

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Cathleen Osborne-Gowey for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology
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Title: "No One Cared we was just Indian Women": Plants as a Catalyst to Eastern
Shawnee Women's Identity Change

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Being an Eastern Shawnee Tribal member I understand the importance of documenting oral histories of Tribal elders to ensure that our cultural history is passed on to future generations. Therefore, the focus of this project is the collection of oral histories and folklore in order to document traditional knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge surrounding Eastern Shawnee women's gathering practices. It also examines the influence of boarding schools and relocation on the transmission of knowledge surrounding food and folk remedies, identity, plant and animal usage, and the significance or meaning that lies behind the use of certain foods and folk remedies.

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"No One Cared we was just Indian Women": Plants as a Catalyst to Eastern Shawnee
Women's Identity Change

by
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“No one cared we was just Indian women”: Plants as a Catalyst to Eastern
Shawnee Women’s Identity Change

Introduction

It is a cold spring day and the sun is peeking through the bare trees. I am standing in a place that has been considered sacred to the Eastern Shawnee for over a hundred years. My mother is fidgeting next to me while talking with my informant and for the first time she really looks interested in the conversation. I think she feels the significance of this moment and where we are. This is my mother’s first time to Oklahoma, the place where her father was born and her grandmother was buried. My informant begins to tell my mother which families camped at this dance area. Before she can stop herself, my mother proudly and publicly tells the informant that our family camped here too, that she is a Bluejacket. Shocked, I think to myself, this is the first time my mother has publicly and happily announced that she’s Eastern Shawnee and of the Bluejacket Turtle clan. My informant turns and looks right in my mother’s eyes, embraces her, and says “welcome home”.

I always knew something was different about my mother and her family; they had dark skin, brown hair, dark eyes, and called themselves Eastern Shawnee. When I was seven I asked my grandfather why we looked different, why he was so dark, and what was Eastern Shawnee? He gave me a book on Indians in the Americas; I just remember that it had pictures of Aztecs who did not look a thing like us except that we were all called “Indians”. It was not until grade school that I learned being different was not a good thing. It made other kids make fun of you, throw rocks at you, and make you want

to be anyone other than who you really are. Being light skinned, as Michael Omi discusses, I had the privilege of choosing between my oppressions (Omi 1999:5). I could choose not to be Indian, not to talk about who I was and stave off public ridicule. But in doing so I felt something Omi leaves out in his discussion of multi-ethnicities... shame. I felt ashamed that I was able to hide who I was. I do not want to be ashamed of the fact that I am Eastern Shawnee and Irish. I want to understand my roots. I want to help future Eastern Shawnee women understand their history and how it creates their identity. I want to be able to take my mother "home".

A goal for this project was to talk to Eastern Shawnee women regarding their experiences with boarding schools and assimilation. I used plants as a way to do that for two main reasons. First, I used plants as a way to discuss what I saw as a potentially disturbing topic in a non-threatening manner. Based on my previous research in 2002, I found that conversations regarding assimilation and boarding school experiences were mixed with subjects about physical and mental abuse, poverty, death and plants. My informants gave me the idea that, for them, they felt no one cared because they were Indian woman; their tears told me that these were difficult subject to talk about. However, no matter how painful the subjects were my informants always brought their conversations back to plant knowledge, making me believe that this subject was a comfortable, peaceful subject to come back to. By using plants I hoped to discuss issues of assimilation, relocation, boarding schools, and identity¹ in a way that allowed my informants the freedom to discuss what they felt was relevant in a comfortable way.

¹ When using the term "identity" in this thesis, I am referring to Eastern Shawnee women's tribal identity and their status within in the tribe. This identity, historically, is partly based out of Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge for food and folk remedies. Contemporarily, it is based on their life experiences

Secondly, I used plants to discuss the changes in Eastern Shawnee women identity and tribal status. Plant knowledge gave Eastern Shawnee women respect and power. As their plant knowledge decreased due to assimilation and relocation their respected tribal status weakened. I believe, by reclaiming plant knowledge we can symbolically reclaim the material action that once gave us a respected and valued place in our tribal community. In Shawnee society, Shawnee women's roles centered on planting, harvesting, gathering, and using plants. They used these plants to nourish themselves, their families, and their tribal community. This knowledge is both symbolically and materially meaningful to Eastern Shawnee women. My thesis documents a decrease in their status due to loss of knowledge. I believe that this material action of picking plants will help us gain tools to reconnect with each other, pass on traditional knowledge, and come together to nourish ourselves, our families, and our community.

In my research I had three main questions, first, was Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge dependent upon location? Second, what have the changes in Eastern Shawnee culture meant to Eastern Shawnee women in the creation of their tribal identity and status? Third, how have historical factors and cultural changes, specifically the loss of plant knowledge, affected Eastern Shawnee women's identity and tribal status?

I compared the plants discussed by interviewees in the Pacific Northwest to those discussed in Oklahoma. I documented if the transmission of traditional knowledge regarding women's gathering practices and plant usage has been altered due to relocation and assimilation. My hope was to find out whether Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge was dependent upon location and experience with assimilation; I also wanted

and the meaning they place on race, class, and gender. For further definition please refer to the chapter titled literature review constructing identity.

to know whether the knowledge Eastern Shawnee women had regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies would increase or decrease depending on their connection to tribal allotted lands. For example, would Eastern Shawnee women who had never lived on or been connected to the allotted lands in Oklahoma discuss the same type or amount of plants as Eastern Shawnee women who either were born on or who have always lived on allotted lands in Oklahoma?

In order to take my mother home again and to help the women of the Eastern Shawnee tribe reclaim a positive, healthy, and respected self image and tribal identity, I realized that cultural revitalization² must become a goal. To revitalize or renew our culture we can use the ideas proposed by Kim Anderson, to resist who we are not, to reclaim our traditions and where we have come from, to construct a new positive identity based on our contemporary selves and cultural knowledge, and to act on this identity in a way that is helpful to our tribal community as a whole. Creating Eastern Shawnee women's groups, culture camps, and interactive learning materials will allow differing generations to come together and translate Anderson's tools for change into a contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's positive identity. This cultural revitalization will only strengthen our tribal community and ourselves and begin to reverse the effects of the virus of assimilation.

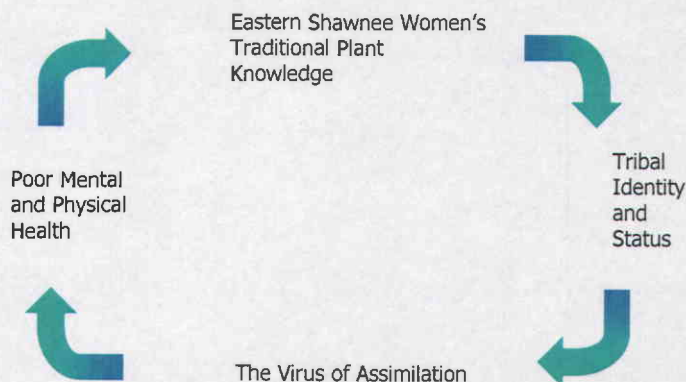
Assimilation³ has spread like a virus infecting the status of Eastern Shawnee women, and specifically their knowledge of plants, which was the building block to their

² When using the term cultural revitalization I am referring to a reclaiming of Eastern Shawnee culture and cultural practices.

³ When using the term assimilation I am referring to the Eastern Shawnee experience with forced relocation from Ohio into Oklahoma, the allotment process, federal Indian boarding schools, and western notions of gender, economy, and religion.

historically respected and valued place in Shawnee society. In the diagram shown below, traditional plant knowledge once created a respected and valued tribal identity and status for Eastern Shawnee women. Once assimilation, the push toward individualism and away from communal living and the influence of western⁴ notions of gender infected the Eastern Shawnee tribal community, women's mental and physical health began to decline. A decline in their physical health being their ability to collect plants for foods and folk remedies and mental being their ability to work together to pass on cultural knowledge, build positive self esteem, and work together to for community survival. As their mental and physical health began to decline Eastern Shawnee women's access and drive to learn and pass on traditional plant knowledge declined.

The Life Cycle of Plant Knowledge and Change



We can reset the life cycle of plant knowledge and change. We can resist assimilation and the push of individualism, reclaim the plant knowledge we have left and use it to recreate a positive and respected contemporary tribal identity and status which will restore a positive mental and physical health. By restoring our mental and physical

⁴ Western society, in terms of this research, refers to the dominant American culture from the 19th century to the present.

health we can enrich our desire and access to pass on traditional plant knowledge for future generations.

Project Background

In the summer of 2002⁵ I began working on a study which I titled the Eastern Shawnee Oral History Research Project. This project was a case study of my family who are from the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. The research documented whether traditional knowledge still exists in the family, how it was transmitted, and what effects relocation to the Pacific Northwest had on the process. I started this research not knowing what I would find or what I would uncover. I was young, ambitious, and thought I knew everything about my mother's family. I interviewed all my great aunts on my mother's side, most of whom I had only met once as a child. They began relaying stories of my great grandmother Louisa Bluejacket, my great-great aunt Susie Bluejacket Daugherty, of their own lives, and the lives of their children. As discussed by Julie Cruikshank, ethnographic interviews often take a path of their own (Cruikshank 1991). I had come to these interviews looking for information on traditional Eastern Shawnee knowledge regarding plant usage, ceremonies, and rituals. What I received were stories of Eastern Shawnee women's experiences with Federal Indian boarding schools, forced migration, relocation, forced marriage, basic survival, and dramatic cultural change and loss. One phrase my aunties used in response to why hard times fell so easily on them was, "no one cared...we was just Indian women." This sparked my interest. It was here I decided to focus my work on Eastern Shawnee women. Later, by examining information gathered

⁵ In the summer of 2002 I began a research project with the McNair Scholars program at Oregon State University.

from my previous research in 2002, I found a correlation between the amount of knowledge Eastern Shawnee women possess, regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies, and how they identified themselves in the tribe. This then led to my thesis research, *"No One Cared We Was Just Indian Women": Plants as a Catalyst to Eastern Shawnee Women's Identity Change*, which examines Eastern Shawnee women's changing tribal identity and status by using plants as a non-threatening catalyst for discussion. In this research, unlike my previous research in 2002 where I interviewed only family members, I interviewed Eastern Shawnee community members both in and out of my family.

This research is significant to applied anthropology and to the Eastern Shawnee tribe of Oklahoma because it studies a culture not greatly documented by academia. This research gives tangible, applicable ideas for rebuilding women's identity and strengthening the tribe as a whole. Studying applied anthropology and ethnic studies I have gained the tools of education and the art of collecting and preserving oral histories. Most importantly, I have learned the tools of resistance, reclaiming, constructing, and acting: resisting assimilation and the push of individualism, reclaiming traditional knowledge, constructing a new identity and status, and then acting towards a more positive mental and physical health. These tools will help Eastern Shawnee women re-define their identity by revitalizing the traditional plant knowledge left in the community, bringing the generations together to pass on traditional plant knowledge, and allowing contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's issues to re-define women's tribal identity and status in a valued and respected way.

In this thesis I frequently use the term “traditional knowledge”. When using the term “traditional knowledge”, I am referring to Eastern Shawnee cultural knowledge of plants, gender roles, and social structure, prior to the influence of Federal Indian Boarding schools, Christianity, and relocation to the Pacific Northwest. This thesis also examines the lives of the Bluejacket family of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, the descendents of Walter Bluejacket and his daughter Rosa Bluejacket Daugherty.

As my interviews progressed I realized that I was not simply recording information about Eastern Shawnee women’s plant knowledge but rather life stories. As Jeff Titon discusses, life stories can often be defined as “an expression of personality and self conception-the who and why rather than just the what and how...of life” (Titon 1980:290). Believing that the information given in a life story is based both in fiction and fact, in my research, I use the terms life stories, life histories, and oral histories interchangeably in my research. I asked questions regarding traditional Eastern Shawnee plant knowledge and was given life stories, life histories, and oral histories from my informants, information given in a style they felt most relevant⁶.

Theoretical Framework

By understanding the Eastern Shawnee history of migration, assimilation with the emphasis on individualism and colonization, we can see the changes that have affected the role of women in Eastern Shawnee society in terms of food and folk remedies. I follow Franz Boas and historical particularism, which promotes the idea that societies are created out of their historical circumstance and that to study a culture, or individuals in a

⁶ I discuss the distinction between life story, life history, and oral histories in the methods chapter under approach used.

culture, is to study the history that is unique to them (Boas, 1920). Historical particularism promotes the necessity of understanding individual unique histories in order to understand a group's culture and/or the identity and status of individuals in a culture. When examining Eastern Shawnee women's changing tribal identity and status, it is necessary to understand the unique history of the Eastern Shawnee and how this unique history has shaped Eastern Shawnee women's tribal identity and/or status. The historical circumstances that have changed Eastern Shawnee culture are similar to those endured by other Native American Tribes. What is unique in this study is that I examine these events in terms of how they changed Native women's identity among the Eastern Shawnee.

The Eastern Shawnee are distinctive in their experience with assimilation and its push toward individualism, relocation, and forced migration. Few other tribal communities had a similar experience with rapid change and continued attempts at re-unification as did the Eastern Shawnee. From the mid-eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century, the group that would become the Eastern Shawnee tribe was in a continual state of forced migration west. Though the tribe continually tried to re-unify and re-create their communal society, the constant migration unraveled, separated, and destroyed Shawnee culture.

Federal Indian policy also greatly altered Eastern Shawnee women's identity and status just as it did with other Native American communities in the United States. Forced migration and colonization, which occurred throughout the creation of the United States, vastly changed the way the Eastern Shawnee used plants for food and folk remedies. With this change also came a change in meaning behind certain foods and folk remedies for the Eastern Shawnee (Howard 1981; Swanton 1979). For example, prior to

assimilation and migration, the use of corn was not only a food source but a symbol of hope and tribal continuation. Ceremonies were dedicated to the planting and harvesting of corn; now, corn is no longer a large source of diet or ceremonial celebration but rather a symbol of Shawnee tradition prior to assimilation. As new ideas were embraced and old ideas left behind, Eastern Shawnee views of the world around them changed.

In order to understand these changes in meaning, I look to symbolic anthropology and ideas posed by Clifford Geertz who argued that how individuals think and the meaning they attach to events and objects creates their world view (McGee and Warms 2004: 555-575; Geertz 1973). Geertz destabilized the idea that culture was an imagined idea that lives only in the heads of individuals in a culture, and asserted instead that it can be observed as a tangible action in society (McGee and Warms 2004).

Applying symbolic anthropology and the work of Clifford Geertz to my research helps to explain the change in the reverence given to women in the Eastern Shawnee tribe. Eastern Shawnee women's identity centered on the tangible knowledge they possessed regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies. By having this key knowledge they were revered and given the responsibility of peace and war chief, counselors over other male chiefs, and healers. Ceremonies such as the Spring Bread Dance focused on the contributions women made to the survival of the community. Forced migration and assimilation separated Eastern Shawnee women from each other and affected their ability to pass on this knowledge. Plant knowledge was no longer seen as valuable for survival and neither were the women who were bearers of that knowledge. Eastern Shawnee women no longer had a connection to the elements that created their positive, healthy, respected place in the Eastern Shawnee tribe. Without this connection,

their tribal identity and status changed from one of power⁷, respect, and reverence to one of dependence. Eastern Shawnee women no longer hold respected positions as chief or healers and ceremonies that honored women are seen as less important than tribal economic security.

Feminist theory specifically examines the power struggles in colonialism, gender roles, identity, race and class with the goal of resolving inequalities faced by marginalized groups. Feminism and socialist feminists such as Heidi Hartman and June Jordan point out the partnership between patriarchy and capitalism (Hartman 1981: 207) in which the superiority of men, their interdependence with each other and the subordination of women are integral to the functioning of our American society (Hartman 1981:215). In their work, Hartman and Jordan discuss that in order for a capitalist society to function women must be kept in a subservient role. This subservient role allows men to control our cash economy and society while still having families. In a communal society, such as the Eastern Shawnee, men and women were dependent upon each other for survival; each role was valued and respected and women still held positions in the governmental and judicial tribal systems (Howard 1981: 43). As the Eastern Shawnee were forced to assimilate into western society, Eastern Shawnee men were expected to take over responsibilities of survival that had belonged to both genders in the tribe. Eastern Shawnee women's contributions were no longer valued. Eastern Shawnee men were now raising crops, harvesting, and controlling tribal government.

⁷ When using the term power, I am referring to level of respect and value Eastern Shawnee women have in their tribal community. As the Eastern Shawnee community lost respect and value in the larger American society Eastern Shawnee women also lost respect and value in their tribal community. For further definition please see the literature review section of this thesis.

Once the assimilated views of a cash economy emerged in Eastern Shawnee culture and replaced the communal nature of Eastern Shawnee economic structure, the need and/or importance of women's roles changed (Howard 1981: 103-104).

Feminist theory also deconstructs female identity, pointing out that race, class, and gender are interwoven elements that women choose to give meaning to in the creation of their identity (Jordan 1985). With assimilation and the emphasis placed on individualism a new level of importance has formed around oppression in the creation of Eastern Shawnee women's contemporary tribal identity. Race, class, and gender now have great meaning in the lives of Eastern Shawnee women; they have become quintessential elements making up their identity.

As suggested by postmodernist theory, difference⁸ must be explored in the creation of identity (Scott 1989). Eastern Shawnee women's "difference" is key to their contemporary tribal identity. In order for Eastern Shawnee women to embrace their individuality and realize their own self worth, they must see and understand that they do not have to assimilate into white women in order to have a valued and respected identity in their tribal community. Postmodernist theory brings out the realization that, as Eastern Shawnee women embrace and create a positive identity for themselves, they can move forward in decolonizing the contemporary westernized gender roles in the tribe.

Agreeing with Linda Green, the object of anthropological fieldwork should not be the inspection of the "other" or to give voice to a voiceless group but rather to illustrate life experiences as you have witnessed them or have been told about them by your informants (Green 1999). I do not see Eastern Shawnee women as voiceless or as the

⁸ When discussing difference I am referring to the differences between genders and the cultural differences between minority women and western society.

“other”. My work is about illustrating the life stories of Eastern Shawnee women. However, in my work I must also question my own objectivity. I must realize that I am not simply illustrating life experiences; who I am as a member of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe and as a student of anthropology and women’s studies influences my illustration of these life stories. Postmodernists believe we must question our own objectivity and realize that no one can ever be truly objective. Who and what we are always influences our research. It is important that at no time should the interviewer be taken out of the interview; we must recognize our bias and our privilege. I must realize my own lack of objectivity while striving to distinguish between my thoughts and interpretations and my interviewees’ lived experience.

Chapter Outline

The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma has been underrepresented in academic articles. Little to no research has been done surrounding their culture and community. The study of women and their roles in the tribe has been non-existent. In chapter one, I review the literature on Native women’s identity, assimilation through education, allotment and relocation, and tribal gender roles. In chapter two, I give a historical background to the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, focusing on the allotment process and forced migration of the tribe. I discuss the past importance of women’s roles surrounding the use of plants for food and folk remedies and the contemporary role of Eastern Shawnee women in North Eastern Oklahoma. In chapter three, I explain the methods used to conduct my research; which include participant observation, interview process and style, and limitations. In chapter four, I discuss the results of my fieldwork;

changes in Eastern Shawnee women's identity, and the transmission of knowledge regarding women's use of plants for food and folk remedies. I also talk about finding a correlation between the decline in the transmission of knowledge, with specific reference to the importance of Eastern Shawnee women's use of plants for food and folk remedies, and the downward turn in the importance placed on women's roles and identity in the Eastern Shawnee Tribe. Finally, I examine the future of Eastern Shawnee women's identity and my recommendations for cultural revitalization which will aid in the creation of a valued and respected contemporary identity for Eastern Shawnee women.

Chapter 1

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Identity, Status, and the Virus of Assimilation

- 1.1 Constructing Identity
- 1.2 Native Women's Tribal Identity and Status
- 1.3 The Virus of Assimilation
- 1.4 Allotment and Relocation
- 1.5 Conclusion

To survive culturally, American Indian women must often fight the United States government, the tribal governments, women and men of their tribe or their urban community who are virulently misogynist or who are threatened by attempts to change the images foisted on us over the centuries by whites. The colonizers' revisions of our lives, values, and histories have devastated us at the most critical level of all—that of our minds, our own sense of who we are (Allen 1992:193).

In this chapter, I will discuss the basic construction of identity. I will discuss the changes to identity and status Eastern Shawnee women have faced through assimilation, education, allotment, and relocation. I will examine how Eastern Shawnee women have defined their own identity or tribal status and how it has been defined for them in the past. I will explore the process of assimilation through education, allotment, and relocation; how these issues have been examined in the past, and how they have changed Eastern Shawnee women's tribal identity and status.

Constructing Identity

Identity is created out of our interactions with society and how society views us. It is derived from a hierarchical social system and is self defined and defined for us. As discussed by Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, there are many levels to identity. In

my research, when looking at identity, I am referring to Eastern Shawnee tribal identity as a whole and the identity of women in the tribe. Ben-Amos and Weissberg suggest that our levels of identity are “constructed within a larger historical setting and driven by the memory of past events” (Ben-Amos & Weissberg 1999:10). Whether is be for an entire tribal community or the individuals in it, who we are and the elements of our identity are created out of our collective history. Ben-Amos and Weissberg contend that there are two levels of identity, the collective and the individual. Identity is created out of “the relationship between individual and collective, between past and present...the construction of individual as well as collective ‘identity’ (Ben-Amos & Weissberg 1999: 18). They also suggest that both are dependent upon memory.

Memory is subjective; as we create our individual identity we choose the memories to build from. Cultural memory⁹ has no choice; its memory is not subjective. Culture is subjected to its memory and forced to recall it in the creation of its identity. For example, Eastern Shawnee identity has no choice in remembering its place in history and its position with assimilation. Eastern Shawnee identity has been subjected to these elements, however, as individuals in the tribe process this larger identity they can choose to leave out those elements of assimilation and history in the creation of their own individual identity.

According to Ben-Amos and Weissberg, in processing our larger cultural memory and personal memory two different identities are created. Collective identity, such as the identity of an entire tribe, is dependent upon the cultural memory. Individual identity, such as specific women in a tribe, is dependent upon personal memory. For example,

⁹ According to Ben-Amos and Weissberg, cultural memory are the events that influence the collective culture group as a whole (Ben-Amos & Weissberg 1999: 18).

when creating identity Eastern Shawnee women must simultaneously deal with their place in the larger cultural memory and their personal memory. In processing their cultural memory they are a part of the larger Eastern Shawnee identity, while processing their own personal memory they create their individual identity.

It is important to discuss ethnicity in the creation of identity. Building on the work of Ben-Amos and Weissberg, Richard Alba contends that identity is not just formed by our interactions in society, our individual and collective memory, but how we respond to social expectations placed upon us. "The social world is comprised of social categories and membership groups, in terms of which the individual must define him or herself and be defined by others (Alba 1990: 23). Alba addresses the idea that identity is created in two ways; first it is the identity we choose consciously or subconsciously based on our surroundings and place in time and history. Second, identity is created out of ethnic societal labels, labels based on a hierarchical standing in our society. As an example, contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's identity is, in part, created out of society's expectations of these women as poor minority women. However, their identity is also created out of the validity they give to society's expectations of them as minority women. "Representing an individuals personal identification...given his or her location in time, history, and space...identity is formed through internalization of the models of self" (Alba 1990: 21-22). Bringing the ideas together, identity is both individual and collective. Who we are and how we define ourselves is based on our memory, our place in history and time, and what elements of our experience we choose consciously and subconsciously to accept. Identity is also created out of the place in society we have been given by the world around us, specifically where society has placed us in the larger

hierarchical system of ethnicity. Identity is a constant negotiation between what society thinks of you and your group, what your group thinks of you, and how you think about yourself within your particular group and society at large.

The work of Perdue and Mihesuah adds to the larger theories of identity expressed by Ben-Amos, Weissberg, and Alba by illustrating that identity is comprised of many layers and/or levels, is based on our life experiences in specific place and time, and is interwoven with our collective and individual memory. They point out that among Native women, “even within a single tribe...females possess a range of degrees of Native blood, of skin and hair color, and of opinions about what it means to be Native” (Mihesuah 2003: XV). Both Perdue and Mihesuah work to deconstruct previous notions of Native identity and gender and bring to light the many levels of Native women’s identity.

Devon Mihesuah and Theda Perdue, in their work with contemporary Native women, define Native women’s identity as being enmeshed in both individual and collective identity. Mihesuah states, “Some of the greatest stressors that Indigenous women face have to do with their appearances and with not knowing their tribe’s history and culture and, therefore, their identities as Natives. (Mihesuah 2003: 81). Native women’s identity is created out of their own personal memory and their collective memory. It is created out of how they deal with their personal life experiences of being a minority and the meaning they give to the larger tribal history in their identity.

Native Women’s Tribal Identity and Status

Mihesuah states that there is no one definition of identity or gender status that categorizes all Native women. There is no one voice that can be made universal to speak for the struggle of Native women; not all Native women have dealt identically with tribal identity and status change. My goal is to not create a universalized notion of Native women's identity or tribal status, but to explore the meaning my informants have given to the changes in Eastern Shawnee women's tribal identity and status. When discussing tribal identity and status in my thesis, I am referring to how the women in my research see themselves in their tribal community and their homes. Do they see themselves as powerful equal members of their tribal community and inside their personal lives? Do they see themselves as dependent and unable to make valid contributions to tribal economic, social, and cultural survival?

There is no clear way to know how Eastern Shawnee women, prior to assimilation, have defined their tribal identity or status. "How much prestige and power [Native] women actually held will never be known. Most observations of Indian women in traditional societies were written by Euro-American men, who judged them by the same standards that they judged women of their own societies" (Mihesuah 2003: 45). Oral histories by Native women have often not been used as a source of information when discussing Native women's issues, such as tribal identity or status. To find out what Eastern Shawnee women, prior to assimilation, might have held as important factors in determining their tribal status or identity I have compiled historical documents and oral histories given to me by key informants¹⁰. Prior to assimilation through boarding schools, allotment, and relocation, Eastern Shawnee women defined female identity

¹⁰ A definition of my key informants can be found in the methods chapter.

based upon gendered activities, clan line membership, and placement or status in Eastern Shawnee society¹¹.

Exploration into the meaning cultures give to specific elements that make up their world view aids in understanding the importance Eastern Shawnee women place on their tribal status and identity and the changes that have affected their position in the tribal community; "The concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political context. Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am." (Tatum 1997: 1). As Alba, Ben-Amos, Weissberg, Mihesuah, and Perdue discuss, identity, specifically Native women's identity, is based on our personal and collective experiences. It is also created out of the meaning Native women give to how our society views us as a whole.

Mihesuah's ideas mirror the larger theories of feminism, that out of religion, patriarchal notions of gender, and a capitalistic economy, Native women have been placed in a role of dependence while men have been elevated to a higher level of status (Mihesuah 2003).

Prior to contact, men and women performed tasks specific to gender...all work was necessary, and the tribe needed the hands of both men and women. The influences of European's social beliefs, however, changed the way Natives interpreted the world, themselves, and gender roles (Mihesuah 2003: 42).

Traditional gender roles were eroded from due to the introduction of patriarchal thought, and those ideologies still affect Native women's positions in their tribes and the respect

¹¹ See chapter two for a definition of Eastern Shawnee women's tribal roles and identity prior to assimilation.

given to them by men (Mihesuah 2003: 42). A similar sentiment can be said for Eastern Shawnee women; suffering from financial insecurity and unable to practice their traditions, Eastern Shawnee women became economically and socially dependent upon men. Referring back to the *Life Cycle of Plant Knowledge and Change* flow chart¹², without the material and symbolic action of using plants knowledge for food and folk remedies, Eastern Shawnee women no longer had access to what had previously been a building block to their tribal and personal identity. Eastern Shawnee women were left vulnerable to assimilation in the creation of a contemporary identity.

The Virus of Assimilation

‘Don’t cry! my little grandson,’ she was saying; ‘don’t cry! These White-chests are kind; they will clothe and feed you. I can no longer take care of you, so I must give you to them...you will have plenty to eat. The White-chests will be good to you; I will come and see you very often... ‘I have brought my little boy to give him to the White-chests to raise and to educate. On account of my age and feebleness, I am no longer able to care for him. I give him to you, and I beg that he be kindly treated. That is all I ask.’ (La Flesche 1993: 118).

For Native communities, assimilation through education has been explored and examined in great detail. Frederick Hoxie discusses the inner workings of assimilation found in the forced education of Indian children in federal and religious Indian boarding schools. Hoxie asserts that while assimilation, through forced education, worked to forever change Native culture, it also created resilience. By surviving the boarding school experiences and keeping a connection to their culture, Native communities did not

¹² Life Cycle of Plant Knowledge and Change flow chart is discussed in the introduction and chapter four of this thesis.

completely succumb to western culture. Instead, they created a new culture built on the foundations of their own Native cultures but with new adaptations of western culture. Peter Iverson takes a similar stance as Hoxie in exploring Native assimilation through education: "The schools thus did not necessarily accomplish at all what Pratt and his colleagues wanted. The boarding schools even proved to be places where students became aware of new Indian institutions" (Iverson 1998: 26). As historical particularism points out the need to understand a culture's unique experiences, Hoxie and Iverson contend that to understand the Native experience with Federal Indian boarding schools, we have to look past universalized notions. We have to look past the universalized notion that all Native communities were forever disconnected from their tribal communities and look at the unique experiences of individual Native people. Assimilation attempted to restructure Native culture into a mirror of dominant white culture. For many it was not as successful as hoped, as Hoxie and Iverson point out. It created resilience and defiance to dominant white culture. Yet, for the Eastern Shawnee, it created a great cultural divide.

Echoing ideas of feminist theory, Miller and Chuchryk bring about the idea that race, class and gender are given great meaning for contemporary women. They discuss in their exploration of the changes in Canadian Indian women's identity, Indian boarding schools (assimilation) not only changed Indian identity but created a new identity based on inferiority and low self worth.

It is important to note that tribal identity among tribal peoples has been effectively negated by the oppression of Indian people in the process of colonization....a feeling of self hate is perpetuated among the oppressed people...the oppressed people actually try to emulate their oppressors in an attempt to gain equality and this emulation of the oppressor's culture

comes about through the process of assimilation. In Canada, assimilation of Indians has been imposed through the education system, which has promised us upward mobility in the context of Canadian culture. However, in reality, the education of Native children has instead been a systematic assault on Indian culture, and the result has been the continued failure of Native children. Thus, the system only reinforces feelings of inferiority (Miller and Chuchryk 1996: 127-128).

Along the lines of symbolic theory, Miller and Chuchryk also contend that culture is created out of our tangible actions. They point out that while attending Indian boarding schools, young Indian women were forced to push away from the physical actions that once created their culture and their minds were plagued with assimilated western ideas of gender. They were taught that the cultural life they lived previously was “associated with dirt, disease, and death” (Kelm 1998:61). They were also taught that the elder women who had trained them on their gender roles in their community, their place of power and respect, were responsible for the disease, poverty, and high infant mortality plaguing many Indian communities (Kelm 1998: 61). Assimilation found in Indian boarding schools disconnected Native women physically and mentally from their community. Elder women were no longer able to pass on the traditional knowledge that created a positive tribal identity and status. Young Native women were left to create a new identity based on western assimilated views of women’s roles, with men being elevated to a higher status and women being demoted to an inferior role. As Alba discusses in his definition of identity, identity is often created out of our personal experiences and out of the roles society places on us, such as patriarchic gender roles.

The goal of integrating native communities into dominant culture through education dramatically altered the societal structure of the Eastern Shawnee tribe, thus

altering tribal women's perspective on their level of respect and value. "Traditional gender roles eroded from the impact of patriarchal thought, and those ideologies still affect Native women's position in their tribes and the respect given to them by men" (Mihesuah 2003: 42).

Eastern Shawnee culture, at the turn of the 20th century, was just starting to regain stability; they were reconnecting with traditional Shawnee culture. However, once the infection of assimilation took hold in the Eastern Shawnee tribe, a devastating divide in traditional knowledge was created between Rosa Bluejacket's generation and my auntie's generation¹³. The knowledge of the use of plants for food and folk remedies and the role of women in the tribe was no longer passed down to future generations.

In forcing Eastern Shawnee children to attend Indian boarding schools new generations of Eastern women were created. Women were left feeling emotionally and physically scared, they had been kept from the elements that created positive mental health built on an identity of value and respect and replaced it with feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and low self worth.

Native assimilation through education is but one factor in the changes that have affected Native women's identity or status in tribal communities. Also, of great importance to this research is how the process of allotment and the relocation of Native communities off tribal lands has impacted the creation of Eastern Shawnee women's tribal identity and status.

¹³ The time period referred to as "between Rosa Bluejacket's generation and my auntie's generation" is the middle to end of the nineteenth century into the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Allotment and Relocation from Ohio to Oklahoma and Later to the Pacific

Northwest

Gary Paul Nabhan explores the link between culture and plants: “the only factors that have stood between some old-fashioned beans and their extinction are the kindness of curiosity found among exceptional individuals, or encoded in the values of entire cultural communities” (Nabhan 1989: xxvi). Nabhan asserts that plants, and their usage, depend heavily upon cultural values of a community, a community tied to a specific place. When discussing the allotment process and relocation, I am referring to the course of disconnecting the Eastern Shawnee community from their sense of place which hindered their ability to retain the plant knowledge necessary for the creation of a positive tribal identity and status for women. Allotment disconnected the Eastern Shawnee from the greater tribal community. This disconnection aided the spread of assimilation which helped foster continual relocation off tribal lands. Being separated from each other, it became easier to convince tribal members that they no longer needed their cultural ties in order to survive. What was needed was to become individual land owning farmers, and to move away from communal living; individualism meant survival.

In 1887 the General Allotment Act, or the Dawes Act, carved up affected reservations into individual allotted parcels of land. The plan was to get rid of the communal reservation living style and push Indian communities into dominant society by making them individual farmers (Howard 1981: 34). Valls states that “in political theory, individualism holds that individual interests and the consent of individuals should be the basis of a legitimate political order” (Valls 2005: 2). The framework of individualism that Native communities were being fit into is similar to what Valls discusses; individual

interests were the basis for societal order. Native communities were to recreate their societal framework to be based on individual not community interests, as represented by the forced change to individual land ownership. Inside this disconnection of place Hoxie and Howard have explored the idea that, by allotting Native reservations, Native communities were too scattered to effectively reattach cultural community ties and pass on necessary information for the creation of tribal identity (Howard 1981 and Hoxie 2001). By physically removing tribal communities from their lands and spreading them over larger spaces, tribal communities were no longer able to stay connected, to create a united front against the spread of assimilation. When tribal communities were not allotted or forced to relocate off of tribal lands, cultural connections were easier to maintain, and assimilation was easier to combat. As Perdue discusses, the Cherokee tribe was better able to combat assimilation and retain cultural cohesion, enforce tribal gender roles, and maintain women and men's tribal identity or status because they were put on a communal reservation and not allotted (Perdue 1998). Referring to Postmodernist theory, Perdue points out that for Cherokee women their difference is an important element to their respected and valued identity; their difference is their power. For the Eastern Shawnee tribe, the allotting of the reservation and the eventual relocation of community members to the Pacific Northwest, fed the virus of assimilation.

Disconnected from the larger tribal body and from each other, it became harder and harder to maintain elements of Eastern Shawnee culture, specifically traditional plant knowledge for food and folk remedies. This knowledge aided in Eastern Shawnee women's creation of a positive, respected, and valued tribal identity and status. Hoxie and Howard both explore the allotment of reservation lands as adding to the creation of

poverty and widespread uncontrollable disease among tribal communities. The disconnection in cultural knowledge, by allotment, relocation, and the importance placed on individualism over community, led to a decline in Eastern Shawnee women's overall physical and mental health. Eastern Shawnee women's self worth and physical ability to heal themselves and each other was eroded by their inability to pass on Eastern Shawnee traditional plant knowledge for food and folk remedies.

Conclusion

To the Indian kid the white boarding school comes as a terrific shock. He [or she] is taken from [their] warm womb to a strange, cold place. It is like being pushed out of a cozy kitchen into a howling blizzard. The schools are better now than they were in my time...the teachers understand the kids a little better, use more psychology and less stick...but in these fine new buildings Indian children still commit suicide, because they are lonely among all that noise and activity (Lame Deer 1993: 146).

Assimilation through education, relocation, and the allotment process has greatly affected Native communities in the United States. As Hoxie and Howard have expressed, they have opened and paved the way for western assimilation to work as a virus and spread through Native communities, taking with it traditional culture and leaving behind individuals expected to live not as equals but on the fringes of dominant society. Though not completely successful, scholars such as Devon Mehesuah and Theda Perdue have pointed out that some tribal communities have managed to avoid total assimilation and have maintained close cultural cohesion. However, for some, the pain and scars are all too real and debilitating.

To understand the struggle Eastern Shawnee women have faced, with their changing identity and tribal status, an exploration of what elements created these changes must occur. As assimilation through education forced western views of gender and culture Eastern Shawnee women no longer were able to gain the traditional knowledge, regarding plants and women's roles in the tribe, which would help them create a positive, respected, and valued place in Eastern Shawnee society. With assimilation also came the restructuring of tribal economies leading into a push to move Native communities away from communal living and into individual land owning farmers. Once the Eastern Shawnee were no longer on reservations and community members were pushed apart on individual land parcels, the passing on of plant knowledge became more and more difficult for women. Access to harvesting and gathering became more and more difficult as community members were separated from the locations of plants. A new way of thinking was created; out of the individualized ownership of property and the assimilated western ideas of community and culture, enforced in the Indian boarding schools, a move was made away from the idea of communal and subsistence living to individualism. Eastern Shawnee community members started thinking of survival as an individual not a community need. Survival changed from learning to gather plants and wild game, for the continuation of the tribe as a whole, to finding individual paying jobs off tribal lands to ensure individual survival.

Examining the Eastern Shawnee experience with assimilation and the creation of Native women's identity enriches and validates historical particularism, symbolism, feminism, and postmodernism.

By exploring Native women's identity we add a new layer to feminist theory. It demonstrates that when discussing the work to uplift American women's identity, we must incorporate the life experiences of all American women, not just white middle class women. Looking at Native women's identity also reveals that there is not one stamped out definition of Native women's identity.

Contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's identity is a compilation of many things. It has been created out of their collective and individual memory, the meaning they have placed on their societal placement on the hierarchical ethnicity scale, and the tribe's history and contemporary experiences with assimilation.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND:

The History of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma from 1800 to Present

2.1 Life Prior to Oklahoma

2.2 The Importance of Plants and the Role of Eastern Shawnee Women

2.3 Forced Migration, Allotment, and Federal Indian Boarding Schools

2.4 Contemporary Life in North Eastern Oklahoma

In this chapter, I will give a brief background of the events that led the Shawnee into becoming three, separate, federally recognized tribes. I will discuss how the Eastern Shawnee ended up in Oklahoma, the process of allotment and migration, and the importance of women's traditional knowledge regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies.

Brief History of Shawnee Life Prior to Living in Oklahoma

This brief history is based upon existing literature on the Eastern Shawnee tribe and oral history interviews. As James Howard points out, traditional history of the Shawnee has often been left up to non-Indian historians and not the individuals who lived the experiences (Howard 1981). Because traditional Shawnee history was passed down orally, the written accounts available are from non-Indians whose work is subject to interpretation and assumption. With this in mind, I have used a combination of written records and oral histories gathered from my own research and the research of others.

History can be flat, even when it is about your own community, your roots. My goal is to give a three dimensional glimpse into the history of the Shawnee, the creation

of the Eastern Shawnee and the process of relocation, Federal Indian Boarding schools, and assimilation. By using oral narratives about the lives of my family and community members, I hope to create a bridge that reaches across the pages of the text and gives a face to the history of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.

Prior to migration the Shawnee were known as an Eastern Woodlands Tribe, living primarily in what is now Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Tennessee (Howard 1981). Organized into smaller bands, the Shawnee had a more nomadic and highly mobile social structure (Gilbert 1989). During the spring and summer the small bands joined together allowing for easier planting, harvesting, gathering, and hunting. Women's activities were centered around the spring and summer planting, harvesting, gathering, storing of plants and vegetables, and meat processing. Corn, beans, squash, and melons were the primary plants grown and harvested. Women gathered local berries, greens, and roots; generally grapes, sumac, wild onions, milkweed, and tubers of the Jerusalem artichoke. Men's activities centered on hunting and harvesting in the fall and winter months; Elk, deer, bear, buffalo, turkey, raccoon, squirrel, and other small game were hunted, processed, and used by the Shawnee tribe (Howard 1981).

Traditional Shawnee communities were divided into five major groups; the Chalaakaatha, Mekoche, Thawikila, Pekowi, and the Kishpoko (also called the Pekowi, Oawikila, Kispoko, Calaka, and Mekoce). The five groups were then broken down into twelve clans; the rabbit, raccoon, panther, turtle, wolf, deer, turkey, snake, bear, wildcat, eagle, and the owl. With the move to Oklahoma the rabbit, panther, eagle, owl, and wildcat were changed to the great lynx, elk, buffalo, horse, and hawk) (Howard 1981,

Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d.). Why the names of the five major groups and the twelve clans changed with the migration from Ohio to Oklahoma is unknown. Perhaps, it is due to the influence of the Cherokee, Seneca, and other tribes the Shawnee lived and migrated with in their trip west to Oklahoma. As discussed in many oral histories, it is thought that the origin of the five major groups came from patrilineal clan names, however, there are no written records to confirm this. The twelve clan names, as well as hunting and fishing grounds, were passed down along patrilineal lines. Along with following patrilineal clan lines, newborn children were given personal names referring to their father's clan line (Sturtevant 1978).

Prior to assimilation, the Shawnee religion centered around the deity of the "Great Spirit" who is believed to have created the Shawnee as the first humans. After saving them from the great flood, the Great Spirit is said to have chosen the Shawnee to be the leaders of all humankind. Variations exist in the Shawnee creation story, but as I was told by my community, the Great Spirit sent a swan down to save the Shawnee from the great flood. They crawled on her back until grandmother moon sent down a crayfish to bury itself in the earth and force the water level to recede (Interview with Octavia, 2005). Some in the tribe believe that it was not a swan but a turtle that the first humans crawled onto and the turtle became the earth (Howard 1981).

What information I know about the Shawnee prior to assimilation and forced migration comes only from history books. Unfortunately, my family has no stories of Shawnee life prior to the move from Ohio to Oklahoma, what roles men and women had, where they lived or how they lived, and why they chose to break down their society along clan lines. As I discuss the historical background of the creation of the Eastern Shawnee

tribe of Oklahoma, I will combine the information from researched text with life history narratives. I will explore what it meant to be a Bluejacket during this time of assimilation and change and what being a Bluejacket means today.

The Importance of Plants and the Role of Eastern Shawnee Women

Gender roles in the Shawnee tribe were centered around activity and responsibility for survival. Women's roles focused on the planting, gathering, harvesting, and storing of plants for food and folk remedies. Though clan lines were patrilineal, women contributed to annual ceremonies and in tribal politics; "The women of the Shawnees had a strong voice in tribal government" (Howard 1981: 109). Shawnee women held positions of peace and war chiefs or chief matrons. These women were responsible for counseling those on trial before the male war chief, overseeing women's activities in the community, directing planting and harvesting, and scheduling and cooking for feasts (Howard 1981:109). Working equally with men for the daily survival of the community, women's roles gave them a sense of power¹⁴ and reverence in the community. Their work and contribution was recognized and validated each year at the annual Spring Bread Dance. The Spring Bread Dance is a prayer for new growth of crops and general fertility. It is at this dance that the role of women in planting, gathering, and harvesting is recognized and validated with song and ceremony. As Trowbridge describes from his work with the Shawnee, as discussed by Howard in his book:

¹⁴ When discussing Eastern Shawnee women's power, in this thesis, I am referring to Eastern Shawnee women's respected and valued role in the tribal community, a role based on their subsistence, ceremonial, and political contributions.

Until some thirty or forty years ago [late 1800's into early 1900's], it was the duty of the [Shawnee] women, to perform all the labour properly belonging to the other sex among the whites. They planted and hoed the corn, gathered and dried it, dressed the meat, carried the game, constructed lodges, removed the encampments and replaced them when necessary (Howard 1981: 104).

Prior to assimilation and forced migration Shawnee women's roles in the community were seen as respected and purposeful. They had the ability and skills to keep their families and community alive through subsistence gathering, planting, harvesting, and processing of plants and meats. Contemporarily, gender roles are not based on subsistence activity and skill. Women's roles in the tribal community are now based on assimilated western views of men and women's gender roles. Men are to act as leaders and women are to be supportive followers. Women participate in ceremonies and on activity committees, however, in the Eastern Shawnee tribe men hold a majority of the tribal government positions. As I noted after attending tribal business committee meetings, one woman was present on the seven person Business Committee. Although this woman has the highest education of any known woman in the tribe her role is that of the secretary, in charge of taking the meeting minutes.

My family story begins with Walter Bluejacket my great, great, great grandfather and his daughter Rosa Bluejacket Daugherty¹⁵. Walter Bluejacket was a Shawnee member of the Mixed Band of Seneca-Cayuga and Shawnee who would later be known as the Eastern Shawnee (Interview with Petunia, 2002). Little information has been given by my informants on Walter Bluejacket or any previous Bluejackets in the Shawnee tribe. What I do know is that the status of Chief ran along familial lines, primarily the Bluejacket line, ending with Walter Bluejacket. Walter Bluejacket would

¹⁵ See Table 1: Kinship Chart to clarify family lineage.

later be known for being a signing member of the 1867 treaty with the United States, the treaty that would form the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma (Nabokov 1991). My great, great grandmother Rosa Bluejacket, as I have been told, was a woman who loved to fish, to smoke her corn cob pipe, and to speak only in her Native Shawnee language; she possessed the respect I found discussed in my research on Shawnee women prior to assimilation (Interview with Petunia¹⁶, 2002). Though the role of women in the tribe was changing, Rosa still managed to ensure she had not only her share of Shawnee allotted land but several other shares as well. She married as many times as she pleased, and lived past all her children. She retained and used the skills she was taught for subsistence to ensure the survival of herself and her family. She worked hard, knew her own mind, and survived. She was valued and respected.

Forced Migration, Allotment, and Federal Indian Boarding Schools

Once European powers began affecting Native communities in eastern North America, the Shawnee found themselves in a constant state of migration. For survival and to build alliances for and against both European and Native communities, the Shawnee now moved in much smaller bands farther away from each other. By 1669 the tribe was broken down into two large factions: one living in the Pennsylvania area and the other faction ranged from South Carolina to Tennessee and Kentucky (Nabokov 1991). By the mid-eighteenth century both bands merged into what is now the state of Ohio, due to forced migration from neighboring tribes as well as continual fighting with

¹⁶ Because a majority of my informants chose to remain anonymous I use pseudonyms when referring to their interviews. For further discussion on my use of pseudonyms refer to chapter three, anonymity and confidentiality.

Britain (Sturtevant 1978). Shortly thereafter, due to pressure by the Iroquois Confederacy, the Shawnee, along with Miami, Delaware, Pottawatomie, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Wyandotte, formed their own confederacy and were almost in a constant state of war with Britain (Howard 1981). By the end of the eighteenth century, the Shawnee and their confederacy were defeated. They signed the treaty of Greenville ending almost forty years of war, gave most of their lands in Ohio to the British, and settled in Indiana and part of Missouri (Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d., Howard 1981, and Sturtevant 1978).

By 1805 the Shawnee tribe began to split again. Many in the tribe did not agree with the signing of the treaty of Greenville. The most vocal of these, Tecumseh, formed an alliance with other Native groups against the loss of tribal lands to white settlers. By 1812, Tecumseh's confederacy was destroyed and the Battle of 1812 further divided the Shawnee tribe, some forming an alliance with the newly formed United States and others with the British (Nabokov 1991).

By 1813 the tribe split into eight separate villages ranging through Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri. It was at this time that the group that would later become the Eastern Shawnee tribe was formed. The group began as the Lewiston Band of the Shawnee, named after the group's leader who was referred to by settlers as Colonel Lewis (Sturtevant 1978 and Nabokov 1991). The Lewiston Band of Shawnee was given a reserve in western Ohio in 1817. In 1825 the Shawnee band living in Missouri was given land in Kansas which they sold for a reservation near Shawnee Kansas. By 1830 the Lewiston Band in Ohio, now becoming known as the Mixed Band of the Seneca-

Cayuga and Shawnee, was forced to negotiate a treaty¹⁷ to exchange their lands in Ohio and move west for a reservation (just over 10,000 acres) east of the Neosho River, which lies along the Oklahoma and Missouri border in the Northeast corner of Oklahoma (Nabokov 1991, Sturtevant 1978).

The Bluejackets were Shawnee members of the Lewiston Mixed Band of Seneca-Cayuga and Shawnee. My great auntie recounted a story that her grandmother, Rosa Bluejacket, told to her about the migration from Ohio into Oklahoma in the 1830's. Rosa would have only been a child at the time but remembered the great march to Oklahoma. She spoke of the "bushwhackers", as they called them, settlers that lived in the area, who would hide in the bushes and run out and terrorize and/or kill as many Indians as possible as they marched to their reservation land in Oklahoma (Interview with Petunia, 2002).

Rosa recounted one such instance to her granddaughter Petunia:

As the bushwhackers approached the moving line of Lewiston Mixed Band, chaos rang out. Tribal members scattered running as fast as they could. Mothers wrapped their babies in their skirts trying to hide or outrun the bushwhackers. Rosa remembered that when the commotion was over, and the tribe realized they were safe, many of the women unwrapped their skirts to find their babies dead; beaten to death by their mother's legs while they ran for safety (Notes from an Interview with Petunia, 2002).

While written accounts of the ceding of the Eastern Shawnee lands in Ohio and the migration to reservation lands in Oklahoma was rather peaceful, my oral history interviews say otherwise. As the land in Oklahoma they were promised slowly dwindled, the re-establishment of traditional Shawnee life would continue to be challenging for Rosa and her family.

¹⁷ A treaty signed in 1832 was with a tribe known as the United Nation of the Seneca and Shawnee.

By the mid-nineteenth century, those Shawnee from the Ohio/Missouri area, which settled on the Kansas reserve, began to split and move toward the Shawnee (Mixed Band of the Seneca and Shawnee) in Oklahoma. The first group to leave Kansas would, after moving to Oklahoma, be named the Absentee Shawnee and the last group to leave was named the Cherokee-Shawnee (Howard 1981). In 1867 the Mixed Band of the Seneca and Shawnee were separated. The reservation was divided into two separate reservations, one for the Seneca-Cayuga and the other for the Shawnee. Being the eastern most tribe of the Shawnees in Oklahoma, the Shawnee from the Mixed Band were named the Eastern Shawnee of Oklahoma (Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d.). In that same year, two thousand acres were carved out of the Eastern Shawnee reservation for the Wyandotte tribe (Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d.). Later in 1874, almost four thousand acres were taken out of the Eastern Shawnee reservation and set aside for the Modoc tribe (Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d.).

In 1887 the Dawes General Allotment Act was passed and the Eastern Shawnee reservation would be carved up once again:

During this time [1875-1933] the official Federal Indian policy was to assimilate individual members of American Indian tribes even if rights as members of tribes had to be breached. This pressure to individualize the tribes and dispose of the tribal land estate resulted in the passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887, better known as the Dawes Act, which divided the reservations up into allotments of 160 acres and assigned each Indian a piece of land for farming. The remainder of the tribal land was declared to be 'surplus' and opened to settlement by non-Indians (Howard 1981:34).

With the passing of the Dawes Act, what was left of the Eastern Shawnee Reservation was carved into individual parcels and for the first time Shawnee communal living was changed to private ownership. With the privatization of property came a decline in

hunting, fishing, gathering, and planting and harvesting capabilities (Howard 1981). Some tribal members now had little access to water, others to hunting and fishing, or to gathering and harvesting sights. Suddenly permission had to be granted before daily subsistence activities could be achieved. With tribal members scattered in various locations and disconnected from each other, communal living, maintaining clan lines, and subsistence for group survival became more and more difficult; "The effect of individualizing the tribal estate was the creation of extreme poverty with its attendant disease and apathy on many reservations" (Howard 1981: 34).

After allotment had carved up the reservation, Rosa Bluejacket, aided by her father, gathered as many adjoining allotments as possible. I assume this to be her attempt to create some form of continuity. Though allotments were granted mainly to men, Rosa's father purchased the allotments and then gave them to her (Quapaw Indian Competency Commission n.d.). On her allotments she was able to re-create a somewhat stable piece of Shawnee life, similar to life prior to forced migration and assimilation. She, along with her husband Edward, built a cabin on the allotments, hunted, fished, farmed, and raised four children (Interview with Petunia, 2002). Because Shawnee women at this time were still seen as valued and contributing members of Shawnee society and because the Bluejacket family still held a position of power, Rosa was able to re-establish a more traditional Shawnee lifestyle for herself and her family in Oklahoma. However, once the infection of boarding schools and Christianity started to spread, the lifestyle Rosa created would not stay for long.

Adding to the difficulty of maintaining cultural practices, it was during this same time that Indian Boarding Schools were set up throughout Oklahoma and the United

States. The idea was to educate or assimilate the “Native” out of the Indian. Children as young as three and four were placed in federally run boarding schools with little to no access to their parents or communities. Culture and traditional language were forbidden and in their place the foundation was laid for assimilation into white American culture (Hoxie 2001). In 1869 the Society of Friends built a mission school on the Seneca reservation. By 1871 the Society of Friends mission school became the Seneca Indian School. A few years later, due to railroad construction, the school was moved to the Wyandotte reservation. By 1880 it was taken over by the federal government and turned into an Indian boarding school for the Seneca, Wyandotte, and Shawnee children living in the area (Wyandotte Website). At the school, boys were taught vocational skills, to be blacksmiths or farmers, and steered away from traditional living, hunting, fishing, and trapping. Girls were forced to learn to cook, sew, and keep house for and like white American women. They were told the skills they possessed for gathering, planting, harvesting, and building were “unladylike” and thus were forbidden acts. Both boys and girls were forced to cut their hair, stop speaking their language, and have little to no contact with their family or community (Interview with Pamela, 2002). The skills they would have possessed had they stayed with their family and community, to be valued and equal members in the community, were lost.

Rosa Bluejacket possessed the subsistence skills necessary to help ensure familial and cultural survival. After moving to Oklahoma, though the geographic location of the community changed, she attempted to re-establish a traditional Shawnee life. However, with the creation of the Society of Friends Mission School and the rise of churches, assimilation found its way into the lives of Rosa and her children. She was opposed to

the school that all of her children would attend, which allowed for the tendrils of assimilation to weave their way into the fabric of the Bluejacket family. Rosa's daughter Louisa Bluejacket, my great grandmother, felt the pressure of assimilation. Marrying an Irish immigrant, Louisa attempted to do what I assume she was told by the church and the school would ensure her survival: step away from her traditional Shawnee roots and begin to blend into dominant society. Louisa's choice for assimilation to ensure survival would prove to be a fatal mistake. Her husband, like many of the white men in the area, had little value or respect for Indian women. He would abuse her and their several children, including my grandfather who was the second to the youngest in the family. By the 1920s and 1930s, the Seneca Indian School had become a federally run Indian boarding school and all of Louisa's children would attend. I believe Louisa once again made the choice of assimilation to ensure survival. Though she understood that her children would lose even more of their culture than she had, I believe she felt it would be the only way they could escape the abuse and poverty they found at home. During their time at the Seneca Indian Boarding School, all of Louisa's children would learn their place in dominant society. The girls would have their hair cut, be forced to wear wool dresses, abandon the subsistence skills their mother used, and learn only how to cook, clean, and work as white women did. Louisa's sons would forget the stories of their culture, the songs their mother sang, and instead would be forced to learn to be blacksmiths, carpenters, and farmers. Far from the life Rosa tried to re-establish for them, Louisa's hard choices for survival would create an everlasting break from traditional Shawnee society for this portion of the Bluejacket family. Future members of

the Bluejacket family would not know their place of respect and value; instead they would learn their role as Indian men and women in a white world.

Contemporary Life in North Eastern Oklahoma

Allotment carved up what reservation land was left and scattered Eastern Shawnee community members across several thousands of acres. Hunting, fishing, gathering, planting, and harvesting became more and more difficult, bringing poverty and disease. Federal Indian Boarding schools stifled cultural language and subsistence life skills. Unaccustomed to their own language, gender roles, and subsistence survival, many who went through the Seneca Indian Boarding School found it hard to survive once they were released back into their communities. Boys could not find work and easily became discouraged. Girls no longer had their valued place in their tribal society; they lacked the skills to contribute economically to their family and community. With the nineteen thirties came tuberculosis, the Great Depression, and the Dustbowl. Jobs were scarce, and even more scarce for Indians no matter how “educated” they were. A generation of Eastern Shawnee emerged that lacked Shawnee survival skills. Instead, in their search for survival in a white man’s world, the Eastern Shawnee assimilated, leaving behind many of the skills they had formerly used for thousands of years.

Louisa Bluejacket died at the age of forty three, leaving behind all her children, the youngest being an infant. Unable to find work and desperate for money, Louisa’s daughters one by one were “promised” to local men in the area by their father (Interview with Petunia, 2002). The value of Shawnee women had changed. Once respected valued individuals in their community, they were now forgotten. With the forced attendance of

Indian boarding schools and allotment, Shawnee communal living changed to private individualism. Community members were scattered and separated from each other. Young girls and boys were no longer taught from their community who and what to be, instead they were forced to assimilate into white Christian society. Men dealt with their loss and pain through anger and outward aggression toward women. Women internalized their pain, lowering their own self worth and esteem. Eastern Shawnee men and women no longer had equally respected positions in Eastern Shawnee society. Eastern Shawnee traditional life had, for its members, changed to mirror dominant white society in order to survive. Coupled with the internalization of the pain felt from years of hardship and change, Bluejacket women were no longer as powerful as their grandmother Rosa had been; they now struggle for their voice, their place in their community, and a connection to their roots.

By the nineteen forties and fifties many Eastern Shawnee community members relocated out of Oklahoma and off tribal lands in search of work, creating contemporary tribal members disconnected from their community and history. Currently, of the over two thousand enrolled Eastern Shawnee tribal members, approximately 60% of the community does not live on the allotted land parcels in Northeastern Oklahoma (Eastern Shawnee Education Department n.d.). A great deal of traditional knowledge has been lost, the language is hardly spoken, and cultural identities have been severely altered. My intent is to examine the change to Eastern Shawnee women's identity. Without the subsistence skills to keep themselves and their families alive, their role in the community became one not of respect and importance but of dependence. Eastern Shawnee women

were once strong equal partners in the survival of the Eastern Shawnee community, now they struggle to find their place in the community and validation for their contributions.

Chapter 3

METHODS

- 3.1 Methodological Choice
- 3.3 Informants
- 3.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality
- 3.5 Interviews
- 3.6 Approach Used
- 3.7 Process of Analysis

Methodological Choice:

This thesis looks at the change in Eastern Shawnee culture for women. In order to document and compare the change in Eastern Shawnee women's gathering practices due to outside and internal influences, life experiences were collected. When doing this type of anthropological field work, according to Bernard (2003) traditional ways of sampling such as probability sampling are not effective. What are needed are expert informants and not randomly selected individuals.

During the winter of 2001-2002 verbal consent to do this project was given to me by Eastern Shawnee elders. Understanding the importance of this work, members of my own family as well as other tribal members (who have had life experiences with assimilation and relocation) agreed to work as my key informants.

Informants

As discussed by Bernard, "participant observation ethnography relies on a few key informants rather than on a representative sample" (Bernard 2002:187). The oral

histories and folklore gathered for this research came from 10 key informants¹⁸ interviewed in Oregon, Washington, and Oklahoma throughout June, July, and August of 2004 and March 2005. The informants used for this project were mainly women, between the ages of thirty five to ninety, from the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. Six of the informants were members of my family, those who lived on tribal lands in Oklahoma and the subsequent generations who relocated to the Pacific Northwest and those who were born in the Pacific Northwest after relocation. The other four informants were selected from a list of six community members who tribal leaders felt were the most knowledgeable about plants used for food and folk remedies.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

My key informants were assured anonymity and confidentiality; under Institutional Review Board guidelines for interviewing human participants¹⁹. Participant interviews were on a volunteer basis. Because a majority of my informants asked to not have their names used in my thesis I chose to use pseudonyms. A goal of this project has been to give a face to the experiences of Native American women in the United States. By using pseudonyms and not codes I avoid losing the faces of the Eastern Shawnee women in the data. For my informants who currently live on or near allotted lands and have not relocated I chose pseudonyms beginning with the letter O, representing Oklahoma. Informants who were born on tribal allotted lands but relocated to the Pacific

¹⁸ My informants were comprised of four women I had worked with in my previous research in 2002 and six new informants. Not all members of the tribe would consider my informants "key" informants. I define key informants, however, as Eastern Shawnee women willing to participate in this project.

¹⁹ This research has been approved by the Oregon State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. For more information or verification of my IRB certification please contact the Human Protections Administrator.

Northwest I chose pseudonyms beginning with the letter P, representing the Pacific Northwest and Oklahoma. Finally, for the informants who have never lived on or near allotted lands I chose pseudonyms beginning with the letter N, representing the Pacific Northwest, as all of these informants either currently live or have lived in the Pacific Northwest.

Interviews

My interviews were both informal (interviews consisting of potlucks and family gatherings) and formal (interviews where I scheduled specific time frames with specific tribal members), unstructured interviews. I chose between informal and formal interview styles depending on my level of interaction with my informants. If I had interviewed or known my informants previously then I used a more formal interview style. With these interviews I scheduled a meeting ahead of time, used a tape recorder, and took field notes. If I had not previously met my informant, to build trust and to get to know them, I used an informal interview style.

I chose to use unstructured interviews because they allow for freedom and creativity in the interview process²⁰. "Unstructured interview are based on a clear plan...but are characterized by a minimum of control over people's responses. The idea is to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms" (Bernard 2002: 205). As Bernard discusses, if you want to know about the lived experiences of your informants you cannot do better than unstructured interviews (Bernard 2002: 206). General topics in my interviews included traditional knowledge regarding plant use for

²⁰ After working with Dr. Deanna Kingston for several years and observing her work with unstructured interviews, I felt this would be the most effective and comfortable form of interview style for me to use.

foods and folk remedies, kinship, gathering practices, place names, education, gender, assimilation, identity, and relocation. The interviews took place in various locations throughout Oregon, Washington, and Oklahoma; the key in location choice was access to plant materials and comfort of my informants. The interviews were recorded with an audio device, digital and analog tape recorder, and field notes were taken. In order to observe the plants used or discussed by my key informants, interviews were conducted at gathering sites as well as places chosen by informants. The interviews ranged from forty five minutes to several hours, some lasting as long as a half day, depending on what my informants had time for. Out of my ten informants, four were interviewed once and six were interviewed multiple times. Seven of my informants were interviewed in Oklahoma only. Two were interviewed in both Oklahoma and in the Pacific Northwest. Only one of my informants was interviewed only in the Pacific Northwest.

As discussed by Julie Cruikshank, ethnographic interviews often take on a path of their own (Cruikshank 1991). The information given by Native informants, as well as non-Native informants, can often come in observation, story telling, and experience. Taking the analytical approach used by Cruikshank in her work, I too wanted to ensure the information I was getting was comprehensive. To get the most complete data possible I used unstructured interviews as well as participant observation: "participant observation opens things up and makes it possible to collect all kinds of data...it is the foundation of cultural anthropology...it involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable" (Bernard 2002: 322-333). I used participant observation for two main reasons; first, I wanted my informants to feel as comfortable with my presence and the interview process as possible. Second, I wanted my informants to discuss more than the

themes I put forward; topics they felt were relevant to Native women's tribal identity and status. Even though I had had a long standing relationship with half of my informants I knew the topics discussed could be difficult or even painful to talk about. Difficult and painful topics such as family violence, alcoholism, and physical and mental abuse had been discussed by my informants in 2002 and I felt it was possible they would come up again. Because many of my informants often felt more at ease talking amongst each other, using participant observation allowed my informants to comfortably engage in whatever kind of conversation that came to them (song, dance, story telling, etc.). To find out if the information discussed varied with location of interview, I chose to interview three of my informants in two different locations, Oklahoma and the Pacific Northwest. My goal was to see if the amount or type of information discussed by my informants would change when being in the Pacific Northwest or on allotted lands in Oklahoma. The differences in place, or location of interview, would help explain the differences I saw in my interviews.

Approach Used

My research centered on Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge because of how often the topic was discussed in my previous research in 2002. It became apparent to me that my informants felt a level of comfort in giving their life stories through stories about plants and plant usage. In my research I use the terms life story, life history, and oral history interchangeably. I believe, like Linda Degh, that elements of truth and fiction play out in each re-enactment of my informant's lives. I agree with Titon in that time has a way of loosening the strings of our memory, "life storytelling is a fiction, a

making, an ordered past imposed by a present personality upon a disordered life" (Titon 1980:290). In Titon's view, life histories are structured, subject to constraints surrounding validity and authenticity, and life stories are self expressions of lived experiences. I contend that life stories and life histories collide into a muddle mixing of both definitions, that the information given is not just data but the who, why, how, and what of the life experiences. I hesitate to solely think of my informant's stories as complete fiction or truth. My interviews are a mixing of questions asked and life stories given.

I chose to work with women for two reasons; first, my interests lie in Native women's issues. Second, after doing my previous research in 2002, I found that women in the tribe were and are the primary practitioners of folk remedies and bearers of traditional plant use knowledge. Also, I found women to be more willing to participate in my research. As I spent time with community members I found that, generally, women spoke with other women when they wanted to tell stories or discuss personal issues.

Process of Analysis

After I completed my field work I began organizing my data. I had collected ten hours of taped interviews along with the previous project's fifteen hours of taped interviews and private journals. To see what information I had, I broke the data down into themes. Since my main objective was to look at change over time, in terms of women's traditional plant knowledge, I broke the data down into a sequential time line of

Federal Indian policy²¹. These policies created the greatest amount of change to the Eastern Shawnee tribe. I chose Federal Indian policy starting at the time of my great-great grandmother Rosa Bluejacket's generation, who had migrated from Ohio to the Eastern Shawnee reservation in Oklahoma, because it was the farthest back my interviewees could recollect. My themes included relocation from ceded lands in Ohio to Oklahoma, the Dawes General Allotment Act, relocation to the Pacific Northwest, and Indian boarding schools. Going off of main themes discussed by my informants in my previous research in 2002, I also chose themes regarding plant usage for food and folk remedies, gathering, harvesting, as well as elements that I correlated into the topic of tribal identity or status: the loss of respect, value, low self worth, abuse, alcoholism, and poverty.

Definitions of the themes are as follows:

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Used in 2002 and/or Current Research</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Traditional Knowledge	Both	Traditional Shawnee cultural knowledge prior to assimilation by religion or education.
Plant Use	Current	Eastern Shawnee usage of plants for food and folk remedies.
Gathering Practices	Current	Eastern Shawnee gathering and harvesting of plants for food and folk remedies.
Kinship	Both	Family connection by marriage, birth, and death.
Relocation	Both	Relocation of the Eastern Shawnee off tribal allotted lands to the Pacific Northwest.
Gender	Current	Eastern Shawnee gender roles both prior to and after assimilation.

²¹ When using the phrase Federal Indian policy, I am referring to United States governmental law and action toward Native American tribes in the United State.

Identity	Current	Eastern Shawnee women's historical and contemporary identity, issues of race and class.
Education	Both	Eastern Shawnee experiences with Indian boarding schools and contemporary education.
Family Violence	Current	Physical and mental violence experienced as children and adults. Alcoholism, polygamy, and sexual assault.
Land	Both	Eastern Shawnee tribal allotted lands in Oklahoma.
Loss of Culture	Both	Eastern Shawnee cultural practices lost due to assimilation, relocation, and migration.
Contemporary Plant Use	Current	The contemporary usage of plants outside of Eastern Shawnee plant usage for food and folk remedies.
Passing on of Knowledge	Both	A desire to pass on knowledge, outside of Eastern Shawnee cultural knowledge, to future generations.
Tribal Politics	Current	Beliefs and opinions about the management of the Eastern Shawnee tribe.

Audio recorded interviews and field notes were transcribed, using a literal translation, and indexed by themes in the table above. For accuracy, I transcribed the interviews without correcting language errors or removing pauses.

To analyze the information in my interviews, I examined the frequency and general patterns of the themes discussed. I tallied how often and by whom themes were discussed and looked for general patterns to emerge. After analyzing my data I found that several patterns did emerge. Specific themes became repetitive in the interviews.

Going back over the data, I would re-read each section, which referred to these repetitive themes, to see if my informants were echoing similar sentiments.

Chapter 4

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Fieldwork Results
- 4.2 Transmission of Knowledge and Changes in Eastern Shawnee Women's Identity
- 4.3 Ideas for Change: Decolonization for Survival and the Future of Eastern Shawnee Women's Identity

In this chapter I will break my fieldwork down into three main categories, results, a discussion of those results, and ideas for cultural revitalization and the creation of a respected and valued contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's identity. I will also answer my three main research questions; first, was Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge dependent upon location? Second, what have the changes in Eastern Shawnee culture meant to Eastern Shawnee women in the creation of their tribal identity and status? Third, how have historical factors and cultural changes, specifically the loss of plant knowledge, affected Eastern Shawnee women's identity and tribal status? By answering these questions I will demonstrate the role of plants in Eastern Shawnee women's contemporary identity and lay a foundation for cultural revitalization.

Fieldwork Results

Nye, Narcissa, and Noella

My informants who I will refer to as Nye, Narcissa, and Noella all were born in states other than Oklahoma and have only been to the allotted lands in Oklahoma a handful of times. During my interviews with all three women they spoke mainly of

kinship, identity, loss of culture and contemporary plant usage^{22, 23} For all three informants, the theme of identity came up eighteen times, contemporary plant usage fourteen times, kinship twelve times, and loss of culture seven times.

Plant Knowledge

In their interviews, I found that these informants have less knowledge regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies than my other informants. For instance they rarely spoke of traditional Eastern Shawnee knowledge, plant use, or gathering practices.

In the interviews with Petunia, Payne and Pamela, all who were born on tribal allotted lands but relocated to the Pacific Northwest, the themes of traditional knowledge, plant use, and gathering practices came up a combined fifty-three times. Yet, in the interviews with Nye, Narcissa, and Noella, it only came up a combined four times²⁴.

However, Nye, Narcissa, and Noella did have a strong connection to contemporary usage of plants. As Nye notes:

Like you love the love of stories and stuff and this [plant knowledge] is like a story from someone else...how we know...so you look at um [plants] and it's like a picture...and you remember that stuff...so really it doesn't have to be something edible...it's like when you asked me I thought I don't have a clue what's medicinal, I can grow flowers and oranges though (Interview with Nye, 2003).

Because they were born off tribal lands and have had little to no contact with their tribal community, it stands to reason that they would have little to no traditional Eastern Shawnee knowledge regarding the use of plants for food and folk remedies. Although

²² Contemporary plant usage is defined, in this thesis, as plants grown for aesthetic value.

²³ See table 5 for further reference on themes discussed from interviewees from the Pacific Northwest.

²⁴ See Table 8 for more information on themes discussed during all the interviews.

they had little to no information on Eastern Shawnee women's traditional plant knowledge they did have a strong connection to plants.

Though less so for Noella, plants and knowledge about plants are strong building blocks to their personal identity. For Nye, plants give a sense of peace and a connection to her father. For Narcissa knowledge regarding basic medicinal plants in our American culture helps her feel connected to her tribal roots. They draw strength from their knowledge about growing and raising plants for both medicinal and aesthetic value, as Nye notes:

COG Some have said that because of assimilation, reservations, and allotment Native women, Eastern Shawnee women, have lost their connection to plants. Do you think that's true for the Eastern Shawnee?

Nye Maybe I don't grow vegetables and herbs but I've always felt the need to grow something and put my hands in the dirt and I get that from my dad (Interview with Nye, 2003).

None of the women from this group were able to tell me about specific plants used by Eastern Shawnee women for food or folk remedies. However, they all share a connection to a plant passed down from Louisa Bluejacket, a honeysuckle bush. Clippings from this bush have been passed down to Nye, Noella, and now Narcissa. Though this plant has no material or symbolic connection to the Eastern Shawnee tribe, caring for this plant has created a window for these three women to discuss plant knowledge.

Identity

In my interviews with the women from the Pacific Northwest themes of identity, loss of culture, and kinship were also discussed, while relocation, gender, education,

family violence, land, and tribal politics were rarely if at all discussed²⁵. All of these informants were born after relocation to the Pacific Northwest. None of these informants attended Indian boarding schools or were exposed to Eastern Shawnee gender roles. Their knowledge of these subjects is much less than of those who lived these experiences. However, besides contemporary plant usage, they did discuss their connection to each other and its importance in terms of kinship ties, as noted by Narcissa: “there’s a lot of power in feeling like you know your kin...friends come and go but with family it’s deep” (Interview with Narcissa, 2005). Being connected to each other is the only connection this group has to their Eastern Shawnee roots. When discussing tribal identity and status the group, as a whole, connected the amount of cultural knowledge they possessed with their tribal identity. These women however did not identify themselves as Eastern Shawnee. They placed greater meaning in the creation of their identity on their individual experience with gender and class.

Loss of Culture and Assimilation

Nye, Narcissa, and Noella also spoke of their loss of Eastern Shawnee culture and what that has meant in terms of their identity, as noted by Narcissa: “it’s tragic so much value in plants and connection with earth...I hate to group it with people and how and what I’ve read...we’re headed down the wrong path...having no power” (Interview with Narcissa, 2005). Being raised assimilated into dominant western society, they had little exposure to the processes of assimilation Eastern Shawnee community members have faced, and therefore the topic rarely came up in their interviews. When discussing loss of culture, this group of women viewed traditional Eastern Shawnee knowledge as a thing of

²⁵ See Table 5 for more information on themes discussed during interviews with informants from the Pacific Northwest.

the past. Being disconnected from their tribal community, they have not been made aware of the traditional knowledge left in the Eastern Shawnee tribe. Nye, Narcissa, and Noella, as a group, view their loss of culture as something they can not reclaim and struggle in identifying themselves with a collective memory they have no connection with.

Nye, Narcissa, and Noella have little to no traditional plant knowledge and have no connection with the material and symbolic elements that once created a valued and respected identity for Eastern Shawnee women. Without this connection, they have been left vulnerable to assimilation and struggle to create a contemporary Eastern Shawnee identity. Examining the patterns in the themes discussed by this group, I found that not having this valued and respected Eastern Shawnee identity, Nye, Narcissa, and Noella do not feel comfortable accessing and passing down traditional Eastern Shawnee plant knowledge to future generations.

Pamela, Petunia, and Payne

Three of my informants, whom I refer to as Pamela, Petunia, and Payne, all were born on allotted lands in Oklahoma, lived there for at least twenty years and then relocated to the Pacific Northwest. One of these women, Payne, moved back to tribal allotted lands, permanently, after relocation. The other women have a strong connection to tribal lands in Oklahoma and visit on a regular basis. In the interviews with Pamela, Petunia, and Payne themes of traditional plant knowledge and gathering practices came

up a combined fifty-three times. The theme of kinship came up forty-one times²⁶, loss of culture thirty-five times, family violence twenty-one times, and education sixteen times.

Plant Knowledge

When discussing traditional knowledge, plant usage, and gathering practices in my interviews with Pamela, Petunia, and Payne, specific patterns of discussion emerged. In particular, they gave me short lists of plants their mothers taught them to use for food and folk remedies²⁷. For example, Pamela recalled:

Uh there was a weed called mule tailed weed that grows back there pretty plentiful, it grows pretty tall and has leaves out to here. And she [Louisa Bluejacket] would go gather that in the fall. And that was for laxative I think...there was a little thing that looked like a wild strawberry, but it wasn't cause it had yellow blooms. But it had little leaves like strawberries and it grew along the ground. And uh that was for diarrhea. She got the bark off a some tree and this weed that grows way big, Corum I think, I don't know cause it had a fuzzy leaf and she rolled them together and made salves for sores. (Interview with Pamela, 2002).

I was also given names of plants from Oklahoma they were able to grow in the Pacific Northwest, specifically polk and mustard greens. Although these women were able to give a great deal more information about traditional Eastern Shawnee plant usage than Nye, Narcissa, and Noella, they did not pass a lot of this information down to their children. I believe this information was not passed down because of the influence of assimilation through the Seneca Indian Boarding School. To explore this further I looked at loss of culture and the tribe's history with assimilation.

Loss of Culture and Assimilation

²⁶ See Table 6 for more information on themes discussed during interviews with informants who were born in Oklahoma but relocated to the Pacific Northwest.

²⁷ See Table 3 for more information on which specific plants women from this group discussed.

When discussing themes of education, family violence, and loss of culture I was told stories about the great move from Ohio to Oklahoma. As Petunia explains:

Grandma [Rosa Bluejacket] was just a little girl when they made the march into Oklahoma territory from their homelands to the east. So many died and were killed. It was their 'trail of tears'. They were hounded and starved and was treated with brutality and they had to be on guard of the 'bushwackers' she called them. It was a terrible time for the Shawnee (Taken from Petunia's journal entries given to me during an interview with Petunia, 2002).

I was also given life stories of boarding school experiences, Christianity, and family abuse. While in Oklahoma I was able to travel, with my informants, to the Seneca Indian School where they relayed stories of their experiences of being young girls learning western ways of cooking and sewing, and longing to go home. As Pamela explains:

COG Did you guys ever try to run away from the Indian School?

Pamela We used to dream about it, when we would run down the hill and be afraid we would get caught and run back up.

COG What was it like livin there?

Pamela Oh we had to take care of yourself. You had your own cot unless it was really crowded they made Payne and Petunia sleep together (Interview with Pamela, 2002).

They also shared how their mother, Louisa, used a great deal of traditional plant knowledge taught to her by her mother Rosa. They discussed how their father was often abusive and not only had children with their mother Louisa but also forcibly with their aunt Susie. Susie and Louisa lived with their children's father, were abused, and forced to have several children which would inevitably lead to their deaths.

Under the general theme of loss of culture, my informants also spoke of the pain of losing children because of the inability for Indian women to find adequate health care.

As discussed by Petunia:

It was a miserable time my babies were hungry, the little one became sick oh so very sick. We had what they called an Indian agent...a big man ole blustery fellow. Finally he took me and the baby to the Indian Hospital about sixty five miles away at Claremore Oklahoma. They would not let me stay there with my little son and I had no money either. They told me to go home and they would keep in touch and let me know how he was doing. So I went home. My dad was letting me stay at his house, it was so cold. One week later [the Indian agent] drove up to my dads place and said 'I brought your baby home' and set a tiny little casket out onto the snow and drove off. That's the way the Indian people were treated back there (Excerpt from Petunia's journal given to me during an interview with Petunia, 2002).

Pamela, Petunia, and Payne tied family violence, their boarding school experiences, and inadequate healthcare with their loss of cultural connection. They attributed domestic violence and their own abuse at home and in school as being because they are Indian. These women did not contribute loss of culture with a loss of cultural traditions. By being around the previous generations of Eastern Shawnee women who were once respected and valued and watching that respect and value change through time, they regarded loss of culture with a loss of value and respect. The stories of family abuse will be left out of this thesis; my informants expressed a desire to have those stories withheld because of the pain they still cause their families.

Identity

Though Pamela, Petunia, and Payne spoke a great deal about traditional plant knowledge and gathering practices, kinship, and loss of culture, they spoke little about

gender, identity, land, passing on of knowledge, and tribal politics²⁸. By being detached from their tribal community, due to relocating, their knowledge about land issues, tribal politics, and tribal identity, is less than of those who live in the area and deal with these issues on a daily basis.

Unlike the group of women from the Pacific Northwest, Pamela, Petunia, and Payne were able to admit their Eastern Shawnee identity. They did so, however, in a derogatory manner. As a whole, they identified themselves as either “old Indian women” or “dumb old Indian women”. Though they had been taught traditional plant knowledge, the process of assimilation had changed their identity. Because of assimilation, I believe, they found little reason to teach their children the traditional Eastern Shawnee plant knowledge they had been given.

Pamela, Petunia, and Payne’s discussion on themes of traditional plant knowledge and gathering practices did come up less frequently than in the interviews with Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa (all of whom were born on allotted lands and did not relocate out of Oklahoma). Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa referenced this theme in their interviews over eighty times and Pamela, Petunia, and Payne referenced to it fifty-three times²⁹. Looking at these quantitative results I began to see that plant knowledge and location were tied together. Those who had a connection to the tribal allotted lands possessed more traditional plant knowledge than those who had relocated or who were born after relocation.

²⁸ See Table 6 for more information on themes discussed during interviews with informants who were born in Oklahoma but relocated to the Pacific Northwest.

²⁹ See Table 8 for more information on themes discussed during all the interviews.

Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa (OK)

Four of my informants, whom I refer to as Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa, lived their entire lives on or near tribal allotted lands in Oklahoma. Two of them have left for short periods of time; all four have chosen to live and be connected to the Eastern Shawnee tribe. During my interviews all four women spoke mainly of traditional plant knowledge and gathering practices, identity, loss of culture and tribal politics.³⁰ Combined, in all the interviews with Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa, the theme of traditional plant knowledge and gathering practices came up eighty-one times, identity thirty-four times, loss of culture twenty-eight times, and tribal politics twenty times.

During these discussion sessions, I discovered a family connection to the ceremonial grounds at White Oak, the ceremonial grounds of the Loyal Shawnee who are believed to be the most traditional of all the Shawnee. I became aware that Rosa Bluejacket had married a Loyal Shawnee, Edward Daugherty, and they had both attended and had taken a few of my key informants to the Bread Dance ceremonies that honored women's roles in harvesting and gathering of foods. My informants spoke of ceremonies or feasts that honored women: "the differences with the two different Bread Dances were, the spring was for new crops dedicated to women, and the fall for men and the harvest and hunt" (Interview with Omara, 2005). Also discussed further by Odessa:

As a child we had two major ceremonials. One was the spring Bread Dance, and the other was the Green Corn Dance in the fall. And in the spring, when the redbuds would bloom...and we would have this spring dance, and we would go out to the ceremonial grounds and we would camp out, and live in tents for a whole week...the women would prepare

³⁰ See Table 7 for more information on themes discussed during interviews with informants who were born in Oklahoma and who did not relocate.

all kinds of food during the week that would be brought in to the stomp ground, and put in the center of the ground. This dance was to give thanks to the Higher Being, for the fact that we could live through the winter.³¹
(Interview with Odessa, 2005)

My informants spoke of ceremonies where tribal women took on the responsibility to prepare food and offer it to the souls of the dead ancestors, illustrating that they had knowledge of a time when Eastern Shawnee women held respected places in Eastern Shawnee ceremonies.

Plant Knowledge

While analyzing the interviews, I noticed that when discussing traditional knowledge, plant use, and gathering practices, Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa discussed several plants: possum grapes, persimmon, wild onion, corn, polk, acorns, lambs quarter, sassafras, dandelion, greens, and wild strawberry³². This group of women had the most information regarding Eastern Shawnee women's contemporary use of traditional plant knowledge. Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa, unlike the group who had relocated, did not speak about traditional plant knowledge as a lost element to their culture.

The four informants from Oklahoma also spoke of the loss of traditional plant knowledge and women's roles in the tribe; "we were one of the few tribes where women had a prominent role...women were respected...I don't know that we became that"
(Interview with Omara, 2005). And as Olivia notes:

It's up to our generation. It isn't fair, we try to learn, it was up to the generations back who have all died off. When we ask now and they say

³¹ Excerpt from an interview given by Odessa to Voices of Native People Methodist Newsletter vol. 9 May 2003 which was given to me during an interview in 2005.

³² See Table 3: Plants and Data Discussed for clarification.

'well you weren't raised in it so you don't know' ...I don't know one person around here who was raised Indian, we have to carry on (Interview with Olivia, 2005).

When discussing plant knowledge, Olivia spoke of the responsibility that the previous generations had to pass on traditional plant knowledge and that the quest to learn the plant knowledge left is steeped in identity issues.

Identity

Though Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa have all retained a strong connection to their tribal lands, possess traditional plant knowledge, and have not relocated, when discussing themes of identity and loss of culture all four spoke of not being respected or valued. They felt they had limited opportunities to make effective change for the tribe.

As noted by Olivia:

My dad's generation, they had to fight against whites, my generation my daughters we have to fight against our own people. The fight is about identity, how Indian are you, what do you know, what are you and what makes up your identity. Everyone has the right to be who they are, being Indian doesn't matter who you are and how Indian you are or what you look like (Interview with Olivia, 2005).

As a whole Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa strongly identified themselves as Eastern Shawnee women. Unlike the other two groups who discussed their identity in terms of lack of cultural knowledge and assimilation, the group of women from Oklahoma talked more about internal tribal issues and blood quantum. However, though less than the group who relocated, Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa spoke briefly about their feelings of shame about being Eastern Shawnee and their experiences with assimilation through Indian boarding schools and Christianity. As noted by Odessa:

When I was a little girl, we used to go to ceremonies because my grandfather was the chief of the tribe and my grandmother had a lot of responsibility as the wife of the tribal leader. And we would go to these ceremonies, and when I went back to church, the denomination that we belonged to...they would tell us that was a sin, and that we shouldn't go to these ceremonials. As a little girl, I knew that sin, if you did too much of it, you would go to hell. And all my life, I worried about going to hell. Because I was an Indian, and because I believed in my traditions³³ (Interview with Odessa, 2005).

The tribe's exposure to western religion and education still plays a large role in the creation of individual identity for the women from the Oklahoma group.

Loss of Culture

In the interviews Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa rarely discussed kinship, relocation, gender, family violence, non traditional contemporary plant usage, and passing on of plant knowledge. The need to discuss relocation and to verify kinship ties was less significant to this group. Because my interviews were centered on traditional Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge, a subject they know a great deal about, they spoke less on non-traditional contemporary plant usage. They also spoke less about the passing on of traditional plant knowledge because it is an action they do on a much more regular basis than the other groups. The passing on of traditional plant knowledge is something they actively participate in.

Of all the informants I interviewed, only those living on or near tribal allotted lands were actively working to bring about a cultural revitalization, to make women's presence

³³ Excerpt from an interview given by Odessa to Voices of Native People Methodist Newsletter vol. 9 May 2003 which was given to me during an interview with Odessa in 2005.

in the tribal community known. These informants attended business meetings as I noted in my field notes:

While in Oklahoma I was able to attend an Eastern Shawnee tribal business committee meeting. At the meeting I could see first hand if tribal women were respected and valued as powerful members in tribal government. While there, I observed that tribal women seldom spoke up, when they did they were timid and were talked down to by tribal men. I noticed that the only woman on the business committee is one of three tribal members with a master's degree, however, her role is as secretary taking the meeting minutes (Field Note Reference, 2005).

Although their voices are timid they are there. They are creating tribal newsletters, attending the Bread Dance and Stomp Dance, and are using and passing down what traditional plant knowledge they have. As discussed by Olivia:

I think that my generation is older, I think I've missed a chance, I've had to pretty much fight for it, but my kids, because they're dark have a chance now, if I push...I want them to have that opportunity, they've been raised with it all their lives so they have no excuse. Tribal identity or being Indian it's the lifestyle you choose to participate in, if you choose to do more traditional Indian, I mean I'm part Irish but I don't sit around drinking Guinness (Interview with Olivia, 2005).

In relation to the Life Cycle of Plant Knowledge and Change flow chart, Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa retained a larger portion of the traditional Eastern Shawnee women's plant knowledge that once created a respected women's tribal identity.

Although assimilation has changed their tribal identity and status, their location has allowed them to retain a stronger community connection. The stronger community connection has permitted them to start recreating a more positive contemporary identity which has allowed them to reclaim a more positive mental and physical health. I define "positive mental health" as being a more respected and valued tribal and individual

identity, and “physical health” refers to the ability to come together to help bring healthcare and resources to the tribal community. Their positive mental and physical health has helped them build a desire and ability to pass on contemporary Eastern Shawnee women’s plant knowledge.

Transmission of Knowledge and Changes In Eastern Shawnee Women’s Identity

In my research I ask three main questions, was Eastern Shawnee women’s plant knowledge dependent upon location? What have the changes in Eastern Shawnee culture meant to Eastern Shawnee women in the creation of their tribal identity and status? How have historical factors and cultural changes, specifically the loss of plant knowledge, affected Eastern Shawnee women’s identity and tribal status? In this section I will discuss my thesis results while answering these questions. I will also discuss how my three groups of informants discussed plant knowledge, loss of culture and/or assimilation, and identity.

Is Eastern Shawnee Women’s Plant Knowledge Dependent Upon Location?

Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman discuss how Native women, prior to contact, held a higher position of power in tribal communities. Their role as equal partners in the survival of the community gave them an element of respect and power; they were valued members of Native society (Klein and Ackerman 1995: 8). However, the shift toward assimilated western views of autonomy ran against the communal living style of many Native communities. The shift from community centered thinking to individuality completely restructured Native culture, specifically women’s tribal roles and status

(Klein and Ackerman 1995: 246). As changes from Federal Indian policy occurred among the Eastern Shawnee tribe (specifically assimilation through education, allotment, and relocation), the passing down of traditional plant knowledge to young Eastern Shawnee women diminished. For example, the women who I interviewed who had not relocated off tribal lands discussed traditional plant knowledge a combined eighty-one times in all their interviews. Women who were born on tribal lands but relocated discussed traditional plant knowledge fifty-three times, and those who were born off tribal lands and who had little connection to their tribal community, discussed it four times³⁴. Location does have a great deal to do with the amount of traditional Eastern Shawnee plant knowledge my informants have. Those who were not born connected to or near their tribal community have little to no traditional plant knowledge. Those who relocated lost a great deal of traditional plant knowledge with assimilation and by relocating out of the area. The group of women who stayed in Oklahoma were able to recreate and retain a large portion of the traditional knowledge they had been taught and have worked to pass it on to younger generations.

What have the changes in Eastern Shawnee culture meant to Eastern Shawnee women in the creation of their tribal identity and status?

With the diminishment of traditional plant knowledge came a change in the tribal identity and/or status of Eastern Shawnee women. No longer able to gain access to the knowledge that created their identity, they were forced to look outside their community for elements to create a new self image. In a majority of my interviews, my informants

³⁴ See Table 8 for more information on themes discussed during all the interviews.

discussed a connection between attending Indian boarding schools and being disconnected from their tribal lands with the diminishment of traditional plant knowledge. Petunia recalls:

And before I got old enough to go to school, we went to the fall Stomp Dance out at White Oak. That was a harvest ritual...I loved the quiet time of evening. The grandparents [Rosa Bluejacket and Edward Daugherty] would light up their pipes and sit and talk in the Shawnee language and chuckle now and then, such tranquility and peace. I guess I remember this time of my life because it was truly the happiest time of my childhood. Oh...you wonder did I not live with my family. Oh yes the time came all too soon. After I started school [the Seneca Indian School] I never got to go to the grandparents anymore (Excerpt from Petunia's journal given to me during an interview with Petunia, 2002).

As I explored my research I found all the women I interviewed spoke of low self worth, abuse, alcoholism, and poverty which I defined under the themes of identity and family violence. Nye, Narcissa, and Noella discussed identity eighteen times during their interviews³⁵. When discussing identity they spoke of their lack of tribal cultural knowledge, which they believed to make up their tribal identity. Those with little traditional plant knowledge thought of their identity as non-Indian, those with a great deal of knowledge strongly identified as Eastern Shawnee. As discussed by Nye and echoed by Narcissa and Noella:

He [her father] tried to separate himself as a young man. He wanted to be set apart from his heritage and things said about his mother [Louisa Bluejacket] and family were talked about in secret and shame... its amazing because you know these are stories you are hearing now, that I even as a forty-two year old woman... I have never heard these stories either because it was not allowed. And uh, and actually I think dad would have ushered us out of the room...he wanted more for us...he wanted us to be upper class. Not ever in my wildest dreams did it occur to me that I was Indian, even as an adult woman I find myself saying to dad 'look they

³⁵ See Table 5 for more information on themes discussed during interviews with informants from the Pacific Northwest.

are Indian like you', or uh or I couldn't be Indian, you know because I guess it was so pounded in my head that I was not and there was no reference to it and it was derogatory (Interview with Nye, 2002).

Looking over how Nye, Narcissa, and Noella discussed identity in their interviews, I found that the changes in Eastern Shawnee culture, due to relocation and assimilation, have created a loss of cultural knowledge. With the lack of cultural knowledge, these women felt they had little ability to identify themselves as Eastern Shawnee.

Pamela, Petunia, and Payne discussed identity thirteen times and family violence twenty-one times. Their connection to family violence and loss of culture seemed to weigh heavy in their interviews. This generation of women, who were born on allotted lands but relocated, seemed to discuss family violence (abuse, alcoholism, racism, and poverty) more than my other informants, perhaps because they suffered from it the most.

As discussed by Petunia:

I think back I can't remember funerals for the little ones that died. Baby one ³⁶ burned to death, baby two fell on a sharp stob [stick] and poked a hole in his neck and finally died, it was so sad he cried and cried he would swallow food and it would run out. Baby three and four died of summer comfort whatever that was. Baby five only lived a few days she was so tiny. Baby six died soon after birth and the state took baby seven and he was adopted...I do know that the still born babies were buried in shoe boxes around the place. Who was to know the births and deaths were never recorded and nobody cared anyway. It was just that bunch of...half breeds (Excerpt from Petunia's journal given to me during an interview with Petunia, 2002).

The women who relocated attribute their abuse at home with being an Indian. Indian identity, for this group, represents loss of cultural pride and a respected tribal and individual identity.

³⁶ At the expressed interest of my informant I have chosen to leave out the names of the children discussed and refer to them as baby one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven.

Omara, Olivia, Octavia, and Odessa spoke very little of family violence but did go into great detail on identity, referencing to the theme thirty-four times. When speaking of identity they are the only one of the three groups to speak of pride about being Shawnee, “I would say to children, learn as much as you can possibly learn about your heritage. And be who you are. Be who you are. It’s important” (Interview with Odessa, 2002). However, they also spoke of their disconnection to their tribal identity or cultural knowledge and a need to reclaim it for future generations. As expressed by Olivia, “now that I have children of my own, the will that wasn’t there [to learn cultural knowledge] is there, cause I want to pass it down to my children” (Interview with Olivia, 2005).

The changes brought about by assimilation, relocation, and education have created a disconnection between generations of Eastern Shawnee women. With this disconnection the cultural elements that created a valued and respected place for women in the Eastern Shawnee tribe were lost. As those elements were lost, western cultural values were able to creep into the community and fill in the elements needed to create Eastern Shawnee women’s identity. Loss of cultural knowledge has left Nye, Narcissa, and Noella feeling as if they have no cultural identity and Pamela, Petunia, and Payne searching for respect and value.

How have historical factors and cultural changes, specifically the loss of plant knowledge, affected Eastern Shawnee women’s identity and tribal status?

Theda Perdue discusses the process of assimilation on women in the Cherokee tribe,

Cherokee defined women in terms of their relationship to the land and their role in families. Missionaries regarded men as the appropriate providers for families and attempted to eliminate the role of women as farmers. They also sought to restructure the place of women in families. In the missionaries' worldview, the domestic sphere belonged to women but the husbands and fathers headed the household (Perdue 1999: 173).

The same can be said for Eastern Shawnee women. Historically, Eastern Shawnee women defined their tribal role, identity, and status in terms of their relationship to the land, their knowledge of plants, and their ability to contribute to the survival of the tribal community with this knowledge. With the forced attendance of Indian boarding schools, the break up of communal living due to allotment and relocation, Eastern Shawnee women no longer were able to pass down traditional plant knowledge to younger generations. This is evident in the differences between how often those who had little to no connection to tribal lands, those who relocated, and those who have never left discussed traditional plant knowledge in their interviews. Those who stayed in the area retained the knowledge and were therefore able to discuss it frequently in their interviews. Those who were born after relocation and who had little to no connection to their tribal community did not have the information passed down to them and were not able to discuss the topic.

Theme	Location and Frequency		
Traditional Knowledge/Plant Use/Gathering Practices	Interviewees from the Pacific Northwest	Interviewees who were born in Oklahoma and relocated to the Pacific Northwest	Interviewees from Oklahoma
	4	53	81

With this disconnection in knowledge, Eastern Shawnee women had to find new elements to create their tribal identity or status. Those elements came from race, class, and gender, according to how the dominant culture saw them. For example, in the interviews with Nye, Narcissa, and Noella, they discussed identity more than any other theme in their interviews.

Theme	Informant Name and Frequency			
	Nye	Narcissa	Noella	Totals
TK/Plant Use/Gathering Pract.	0	2	2	4
Kinship	0	4	8	12
Relocation	0	0	1	1
Gender	0	0	1	1
Identity	6	8	4	18
Education	0	0	0	0
Family Violence	0	1	0	1
Land	0	0	1	1
Loss of Culture	2	5	0	7
Contemporary Plant Usage	12	2	0	14
Passing on of Plant Knowledge	5	2	0	7
Tribal Politics	0	0	0	0

Without the elements that previously had made up Eastern Shawnee women's identity, these women struggled in their interviews to talk about tribal identity and status, to define it for themselves and their tribe. As Nye discussed:

I remember one time she [her aunt] looked at me, I had long dark hair...I had been out in the sun all that summer... my hair was pulled back I had a pair of shorts on and I came running in the house and she said wow, you're tan. You look just like a little Indian girl, and I looked around to see who she was talking to and I thought who is a little Indian girl...not me. I teased my cousins but it never occurred to me that I was as much [Indian] as they were, they all had this long flowing black hair, dark skin, and dark eyes. I had light skin, hair, and green eyes. I remember it, but I remember being shocked (Interview with Nye, 2002).

After going through the Seneca Indian Boarding School, my informants discussed a complete disconnection from their tribal language, a diminishment in the transmission of knowledge regarding traditional plant usage, and ceremonies. The elements that Eastern Shawnee women, in Rosa Bluejacket and even Louisa's generation, held as important in the creation of their tribal identity and status changed. As expressed by Odessa:

My family believed in the traditions. It was very, very difficult for me as a little girl to be told that I was going to go to hell [Christian hell] and I thought it was because I was an Indian. It was very, very difficult. Usually when I tell this story I cry, because it affected my life. It affected how I was as a human being. Thank heavens when I got married my husband was a Methodist...I've always felt that the Methodist Church freed me from all that past, that they gave me back a lot that had been taken away from me as a child (Interview with Odessa, 2005).³⁷

Identity and gender roles now focused around an assimilated, western, Christian view of women.

To ensure survival, the Eastern Shawnee community was taught to assimilate into dominant western culture. In this quest for survival, Eastern Shawnee women, whom I have interviewed, replaced many tribal cultural practices with what they were taught to be "appropriate" elements of western culture. An example, during their boarding school experiences, several of my informants spoke of being taught to cook, clean, and sew like "white" people. As remembered by Pamela:

Noella Didn't you say some teacher who was getting married had you sew'n?

Pamela Our third and fourth grade teacher who was getting married had us, instead of do'n our home work she had us embroider sets of table clothes and napkins, that's what we spent our time at.

³⁷ Excerpt from an interview given by Odessa to Voices of Native People Methodist Newsletter vol. 9 May 2003 which was given to me during an interview in 2005.

Noella For her wedding?

Pamela Yeah (Interview with Noella and Pamela, 2002).

The transmission of knowledge regarding Eastern Shawnee women's use of plants for food and folk remedies has slowed and all but stopped. With the decline in the transmission of this knowledge, Eastern Shawnee women's role in the tribal community, their level of importance and their identity, has changed greatly. Plant knowledge is both symbolically and materially important to Eastern Shawnee women. By losing the important elements that once created a valued, and respected place in ourselves and our society we became vulnerable to outside forces, the virus of assimilation, poor mental health, and a push toward individualism; "I feel a sense of responsibility, I have to look out for myself cause no one else will" (Interview with Narcissa, 2005). Analyzing my data, I realize that those women connected to tribal lands, though they discuss negative aspects of tribal identity, have a sense of pride in being Eastern Shawnee and are working to rebuild their tribal identity and status. Omara, Olivia, and Odessa discussed being proud of their Eastern Shawnee identity, a sadness about having little voice in the larger tribal body, and the desire to make changes for their children's generations. Pamela and Petunia struggled to remember their place in their culture and spoke of how their tribal identity had been greatly affected by assimilation. Nye and Narcissa spoke at great length of how they questioned their own identity as Indian women, the shock of realizing they were "Indian". As each generation has moved farther and farther away from tribal lands and have disconnected themselves from their culture, they have to struggle harder to make a healthy Eastern Shawnee identity.

“Being an Indian today, as it always had, include[s] the incorporation of change” (Iverson 1998: 175). The gap between the generations has become quite deep. There are little or no fluent speakers of Shawnee left in the Eastern Shawnee tribe. Only one of my informants, Petunia, remembers speaking the language, and only those currently living in Oklahoma have regularly attended any Eastern Shawnee ceremonies other than pow-wow dances. Change is a large part of culture. In order to keep our culture alive and to rebuild a positive identity and mental health, the Eastern Shawnee must work to preserve and revitalize the plant knowledge we have left. As noted by Nye:

Now you’ll see this like when we went to Petunia’s she remembers gathering plants with her mother but what she and I have in common are the roses, and we went to the grapes and plants because it’s like it was common ground for us see, and the knowledge that I learned from her I can share, it’s, it draws you together and so it doesn’t matter if we’re not gathering camas, cooking it, it leads her into stories, telling me about things I didn’t know about (Interview with Nye, 2003).

Though I found in my interviews that a great deal of the traditional plant knowledge Rosa Bluejacket possessed is now gone, we the Bluejacket women left, can work to preserve what plant knowledge we have. We can pass down the symbolic and material action of plant knowledge and put back the respect and value it once held in the creation of our tribal identity or status; we can rebuild our mental health.

Ideas for Change: Decolonization for Survival and the Future of Eastern Shawnee

Women’s Identity

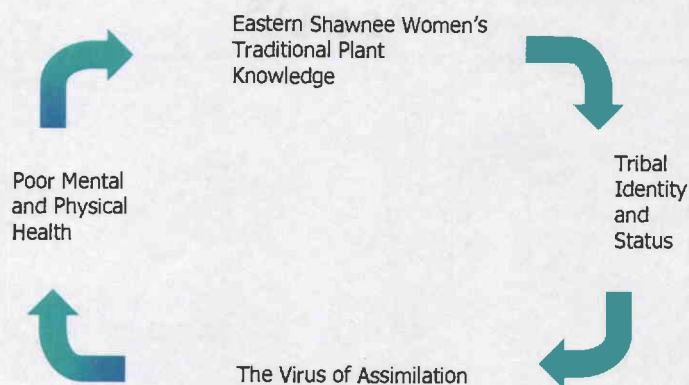
While the role of indigenous women in the family and community, now and in the past, differs from nation to nation, each of the women...stated unequivocally that there was a point in time when there was greater equity between men and women, and that balance between men and women must

be restored if we are ever to have whole, healthy communities again (Mankiller 2004: 8).

A move must be made away from assimilated notions of gender identity or status for Native women. Our difference should not make us the “other” but instead help create our identity. By understanding the changes brought about by assimilation through education, allotment, and relocation, we begin to see the significance of these events in the changing of Eastern Shawnee culture and how strong the push for assimilation and individualism was for Louisa and her children. We can begin to understand how the patriarchal system of assimilation has contributed to our loss of status, value, and respect in the tribe, and to focus on constructive ways to reclaim it. The hardships and pain in our elder women’s life stories can be used as tools for prosperity, adaptation and survival.

Historically, the Eastern Shawnee were pushed into smaller and smaller spaces, separated from each other; they had little access to mental and physical support, and their children were taken and forced to be assimilated and pushed toward individualism.

I refer back to the life cycle of plant knowledge and change:



Eastern Shawnee women’s traditional plant knowledge created our historical identity and status. Through the virus of assimilation, we lost our connection to traditional plant

knowledge and our community. With this disconnection came the spread of assimilated views, Christianity, and cultural separation. The physical and mental separation of our community made Eastern Shawnee women vulnerable to poor mental and physical health. With assimilated views creating poor mental and physical health, access and desire to pass on traditional plant knowledge to future generations, in the creation of a contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's identity, has been weakened. To reset the life cycle of plant knowledge and change, for the positive, we must follow the design of Kim Anderson,

I propose that Native women engage in a process of self-definition that includes four steps: resist, reclaim, construct, and act...very simply...resisting negative definitions of being; reclaiming Aboriginal tradition; constructing a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context; and acting on that identity in a way that nourishes the overall well-being of our communities (Anderson 2000: 15).

Kim Anderson's prescription for resistance, reclaiming, constructing, and acting are tools Eastern Shawnee women can use to implement change, to redefine and create and a positive identity and restore mental health. First, we can learn from the life stories of our elder women. Second, we can "resist" assimilation and the push toward individualism they endured. Third, we can "reclaim" the traditional plant knowledge we still have; fourth, we can "construct" a new identity and status, and lastly "act" on this positive new identity by passing down our knowledge to future generations.

Rosa Bluejacket had little choice over whether her children would be assimilated. They were taught to abandon their culture and become white men and women. The elements that had once created a healthy identity were stripped and they searched for new elements to build who they were. They had been convinced by their school and church

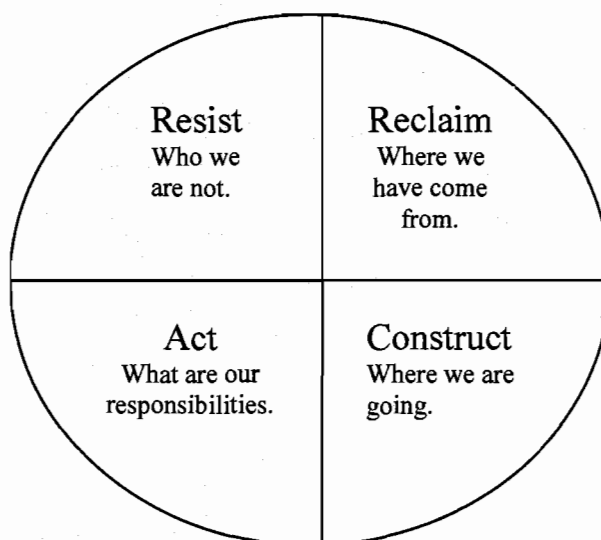
that assimilation was their only key to physical survival. Their need for individual survival became stronger than their desire for community survival. As Odessa discussed, she had been convinced that Christianity would save her from the eternal damnation of being an Indian and for believing in her traditions. Petunia discussed the deaths of her siblings and her own children due to inadequate health care for Indian women. She relocated to find a place where her babies could grow up healthy, not buried in shoe boxes. As remembered by Petunia:

That's the way Indian people were treated back there. And that was the same with my mother. She was in labor for five days. The [Indian agent] made arrangements to take her to the hospital in Miami, Oklahoma. The Miami Baptist Hospital it was. There they would do nothing for her until they were sure they would get their money. By the time they took the baby, dead, she had peritonitis and died in a few hours. This is the treatment meted out to true American people in their own native land. So it was in that time period and so it is to a great extent even today. I suppose it will always be if Indian blood runs in your veins (Excerpt from Petunia's journal given to me during an interview with Petunia, 2002).

We can never fully understand the pain Rosa's, Louisa's, and Pamela's, Petunia's, and Payne's generation experienced and why they believed assimilation was their only key to survival; why they disconnected with their tribal community and changed their status and identity to that of white American women. We can only hear their stories and their children's stories, and begin to see how they were left little choice, how they were brain washed, and how hard they fought for individual survival. "The story of Cherokee women, therefore, is not one of declining status and lost culture, but one of persistence and change, conservatism and adaptation, tragedy and survival" (Perdue 1999: 195). The story of Eastern Shawnee women has been of declining status and loss of culture. However, it also can be one of persistence, change, adaptation, tragedy and survival.

This research has shown that location is key in the amount of traditional plant knowledge Eastern Shawnee women have. That along with location, assimilation, and loss of cultural knowledge has influenced historical and contemporary Eastern Shawnee women's identity.

In my own work, as a student of Ethnic Studies and Anthropology, I have learned tools to help me resist, reclaim, construct, and act. These tools have been first education, second the art of collecting and preserving oral histories, and third the ability to apply my education to the needs of my community. By studying the history of Federal Indian policy I have found the missing pieces to help explain why my family and my tribe were under such great pressure to assimilate. By doing anthropological fieldwork I have realized that other Native communities have had to deal with these same issues of assimilation, the push toward individualism, relocation, and migration and have used the tools to resist, reclaim what is left, construct new identities, and act on those identities. I have learned to collect oral histories to help preserve our culture. I have seen that it is possible to reconnect tribal generations. "Indian women...regardless of the situation they face, [have] turned hardship into prosperity and created an identity for their people that could not be destroyed" (Deloria Jr. 2004: 4) For the Bluejacket women of today we must work to apply Anderson's tools:



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These tools will help us resist negative definitions placed upon us and figure out who we are not. We are not white women; we are Eastern Shawnee, Irish, and a mixture of many other things. Our work must be to reclaim the symbolic and material actions of traditional plant knowledge left, as I have done by researching my family, taking them greens picking, and asking questions about our history. We must figure out where we are going in our tribal community and come together to construct a positive identity out of the contemporary knowledge we have and by putting our traditional respected role back into the tribal community.

By demonstrating we feel strong in our contemporary tribal identity, by attending business committee meetings, speaking out at these events, running for tribal council, and by no longer being silent, we can put our valued role back into the community. For those of us not living in Oklahoma, we can vote during our tribal elections, contribute editorial pieces in our tribal newsletter, and share cultural information with our younger generations. We can ask questions, record the answers, and tell our children. Action is

³⁸ Diagram of "Who Am I?" by Kim Anderson in *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*.

our greatest goal; in my research I have worked to figure out what are our responsibilities as contemporary Eastern Shawnee women. Through applied anthropology I have learned our greatest responsibility is to give back to our community. To give tools that help reclaim our positive, valued, and respected identity as Eastern Shawnee women, tools to rebuild our mental health.

Three examples of how we as a tribal community can reclaim our identity and rebuild our mental health are; first, to create Eastern Shawnee women's teaching circles in both the Pacific Northwest and Oklahoma. This would allow women to come together, create a community, and figure out together how to apply Anderson's model to Eastern Shawnee women's collective identity. A second way would be to create cultural revitalization through annual culture camps³⁹. Bringing tribal elders and youth together would give women like Nye, Narcissa, and Noella the opportunity to learn the knowledge they have lost and feel more confident in creating a tribal identity. Third, we can create interactive cultural learning materials such as cook books. The simple act of creating a cook book can bring differing ages together to pass on traditional plant knowledge and allow all Eastern Shawnee women, regardless of location, access and availability to plant knowledge. We must recreate our strong community core. We must work together to define our contemporary collective tribal identity so that we can help each other in the creation of our own individual Native identity.

Like an heirloom handed down, shame and pain surrounding our Eastern Shawnee identity was passed down the generations; starting with my great grandmother Louisa

³⁹ In the summer of 2002 and 2003 I had the privilege of attending culture camps for the Klamath Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. At these camps I learned how effective they can be at creating cultural revitalization. Culture camps are week long campouts where tribal elders teach the tribal youth about their language and culture.

Bluejacket, to my grandfather, to my mother and now to me. We were taught that assimilation equaled survival, that connecting to our Eastern Shawnee roots was evil and would only lead to our eventual demise. We learned that to survive we must become white. My generation has the ability to give the gift of shame and pain back; to not accept assimilation, and embrace our Eastern Shawnee roots with more freedom and less fear than our past generations. My work toward “action” has been to reconnect my family back to our roots, to bring power and value back to the Bluejacket women in my family, to take my mother “home” again.

Three Generations of Bluejacket Women Picking Greens: First time in over 50+ Years



This photograph represents the bridging together of three generations of Eastern Shawnee women in my family. This is the first time, that I know of, that these three generations have come together to pass on Eastern Shawnee women’s plant knowledge in over fifty

years. By coming together to share our knowledge we can begin to feel strong in the elements that had once and could again create a valued and respected place in our tribal community. By feeling strong we can reset the cycle of plant knowledge and change, we can revitalize our tribal identity and decolonize the assimilation that has created so much negative change for our physical and mental health. We can renew a desire and ability to pass on contemporary plant knowledge to future generations and give them positive elements to create their collective and individual tribal identity.

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Table 1: Kinship Chart

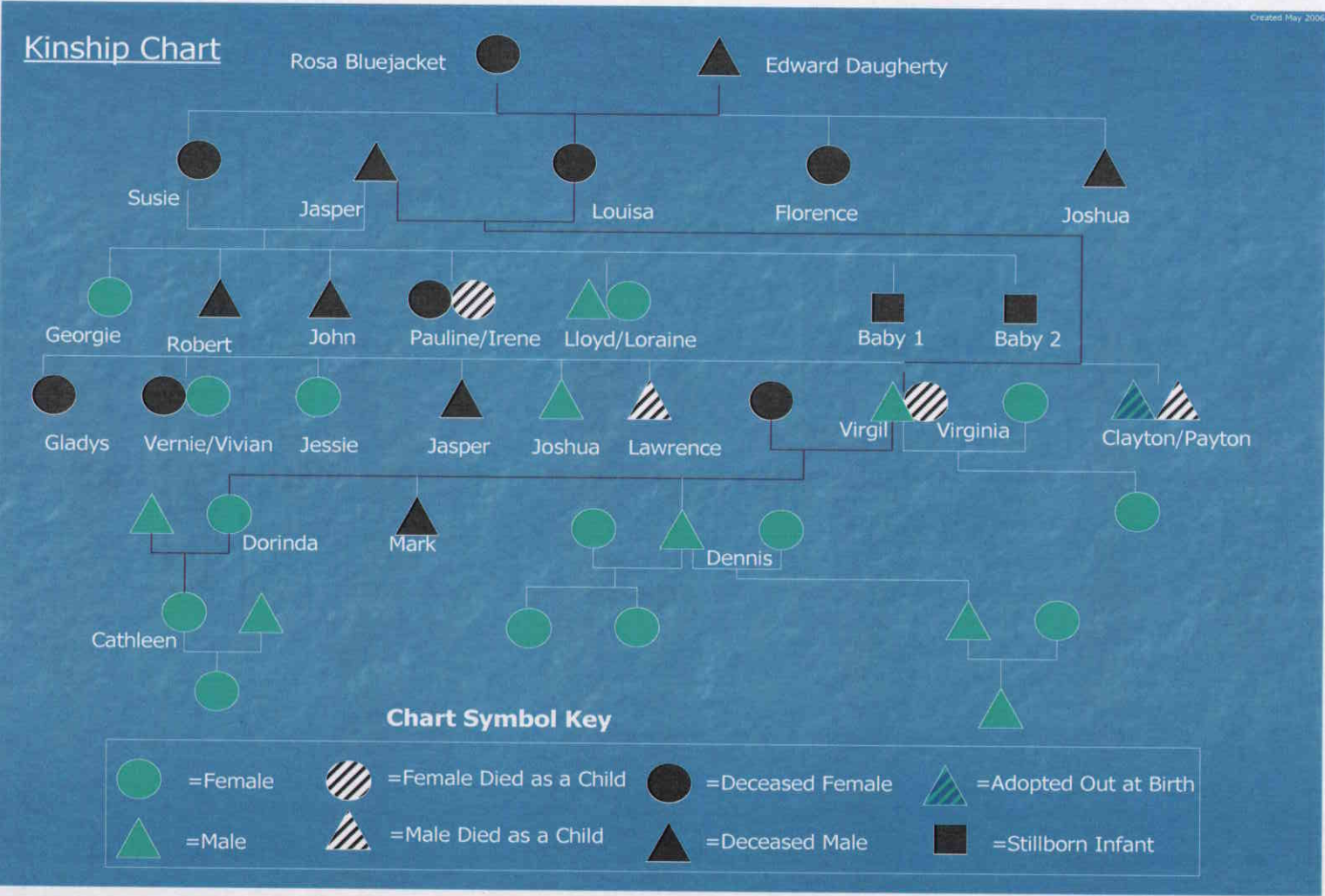


Table 2: Informant Key

<i>Pseudonym</i>	Omara	Olivia	Octavia	Odessa	Nye	Narcissa	Noella	Pamela	Petunia	Payne
<i>Informant Code</i>	OK1	OK2	OK3	OK4	PCNW1	PCNW2	PCNW3	OKPCNW1	OKPCNW2	OKPCNW3
<i>Related to Bluejacket Family</i>					X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Interviewed in 2002 Project</i>					X		X	X	X	
<i>Interviewed in Thesis Project</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Born on Allotted Lands</i>	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
<i>Born off Allotted Lands</i>					X	X	X			
<i>Stayed in Oklahoma</i>		X	X							
<i>Relocated to the Pacific Northwest</i>					X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Relocated back to Oklahoma</i>	X			X						X

Table 3: Plants and Data Discussed

Interviewee	<u>Nye</u>	<u>Narcissa</u>	<u>Noella</u>	<u>Pamela</u>	<u>Petunia</u>	<u>Payne</u>	<u>Omara</u>	<u>Olivia</u>	<u>Octavia</u>	<u>Odessa</u>
Topic:			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Poke Plant										
Sassafras Plant			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Possum Grape			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Wild Onion			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Persimmon						X	X	X	X	X
Corn			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Dandelion Green			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wild Strawberry					X	X	X	X	X	X
Acorns						X	X	X	X	X
Lambs Quarter					X	X	X	X	X	X
Wild Game			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bread Dance			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Death Ceremony						X	X	X	X	X
Loss of Respect						X	X	X	X	X
Abuse and Violence	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X

Table 4: Plants Discussed During Interviews

<i>Plant Name used by Informant</i>	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>North American Plant Distribution (Ohio or Oklahoma)</i>	<i>Native/Exotic Species</i>	<i>Usage</i>
Sassafras	Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Folk Remedy
Possum Grape	Wild Grape	<i>Vitis sp.</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Cultivated, or not in the U.S.	Food Source
Wild Onion	Wild Onion	<i>Allium sp.</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Food Source
Persimmon	Common Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Food Source
Corn	Corn	<i>Zea Mays</i>	Ohio	Introduced	Food/Spiritual Source
Dandelion Greens	Common Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native and Introduced	Food Source
Wild Strawberry	Wild Strawberry	<i>Fragaria Virginia</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Food Source
Acorns	Oak Acorns	<i>Quercus sp.</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Food Source
Lambs Quarter	Lamb's Quarter	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native and Introduced	Folk Remedy
Watercress	Watercress	<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Introduced	Food Source
Poke	American Pokeweed	<i>Phytolacca americana</i> L.	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Food Source
Wild Lettuce	Wild Lettuce	<i>Lacea?</i>	Ohio and Oklahoma	Not Enough Info.	Food Source
Puff Balls (oak)	Oak Leaf Galls	<i>Oak Leaf Galls</i>	Oklahoma, Not Enough Info. For Ohio	Not Enough Info.	Folk Remedy
Mule Tail Weed	Canadian horseweed, Mare's-tail, Colt's-tail, etc.	<i>Conyza canadensis</i> L.	Ohio and Oklahoma	Native	Folk Remedy
Corum	Not Enough Info.	Not Enough Info.	OK	Not Enough Info.	Folk Remedy

Table 5: Overall Frequency of Themes Discussed During Interviews with Informants from the Pacific Northwest

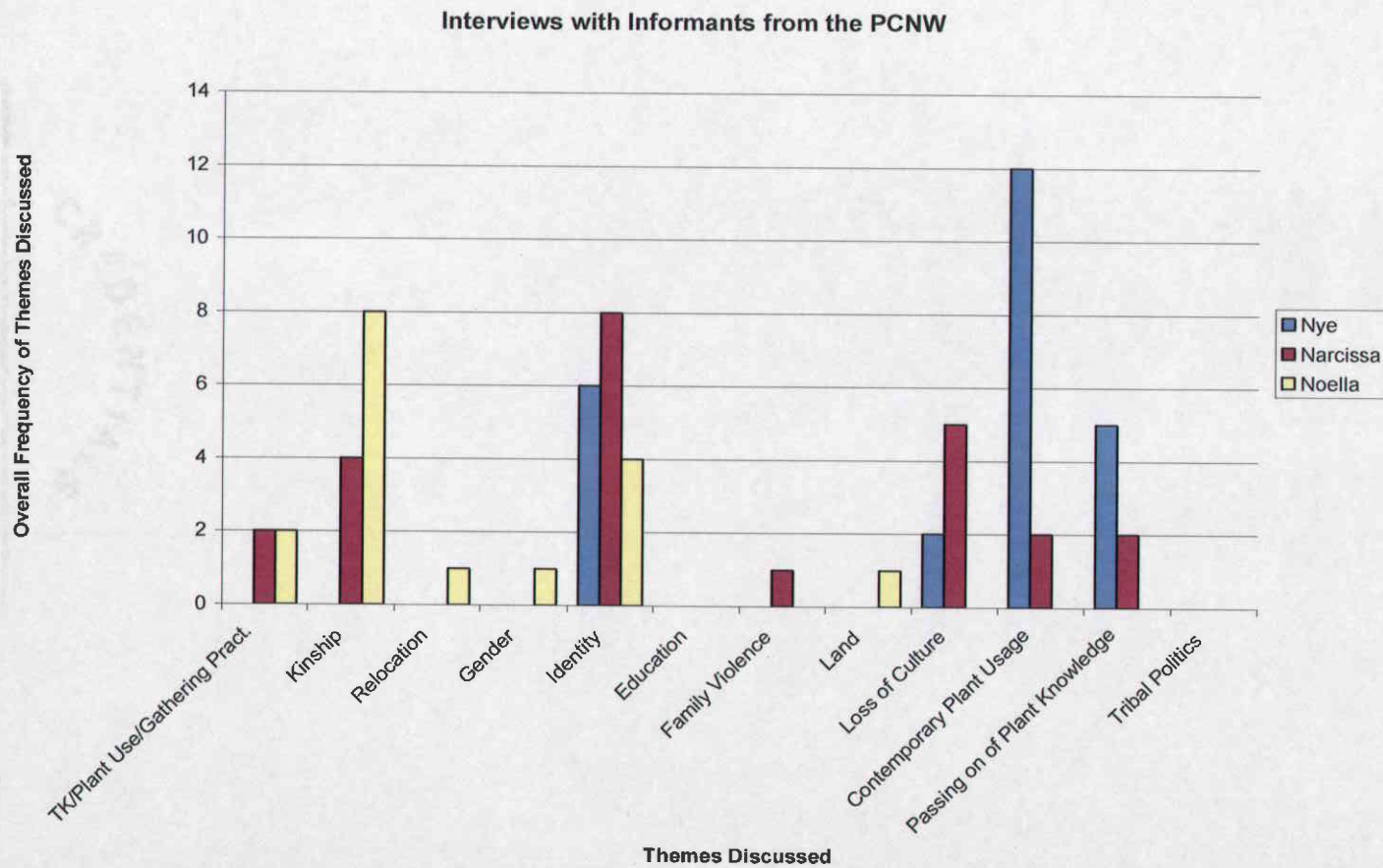


Table 6: Overall Frequency of Themes Discussed During Interviews with Informants from Oklahoma who Relocated to the Pacific Northwest

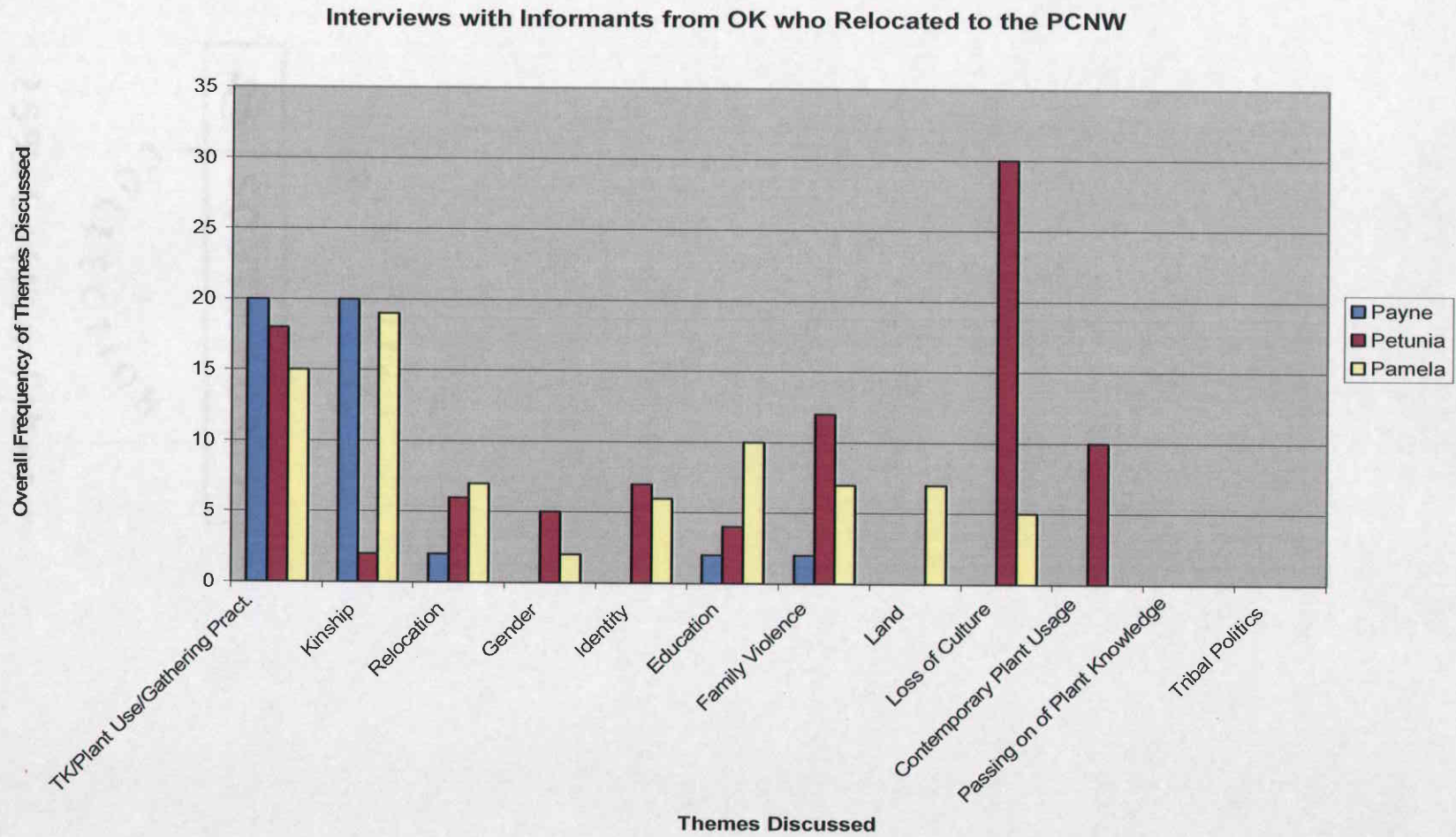


Table 7: Overall Frequency of Themes Discussed During Interviews with Informants from Oklahoma

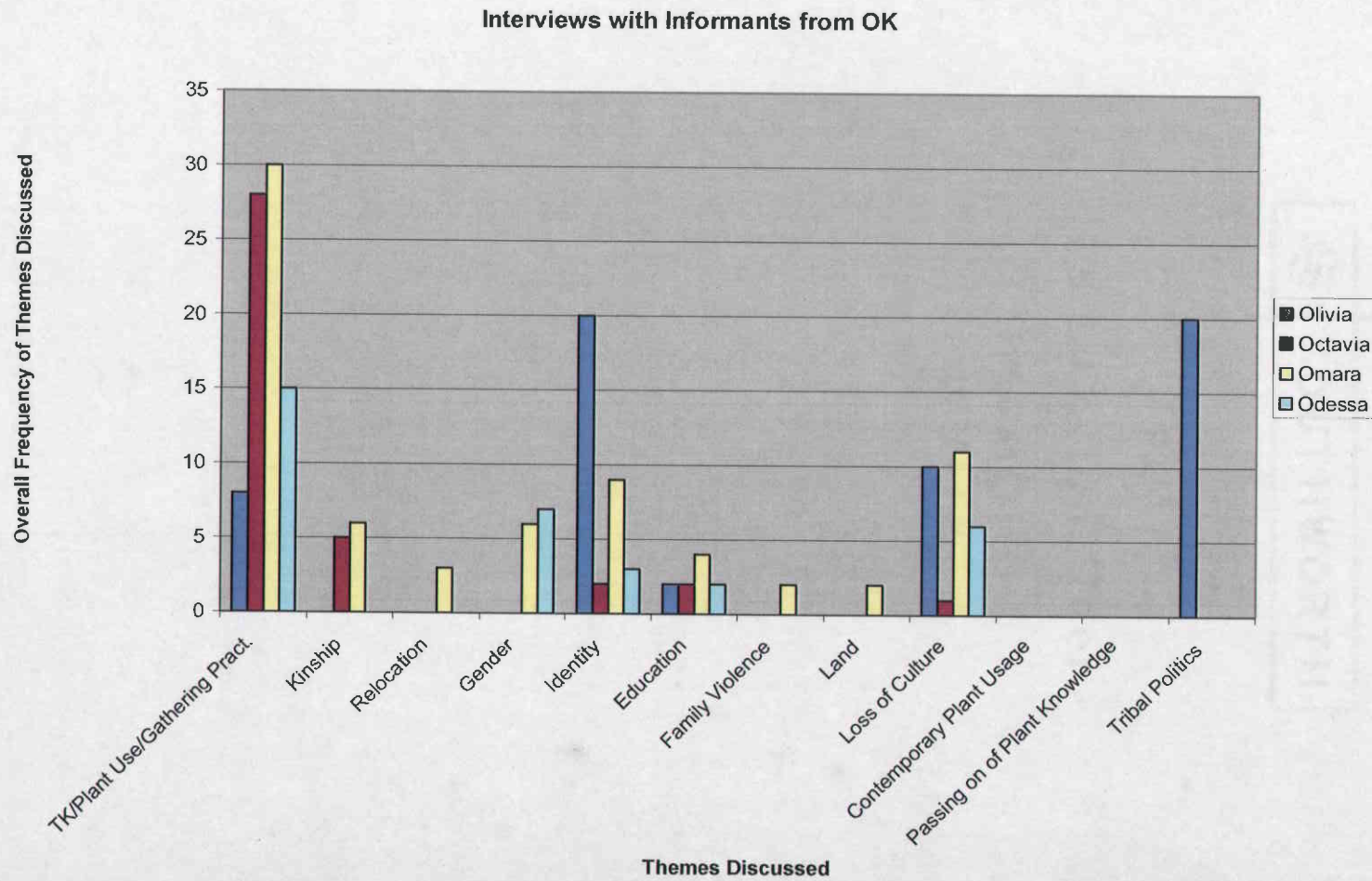


Table 8: Overall Frequency of Themes Discussed During Interviews

