodied in storytelling and rituals that connect individuals to heritage (Kovach, 2010). Dialogue: “They are starving our children of their spirit.They teach them to be ashamed to forget who they are”(scene 1)
Traditional Practices	Mechanisms such as storytelling, communal rituals, and ceremonies	Highlighted in <i>Children of the Sun</i> as tools for navigating challenges.

that reinforce identity and provide solace.

Dialogue: “There were seven sisters who danced on the earth, their laughter echoing in the canyons. One day, a bear came after them, fierce and hungry. The Earth opened, and the sisters rose into the sky, becoming the stars that watch over us even now.”

Intergenerational Ties The role of elders and shared knowledge in maintaining cultural continuity and resilience.

Seen in storytelling traditions that preserve collective identity (Cannon, 2018).

Dialogue: “There was a time when we rode freely, when the sound of our horses filled the valleys, and the feathers of our warriors brushed the skies. We fought not for greed but for the land, for the right to be who we are. They call us savages now, but we knew the meaning of honor.”

Overview of Traditional Practices in the Plays

Several traditional Native American practices span various activities which both uphold and express cultural identity heritage. These practices encompass oral storytelling, rituals, communal gatherings, and various forms of artistic expression (Bishop, 2008). Through his narratives in *The Indolent Boys* and *Children of the Sun* Momaday depicts these Native American practices as critical survival tools which characters use to face their economic troubles. These treasured practices function as vital elements that enable emotional relief and facilitate cultural continuity while allowing families to stay connected across generations. In *The Indolent Boys* assemblage serves basics which regain ethnicity character and provide solace in hard times. As mentioned above, life events that are conventional underlie part of *Children of the Sun* where communal ceremonies which play part in building coherence through endurance are depicted. Cultural continuity enfolds personal custom to concern for forces which join communities; it shows how tradition attends to many kinds of suffering.



Figure 2: Overview of Traditional Practices: Here is where a type of clone or graphic like a diagram or flowchart can be used to illustrate a variety of traditional practices and their connection to culture as well as the differing rigidity levels of cultural strength.

Analysis of *The Indolent Boys*

Running through the whole of *The Indolent Boys* is the sequence of material missing which impacts on both the financial class and the range of options concerning the lives of characters. These are some economic problems which affect native American communities and describe the overall social economic conditions throughout Native American territories. This theatrical production is actually aligned with today’s indigenous struggles such as poverty, joblessness and discrimination systems that affect Indigenous individuals and groups. The main character expresses the same kind of disappointment and despair that so many individuals experience during their existence in chronic economic difficulties (Momaday, 1971).

Table: Themes and Responses in *The Indolent Boys*

Theme	Material Depicted	Hardship	Cultural Practice Used	Outcome/Impact
Poverty	Characters struggle to meet basic needs and face systemic marginalization.		Storytelling of ancestral tales	Reinforces identity and provides emotional solace.
Disillusionment	Lack of opportunities leads to frustration and a sense of hopelessness.		Communal gatherings	Offers a sense of belonging and shared purpose.
Cultural Disconnection	Loss of cultural identity exacerbates personal struggles.	personal	Rituals and small ceremonies	Reconnects characters with their heritage, fostering resilience.
Intergenerational Divide	Younger characters struggle to find guidance amidst adversity.		Elders narrating cultural stories	Transfers wisdom and creates a bridge between generations.

When facing these hardships individuals in the book resort to traditional community celebrations combined with storytelling as part of their coping mechanisms. Through storytelling a path emerges to save cultural memory along with modes that develop resilience. The characters use these stories to form bonds with their ancestral history and strengthen their roots while developing a feeling of belonging. Through storytelling members of a community engage in a purposeful action that helps reevaluate themselves while reconnecting with their cultural traditions (Cannon, 2018).

Through storytelling the play demonstrates how cultural knowledge travels from one generation to the next. Through storytelling elders pass down the essential wisdom and foundational principles and historical records that belong to their community. Through such method younger generations maintain a sense of cultural identity despite their unfavorable circumstances. Character resilience demonstrates how cultural traditions enable people to successfully confront social and economic challenges.

Analysis of *Children of the Sun*

Even though the dialogue focuses on the multifaceted social aspect of the characters’ monetary challenges, the play *Children of the Sun* entails the characters’ movement through material concerns. In this way Native communities gain powerful understanding of group suffering as well as showing the Native peoples’ displacement and cultural erosion consequences of the historical inequalities. All protagonists are in the grip of the substance of social trauma that prescribes relations with extra-human sources as well as influences social relationships (Momaday 1970).

Table: Rituals and Community Dynamics in Children of the Sun

Culture serves as basic mechanisms of survival in such a situation. Traditional practices are therefore important. Time and again, in the context of the story multiple rituals and festivities epitomize characters continuously holding on to their right to decide and traditions. Such cultural practices enact the protection of indigenous culture by opposing acts which seek to obliterate them out. By doing so characters use these traditional practices in which they are assured of a strong relationship with their ancestry and other characters and using this strength to form a parcel from other entities outside their group.

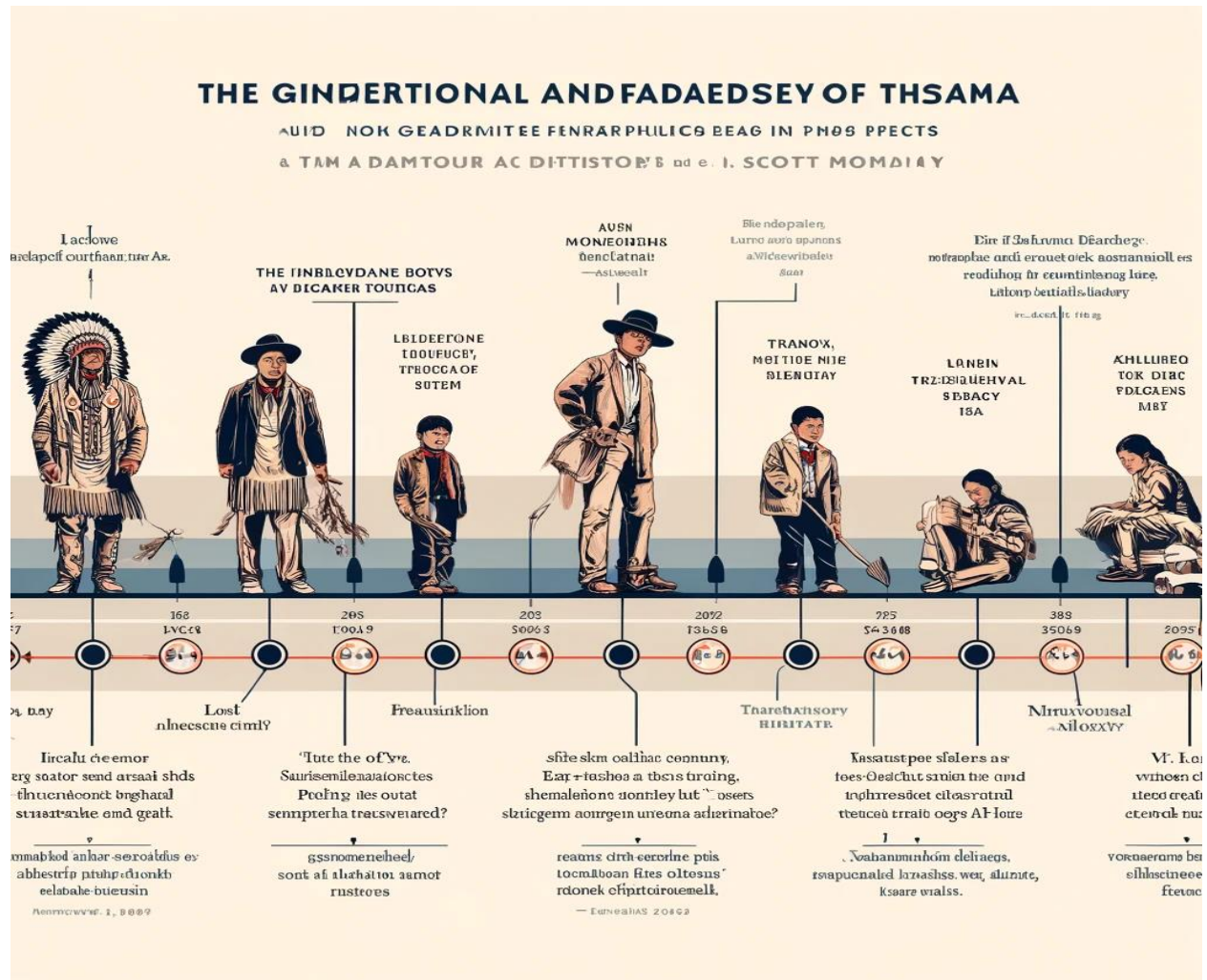


Figure 3: Generational Impact of Hardship

Further, a diagram or a graphic that would present information about intergenerational transmission of trauma would prove helpful too.

By doing so the play reveals how such communal performances are definitive reference points of healing processes. By using social practices, characters find personal healing and develop bonds within the sphere of their larger society. In Children of the Sun the shown rituals are about how culture is used to build instances of healing after suffering. Whereas The Indolent Boys tries to deconstruct macho culture, Children of the Sun strongly reject the concept of survival of the individual hence broadening the cultural perspective of the undoing in tough times.

Comparative Analysis

Finally, the material aspects that are evident in both productions retain close correspondence with native community existence. Hence through people's transformations the play reveals prevalent economical struggles along with social marginalisation and systemic oppressions experienced by Indigenous populations. While both the theatrical works depict certain cultural practices, these manifestation look differently on the screen as does the efficacy in support of resilience.

Table: Comparison of Cultural Practices in The Indolent Boys and Children of the Sun

Aspect	The Indolent Boys Approach	Children of the Sun Approach	Observations
Focus of Practices	Primarily individual storytelling and small rituals.	Emphasis on large communal rituals and collective healing practices.	Highlights the shift from individual resilience to community-driven solidarity.
Role of Storytelling	Personal stories to reconnect characters with their heritage.	Stories shared in communal settings to inspire collective purpose.	Storytelling functions both individually and communally for cultural resilience.
Rituals and Ceremonies	Smaller, intimate rituals to provide solace to individuals.	Large-scale ceremonies that unite and heal the community.	Rituals adapt to the scale and nature of the challenges faced.
Generational Connection	Elders transferring knowledge to individuals through stories.	Rituals involving multiple generations to ensure cultural continuity.	Emphasizes the importance of intergenerational ties in preserving traditions.
Cultural Engagement	Focuses on personal engagement with traditions.	Strong emphasis on collective participation in cultural practices.	Demonstrates how cultural practices scale to address different forms of trauma.

The idea which has been developed as the play's theme focuses on the general problem of personal economic survival of the Indolent Boys. As characters presuppose that kind of stories themselves they create some paths to solve their issues. In this way, this method reveals that failure can be overcome through the use of personal resources and participation in cultural processes.

Children of the Sun also depicts that the healing of society only begins when people work together. The play brings out mime that shows how certain activities are performed in society symbols that depict common goals among people within a particular society. The shared approach shows that tantamount to solidarity and collective support, it is important to build individual and community resilience. Ceremonial drama is a complex method in which multiform rituals play personal problems and community disaster, as in comparing these plays.

Implications of Cultural Practices on Identity and Community

Table: Impact of Cultural Practices on Identity and Resilience

Cultural Practice	Individual/Community Level Impact	Broader Implications for Indigenous Communities
Storytelling	Strengthens personal identity by reconnecting individuals with their heritage.	Preserves cultural narratives and values for future generations, reinforcing identity.
Communal Rituals	Fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support among community members.	Encourages unity and solidarity, essential for cultural survival and resilience.
Artistic Expression	Provides emotional relief and a medium for expressing shared experiences.	Enhances cultural representation and recognition in broader societal contexts.
Intergenerational Ties	Transfers wisdom and cultural knowledge, ensuring continuity of traditions.	Bridges generational divides and reinforces the sustainability of cultural practices.
Healing Ceremonies	Promotes emotional recovery and resilience at both individual and collective levels.	Creates a foundation for addressing historical and ongoing trauma within communities.

In their staging the traditional customs of each play establish roots which unite communities during challenging times. People in precarious material circumstances discover comfort and power through traditional cultural practices (Kovach, 2010). Through storytelling plays an essential role in historic preservation as well as value transmission and worldview verification. The continuity of cultural traditions establishes a feeling of collective identity which preserves Indigenous heritage by defending cultural identity.



Figure 4: Cycle of Cultural Resilience

A circular chart illustrates the direct sequence between traditional practices which create cultural identity and eventually strengthen resilience within the framework of interdependent relationships.

Many traditional practices operate communally to build resilience because of how their shared characteristics support resilience development. Through communal rituals people strengthen their mutual relationships because resilience requires shared efforts. Through communal practices a community develops spaces that facilitate healing sessions while building solidarity and reflection to show how cultural identity connects deeply with collective well-being.

Conclusion

A detailed examination of *The Indolent Boys* and *Children of the Sun* confirms that traditional cultural practices enable people to handle material difficulties faced by the characters. Momaday's narrative framework reveals how culture changes societal power dynamics which protect individual identities and create lasting resistance. Engaging with traditional practices helps Indigenous groups fight back against societal challenges because it allows them to restore their power yet brings their people together while maintaining their cultural heritage.

This study demonstrates why cultural empowerment practices need both recognition and support from non-Indigenous communities. Once we understand Native practices and their strengthening effects we can make meaningful contributions to cultural survival as well as social justice. Through his literary works Momaday reminds readers about the vibrant resilience of Native traditions while showing how sustaining cultural traditions helps Native peoples to overcome difficult times.

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