

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Linda Converse Berry for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education presented on September 24, 2007.

Title: Hearing Their Voices: College Experiences of Urban American Indian Women.

Abstract approved:

Dr. Betty Duvall

The purpose of this study is to explore, through their own voices, the higher education experiences of selected urban American Indian females in California community colleges. This study is an attempt to identify pathways to academic success by teasing out college practices and support systems that help Native women navigate educational paths in community colleges. Five urban Native women were selected through convenience sampling to participate in in-depth interviews that reveal their college-going experiences in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area of Northern California.

A narrative inquiry research design was used in this qualitative study as a means to uncover the lived experience of these Native women in California community colleges. Their stories, in their own voices, reveal how they were assisted or hampered in their pursuit of education goals. Six themes in common emerged from their stories:

1. Perseverance in Higher Education
2. Academic Aptitude and Success
3. Institutional Support
4. Challenges and Barriers
5. Native American Identity and Self-Image

6. Invisibility and Isolation

The exploration of challenges, barriers, and institutional support that influenced academic success for these five women assists community college leaders in understanding ways in which those challenges and barriers can be overcome. An intended outcome of this study is to influence instructional and student support practices in order to expand opportunities for success for Native women.

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Hearing Their Voices: College Experiences of Urban American Indian Women

by
Linda Converse Berry

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APPROVED:

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Linda Converse Berry, Author

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DEDICATION

To my beloved daughter Angela,

Who calls me to consciousness

And brings me hope

Hearing Their Voices: College Experiences of Urban American Indian Women

CHAPTER 1

FOCUS OF STUDY AND SIGNIFICANCE

There are always the women, who make pots and weave baskets, who fashion clothes and cheer their children on at powwow... who dance and sing and remember and hold within their hearts the dream of their ancient peoples. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p. 50.

Introduction

Education of American Indians by the United States government was one prong of a three-pronged attempt to attack Native American sovereignty. The three prongs were the creation of a federally-funded and administered educational system for Indians, the imposition of American federal law on all tribes through citizenship of their tribal members (thereby eliminating tribal sovereignty), and the allotment of tribal lands to individual Indians (Olsen and Wilson, 1984; Bordewich, 1996). The system of education established by the federal government for Native Americans has its historic roots deeply planted in racism, with acculturation and assimilation the stated objectives of “white-controlled” Indian education programs (Bordewich, 1996; Huff, 1997). The wholesale attempt to eradicate Indian cultures, traditions, languages, and spirituality (Smith, 2001; Lomawaima and McCarty, 2006; Archuleta et. al., 2000) have led to Indian distrust in the “white man’s” educational institutions (Deloria, 1969; Bordewich, 1996) as well as to a significant high school dropout rate in contemporary America (Babco, 2003; *A Quiet Crisis*, 2003). Bordewich (1996) writes

that “The lost opportunity to integrate culturally intact Indians into American society may have been the greatest failure of public education in American history” (p. 297).

The removal of native children from their homes, their families, their cultural traditions, and their language triggered a cycle of disconnectedness and despair that casts shadows on the struggles of American Indians to attain an education through the mainstream educational system in the United States. Although many American Indians have succeeded academically despite historical policies and practices that attempted to separate them from their Indian selves, many have given up (Chavers, 2000). While the overall college attendance rate in the United States is 62 - 67%, only 17% of American Indians nationwide attend college (Chavers, 2000; Hall, 2003).

Like Native men, Native women have encountered myriad obstacles in their path to educational achievement. Deirdre Almeida addresses the issue of Native women and education, stating that, “Education has been a key factor in making Native women invisible and silencing our voices” (1997, p. 2). A 1980 study by the National Center for Education Statistics reported the highest dropout rate for American Indian females – 31.8% in 1980 (Bowker, 1992). The statistics have not greatly improved in the new millennium for American Indian students. The average dropout rate from high school is over 35% for Indian students (*A Quiet Crisis*, 2003), and in some parts of the country it is 90% (Hall, 2003). A report on postsecondary attainment of 1992 12th-graders (data collected through December 2000) discloses that over 77% of American Indian/Alaska Natives in this group failed to achieve a postsecondary goal: a

certificate, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, post baccalaureate enrollment, or a graduate degree (Adelman et. al., 2003).

Various factors have been suggested for the low educational achievement of Indians, including tribal culture that may value consideration for the community over individual achievement. Some Indian researchers refute this claim, maintaining that “the interruption in the intergenerational transmission of traditional culture imposed by the Indian boarding school era – which separated generations of American Indian children from their tribes and families – continues to have effects today. Many American Indian women missed out on role models for nurturing and child rearing” (Clarke, 2002, p. 2). Prevalent single-parenthood and separation from culturally prescribed roles have affected the ability of Indian women to participate in their children's education, and to delineate their own educational paths (Clarke, 2002; Giago, 2006). Additional compelling factors for limited educational achievement may be poverty and violation of civil rights and cultural identities. “Research shows that Native American students experience difficulty maintaining rapport with teachers and establishing relationships with other students; feelings of isolation; racist threats; and frequent suspension” (*A Quiet Crisis*, 2003, p. 86).

Despite historical disconnectedness, poverty, and racism, there are increasing numbers of native women enrolled in academic institutions, many of whom actively seek to make “life more healthy, prosperous, and spiritual for their tribespeople” (Mihesuah, 2003, p. xix). Although thirty-three tribal colleges provide educational opportunities that are intertwined with native values, traditions, and cultures, most

Indians in college, particularly those living in urban areas, are enrolled in non-tribal institutions and must learn to navigate educational pathways that neither recognize nor honor their native heritages, but instead promulgate distorted perspectives of American Indians. Fore and Chaney (1998), in their study of factors that lead Native students to pursue the path of higher education, comment that “No known study has investigated the role of cultural identification in predicting educational success in American Indian students attending largely Anglo schools” (p. 51). Although the present study is not intended to predict success of American Indian women enrolled in urban community colleges, it will reveal the play of culture upon the academic success of the study participants.

Focus and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore, through their own voices, the higher education experiences of selected urban American Indian females in California community colleges. Although research and literature focused on American Indian women have increased in the last twenty years, “the majority of writings are devoid of Indian voices and are thereby only partial histories” (Mihsuah, 1996). Mihsuah (2003) further writes about the responsibility of the native female in academia to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes about Natives, about tribal history and culture, and about native women in educational institutions. She writes, “We refuse to be invisible members of the campus community. Therefore, the mere presence of our

female, minority selves politically charges university committees, scholarly conferences, and classrooms” (p. 22).

The need to conduct further studies on American Indian students in the United States has been articulated by Strang & von Glatz (2001). Four priority research topics were presented as part of a research agenda in response to Executive Order 13096, American Indian and Alaska Native Education (1998). The four priorities are listed below.

1. Status of American Indian and Alaska Native students in terms of academic achievement, and status changes in the last two decades
2. Status of American Indian and Alaska Native students in terms of educational attainment, and status changes in the last two decades
3. Status of American Indian and Alaska Native students on other education-related outcomes, such as job skills and readiness, health and fitness, substance abuse, etc.
4. Best practices and reform models that have been demonstrated to be effective in enhancing academic achievement, attainment and/or other education-related outcomes of American Indian and Alaska Native students (Strang & von Glatz, 2001).

This study is proposed as an attempt to address the fourth priority by teasing out college practices and support systems that helped native women navigate educational paths in community colleges.

The most authentic way of learning about the experiences of native women in college is to ask them. Narratives are powerful explications of life and experience, and can inform the listener about life-changing events. The following are guiding questions that frame interviews with each participant.

1. Why did these urban American Indian women enter college? Their narratives may yield motivations for urban Indian women who seek educational opportunities at the community college level.
2. What obstacles have they encountered as they navigate the education labyrinth? Their experiential stories illuminate how they were seen as Indians (or seen as non-Indians) and as women, and what services were available to them prior to and during their educational journey.
3. What facilitated their persistence in college? Accounts of their practices and support systems may give clues to how their culture and gender have affected their educational experiences.

These narratives reveal individual paths to higher education and the individual experiences of urban native women who entered community colleges. This study will be limited to American Indian female attendees, past and present, who attended San Francisco Bay Area two-year community colleges. The Bay Area encompasses both the East Bay (including Oakland) and San Francisco and its environs and is home to one of the largest populations of urban Indians in the country (Lobo & Peters, 2001).

Significance

The issue of American Indian women in academia is culturally and politically charged within many tribes, and potentially fraught with ambiguity. By Anglo standards, which often represent a male bias, a native woman with a terminal degree has attained an impressive goal. Tribal standards, however, may put more emphasis on

the aspects of tribal culture that have been sacrificed in order to achieve an educational goal (Mihesuah, 1996). Mihesuah adds that most accounts of native women have been written by Euroamerican males, and their standards of judgment are not standards used by tribal groups. Thus, their accounts of the role of women within the tribes are tainted by their own expectations of the role of women. What is missing in these accounts is the female, native voice. The concept for this study arose out of the desire to learn what brings native women to our educational institutions, and what keeps them there. The stories of how native women navigate the pathways to and within higher education will inform college administrators about the accomplishments and conflicts experienced as Indian women encounter the dominant-culture educational system and will assist college administrators as they consider ways to attract and support marginalized populations such as native women and men. Vine Deloria, Jr. comments that “rarely does anyone ask an Indian what he thinks about the modern world” (1969, p. 225). This study is an attempt to ask the American Indian female what *she* thinks about the modern world of higher education and her place in it.

Summary

Native women’s voices need to be heard. There is an assumption on the part of many non-Indians that they “know” or “understand” Indians and Indian culture and therefore are qualified to speak about them and for them (Deloria, 1969; Mihesuah, 2003). There is a distinct lack of homogeneity among native men and women due to differences in tribal culture, traditions, and worldviews. Just as non-Indians cannot

speak with an Indian voice, neither can Indians from one tribe or clan speak for those from another tribe or clan. Nor can native men speak for native women. Thus, the stories of these native women will necessarily be bound to time and place, tribe and gender and cannot purport to represent the array of experiences of native women entering higher education. The stories can, however, illuminate experiences of native women within community colleges. Administrators can construct meaning from these stories in order to increase access for American Indian populations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The focus of this study is to describe in their own voices the community college experiences of American Indian women in urban San Francisco Bay Area community colleges. Higher education experiences of indigenous peoples after contact with Europeans were initially determined by the assimilation policies of the United States government, by the establishment of tribal colleges, and by attendance at mainstream colleges and universities. I will review literature in the following three areas:

1. Early government policies of educating American Indians.
2. Higher education experiences of American Indians.
3. Higher education experiences of American Indian women.

The section on early government policies of educating American Indians will summarize the history of educational policies of the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s targeted toward Indian nations and the stated objective to force assimilation, destroy tribal culture, and bring about Indian independence from the United States government (Deloria, Jr. & Lytle, 1983). Forcing Indian children into off-reservation boarding schools separated Indian children from their homes, their families, and from the intergenerational transmission of Indian traditions and values, in essence denying them the education that would have assisted them in being successful in their own culture (Archuleta et. al., 2000, Giago, 2006). Although some of the children enjoyed the companionship of their peers, others experienced a deep disconnectedness from their Indian selves that led them into lives of despair,

beginning generational cycles of poverty and substance abuse for which Indians themselves were blamed, rather than the dominant society that created the conditions (Alfred, 1999; Archuleta et. al., 2000; Duran, 2006; Giago, 2006). Explicating the historical policies that denied many Indians the right to follow their traditions in education reveal some of the obstacles that Indians currently face as victims of stereotyping and lowered expectations as they enter college campuses.

The section on higher education experiences of American Indians illustrates that on college campuses American Indians still experience exclusion, racism, stereotyping, and negative treatment from fellow students and professors (Garrod & Larimore, 1997; Chavers, 2000), reinforcing internalized beliefs that to be “Indian” is to be “the other” in the dominant society and among other students of color. The review of literature on educational experiences of American Indians describes influences on their experiences in tribal and in mainstream academic institutions. Chavers (2000) states that Indian researchers are concerned by the limited amount of research conducted on Indian education and by the reported negative outcomes of the research that has been done. In describing typical characteristics of research in Indian education, Chavers explains that concepts “such as cultural differences, cooperative learning, learning styles, learning patterns, and others” are presented in relationship to Indian learning with limited understanding of those concepts and how they affect Indian education, leading to research based on assumptions rather than fact (p. 3). A review of literature on educational experiences of American Indians illuminates the need for more basic research, including research on “the interaction of culture and

education” and “factors that make Native students successful” (Chavers, 2000, abstract).

According to Bay Area Census data, the estimated Census 2000 Indian population in Oakland was approximately 2,600; in Alameda County, where Oakland is located, it was over 9,000; and in the San Francisco Bay Area over 43,000. Although these numbers all represent less than 1% of the populations of these metropolitan areas, it is possible that the invisibility of urban American Indians has resulted in the undercounting of Indians on the government census. In addition, this invisibility in the urban setting and on college campuses may deny Indians access to culturally-based services, and prevent non-Indians from hearing Indian stories.

The section on educational experiences of American Indian women presents some cultural, biological, and social reasons that American Indian women face challenges in attaining educational goals. The U.S. Department of Justice crime statistics convey that the rate of victimization of American Indian women is the highest of all U.S. residents, and is 50% higher than African American males, the next highest group (*A Quiet Crisis*, July 2003). In making a case for exploring the feelings, motivations, and histories of Indian women, Mihesuah (1998) declares “there is much to do to give voice to Indian women” (p. 49). Providing an opportunity for urban American Indian women to tell their stories in their own voices about their experiences in higher education will inform and enrich our educational institutions and will assist in revealing the female, urban American Indian community to those concerned about underserved populations in educational institutions.

Early Government Policies of Educating American Indians

Two hundred years before the forced migration of Eastern tribes to Indian Territory, which is now Oklahoma (Hill, Vaughn & Harrison, 1995), Harvard University was established in 1636 to educate English and Indian students although few Indians actually attended. Dartmouth College was founded in 1769 primarily to serve American Indians, with a motto of *Vox clamantis in deserto* (“a voice calling in the wilderness”) and a seal depicting two American Indians walking from the woods toward the college (Thornton, 1998, p. 82). Although the educational objectives were “civilization and salvation” (Thornton, 1998, p. 80), Indians were invited, not forced, to attend. Most, however, preferred to attend their own Indian-run schools. The Choctaw Academy, for example, existed from 1825-1842, and during the years 1841-1843, after their forced migration to Indian Territory, the Cherokee Nation established their own school system with eighteen schools whereas the Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles all established Indian schools run by the U.S. government (Thornton, 1998).

As one solution to the “Indian problem” of the late 1800s in the United States, some Euroamericans advocated a policy of assimilation rather than termination, to be achieved through education in off-reservation boarding schools in order to raise up Indian children to be “civilized” and Christian. In 1879, Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania was established by Richard Henry Pratt as the first off-reservation Indian boarding school (Thornton, 1998). Indian children were routinely removed from their reservation homes and forced to live and attend school in these boarding schools.

Despite the successful on-reservation tribal school system in tribal nations such as the Cherokees, Congress authorized the building of 26 off-reservation boarding schools between 1879 and the early 1900s. The disastrous effects of this policy can be seen in the Cherokee literacy rate, which went from 90% under tribal control to less than 50% in 70 years of U.S. government control (Huff, 1997).

Carlisle Indian school became the model for a system of educating young American Indians in a manner intended to “kill the Indian” through assimilation and acculturation (Bordewich, 1996; Archuleta, Child, & Lomawaima, 2000; Churchill, 2003). Indian students were subjected to the humiliation of having their hair cut short, native dress confiscated and burned, and to disciplinary and sexual abuse that caused many to run away. Further, many Indian students were subject to cultural genocide as they were forbidden to speak their native languages or practice their native traditions and religions (O’Brien, 1989; Levchuk, 1997; Duran, Duran, & Brave Heart, 1998; Archuleta, Child, & Lomawaima, 2000; Churchill, 2001; Giago, 2006). In 1891 and 1893, the government authorized the use of troops to force attendance at off-reservation boarding schools when families or tribes resisted sending their children. In 1900, over 21,000 Indian children were held captive in these schools (Churchill, 2001).

Olsen and Wilson (1984) write

Throughout the twentieth century, Native American education has been subject to the capricious whim of Congress as expressed through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. From Richard Henry Pratt’s nonreservation boarding school in the 1880s through John Collier’s temporary restoration of tribal culture to reservation curricula in the 1930s to Hildegard Thompson’s commitment to preparing Native American children for life in an urban,

technological world during the termination and relocation programs of the 1950s, Native American education has been controlled by non-Native Americans with Native Americans the object of political change rather than the active participants in the institutions affecting their lives. (p. 200-201)

The misguided attempt to commit cultural genocide against American Indians through education casts a dark shadow on the struggles of American Indians to achieve legitimacy and credibility through the American educational system. Unlike policies targeting African-Americans that excluded them from white schools, social events and meeting places, policies affecting American Indians were designed to strip their culture from them and educate them as white (Deloria, Jr., 1969; Macgregor, 1970; Olson & Wilson, 1984; Bordewich, 1996; Alfred, 1999; Mihesuah, 2003). The boarding school system was a major component in the attempt by the United States government to “physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes, and tribal affiliations” (Archuleta, Child, & Lomawaima, 2000, p. 19). As Huff (1997) declares, “American Indians are the only group in this country over whom the federal government has held exclusive educational domain, partly because many treaties included education, and partly because it became the bedrock of the pacification and later assimilation policies” (p. 167). Respected tribal leader Manuelito, who, along with other headmen, signed the treaty between the Navaho nation and the United States, undoubtedly recognized the importance of the education clause for the Navaho people. But he could not have envisioned the brutal enforcement techniques the U.S. government would use against the Indians, including kidnapping native children to send to off-reservation boarding schools, and

withholding food from families who refused to surrender their children (Levchuk, 1997). Forced assimilation and acculturation were used against Indian nations as a form of pacification.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the three initiatives of allotment, citizenship, and education reached their peak and threatened indeed to “kill the Indian.” Allotment, contained in several general allotment bills such as the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, was intended to divide Indian reservation lands communally held by the tribe into individual holdings “allotted” to Indian families, with the remainder returned to the federal government or sold to non-natives (Olson & Wilson, 1984). Reservation allotments among families were deliberately dispersed throughout reservation lands in order to break up the traditional family groupings and hasten assimilation (Deloria, Jr. & Lytle, 1983). With allotment came the Curtis Act of 1898, which removed tribal sovereignty in Indian Territory (Deloria, Jr. & Lytle, 1983). With allotment also came citizenship bestowed upon Indians living in Indian Territory, thereby completing the legal attack on tribal sovereignty in the hope that “Native Americans would quietly disappear into the larger society. But most Native Americans determined not to accommodate.” (Olson & Wilson, 1984, p. 74; Wilkins, 1997). Gabriel Horn (Seminole) writes about the cultural genocide that threatened his Indian identity until his two Indian uncles began to teach him his place among his people.

I know that genocide remains the most perverse human act. It eradicates entire peoples. It annihilates whole cultures. It rips beauty, wisdom, and understanding from the world and robs a people of its identity.

Thus, when it comes to the act of genocide, I also know there can be no alternative to finding ways to fight for life. As long as there are those among us

who believe in the old ways of seeing and being, there can be no surrender to genocide. Ever! (Horn, 2003, p. 75).

Higher Education Experiences of American Indians

There are currently thirty-three tribal colleges serving American Indian students, twenty-eight of which are fully accredited. Tribal colleges have a dual mission: to provide quality education to geographically isolated American Indian populations, and to “rebuild, reinforce and explore traditional tribal cultures” (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 1999, p. A-3). However, of the over 140,000 Indian students attending college in 1996, only 7% of those attended tribal colleges (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 1999). How, then, did the more than 130,000 Indian students fare at mainstream academic institutions?

A report on affirmative action and American Indians informs us that outreach and recruitment efforts increased American Indian college enrollments by 80 percent between 1980-2001 (Americans for a Fair Chance, 2004). Still, since American Indian and Alaska Native students represent only about 1 percent of the student population of the United States and are notable in their tribal and linguistic diversity, national education studies rarely provide generalizable findings concerning these populations (*Characteristics of American Indian & Alaska Native Education*, 1997). Many of the outcomes listed by the National Center for Education Statistics report outcomes for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students but not Native American students (see *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2005* at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/dropout05/tables/table_01.asp). To address this problem,

the U.S. Department of Education added an Indian education supplement during academic years 1990-91 and 1993-94 to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) data collection program on K-12 schools. These data reveal that BIA, tribal, and high Indian enrollment (over 25 percent of student population) schools are located primarily in rural areas and small towns. The 1993-94 SASS recorded almost 500,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in public K-12 classes. It is noteworthy that 53 percent of this number attended public schools classified as low Indian enrollment schools. It is also noteworthy that 10 percent of BIA/tribal school-enrolled students dropped out or withdrew from school, but only 5 percent of American Indian students in public non-BIA/tribal schools, both high and low Indian enrollment schools, had withdrawn from school (*Characteristics of American Indian & Alaska Native Education*, 1997).

These statistics suggest that there are factors other than isolation from one's ethnic group that can lead to school dropout rates. American Indian students as a whole face educational obstacles common to minority students and some obstacles unique to colonized peoples. Imposition of Western culture on American Indians has superseded indigenous ways of knowing through "colonial educational systems, laws, and compelled socialization" (Smith, quoted in Grounds, Tinker, & Wilkins, 2003, p. 124). V. Y. Mudimbe's criteria for colonization aptly describe the process by which American indigenous tribes were conquered: 1) the physical space of the colonized has been taken over by the colonizer; 2) the minds of the colonized have been "reformed" by the colonizer; and 3) the economic conventions of the colonized have

been taken over by the colonizer (Morris, 2003, p. 124). Colonization of the mind is a direct result of the colonized people's acceptance of the language and meanings of the colonizer (p. 125 – Deloria's idea). Taiaiake Alfred describes this as internalized oppression. Ward Churchill writes that “educational ‘mainstreaming’ has served the purpose of cultural imperialism” (2003, p. 259).

Vine Deloria, Jr., and Daniel Wildcat address the issue of mainstream education for American Indians in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (2001). Wildcat proposes “indigenizing” education for American Indians. By this he means taking over educational philosophy, pedagogy, practice, and the educational system itself in order to revitalize “ways of knowing and systems of knowledge that have been actively repressed for five centuries” (p. vii). His rationale is that a mechanistic worldview (typically Western) is unable to explain a great deal of experience. Thus “an entire realm of *human experience in the world* is marginalized, declared unknowable, and, consequently, left out of serious consideration” (p. 12). In comparing indigenous metaphysics to Western metaphysics, Wildcat explains that the Indian awareness of self is the beginning of understanding and of learning, and the Indian experience of place is embedded in traditional American Indian cultural practices. Indian experiences with formal education result in a disconnection between what is learned through experience and what is learned in the classroom. Although this disconnection may not be so palpable for the Western child raised and immersed in a technological and mechanistic society, it creates a painful cognitive dissonance for the Indian child who lives in two realms (p. 12-13).

This cognitive dissonance can have social, psychological, and economic consequences for American Indians. American Indians have the highest suicide rate of any minority group. The unemployment rate in 2000 was highest for American Indians at 7.6 percent, compared to 2.9 percent for whites. American Indians earn on average 78 percent of the median family income in the United States (*Facts on Affirmative Action and American Indians*, 2004). The mean figure might be much lower due to unemployment as high as 66 percent on some reservations. This is not to suggest that non-indigenous forms of education are the sole cause of failure on the part of some Indians to accomplish academic, financial, and personal goals. Rather, given that American Indians have suffered as defeated and colonized peoples, it might be worthwhile to identify factors within their educational spheres or tribal traditions that provide opportunities for their success.

Higher Education Experiences of American Indian Women

American Indian enrollment in higher education increased from 1990-1999 by 41 percent, and from 1995-1999 by 10 percent at 2-year colleges and 11 percent at 4-year colleges and universities. Despite these increases, American Indian enrollment at 2 and 4 year institutions remains low. Like other women of color, American Indian women enroll in college in greater numbers than their male counterparts (American Council on Education, 2002) and earn more degrees. During the academic year 1996-1997, 65% of Associate degrees, 60% of Bachelor's degrees, 62% of Master's

degrees, and slightly more than 50% of Doctor's degrees awarded to American Indians were earned by women (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

American Indians enrolled in 2-year academic institutions in greater numbers than in 4-year institutions between 1976 and 1994. In the mid-1990s, however, native enrollment in 4-year institutions equaled that of 2-year institutions. American Indian women enroll in college in greater numbers than native men, a difference of 20 percentage points in 2002 (Freeman & Fox, 2005). Native women are also more likely to be enrolled in college part-time than American Indian men, 44% compared to 41%. Retention data reveal that retention rates in college are lower for Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians than for whites and Asians (National Science Foundation, 2003).

Hill et.al. (1995) interviewed five American Indian female teachers with ties to their Indian heritage to discover how these women balance their tribal cultures with the dominant Euro-American culture in which they teach. "Marsey" was guided by her Chickasaw grandmother to value the Chickasaw traditions and to pursue an education within the white educational system. Marsey's love of history inspired her to explore her Indian heritage and reveal it in the classroom in meaningful ways. Relating teaching to her gender and ethnicity, she says, "Women are caregivers and lend emotional and economic support. They stand for morality and spirituality...My job as a teacher is to try to help each person discover what is in themselves...to find a level of learning...to develop, and to grow" (p. 7).

In *Women as Learners* (2002), Hayes and Flannery relate women's stories of feeling marginalized throughout their educational experiences (pg. 147). Since research on women's development describes women as more relational than men, women are more likely to have their identities and voices obscured by the non-relational communicative strategies utilized by men. Gilligan writes that "A new psychological theory in which girls and women are seen and heard is an inevitable challenge to a patriarchal order that can remain in place only through the continuing eclipse of women's experience" (1982, p. xxiv). Marginalization is more pronounced for women of color, and they are more likely to feel like outsiders due to their fewer numbers in educational institutions (in comparison to Caucasian women). "For women of Color, a central issue in reclaiming a voice may be regaining the ability to articulate identities that have been repressed because of experiences in a racist and sexist culture" (Hayes and Flannery, 2002, pg. 96). Too often, this repression is replicated in the college classroom through inequitable power relationships related to gender and color. In the classroom, men are more often called upon, encouraged, and mentored; they are less often interrupted or ignored (Hayes & Flannery, 2002). Women may be subtly influenced by what Hayes describes as the "hidden curriculum" that reinforces stereotypes about women's capacity for learning (pg. 28).

European sex-role stereotypes depict women as passive, dependent, and even incompetent, and silent women tend to accept the powerlessness they experience (Belenky et.al., 1986). But Native American women are depicted in stories as "healers, women warriors, women artists, women prophets. But above all, they [Native

children] heard stories of woman as the divine creator, woman as a supernatural power, woman as a force of transformation in the universe” (Hazen-Hammond, p.1-2). Paula Gunn Allen speaks of the balance of male and female power that certain Indian rituals depend on, and the growing force that “is helping Indian women reclaim their lives” (Allen, p. 50).

Although the college graduation rate for American Indians rose by 10% from 1991 to 2001, ACE President David Ward acknowledges that if the goal for underrepresented minorities is to attain educational equality with whites, more must be done to improve Indian enrollment in higher education (American Council on Education, 2002). An examination of the obstacles and bridges encountered by native women may assist administrators in reaching the goal of educational equity for all members in the community.

Summary

The United States government policy to eradicate American Indian cultures and traditions through government-run boarding schools for Indian children failed to accomplish its goal of cultural genocide. However, when Urban Indian families have been removed from the reservation for more than one generation, they face challenges in connecting to their cultural heritage, and Western modes of education do little to support the reality of the American Indian in our urban environments. If educational institutions intend to expand Native enrollments and academic achievements, they must assist Native students in achieving visibility in those institutions.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF STUDY

In soliciting narratives for this research, a message is given to those with stories that their stories are important, and will in some way lead to meaning-making. Other approaches were considered for this project; however, the great advantage to narrative storytelling is revealing a voice.

Creswell explains qualitative research as that which seeks to explore “a social or human problem” through the words and perspectives of the informants (1998). Qualitative studies tend towards an interpretive view of “social reality [which] can only be understood by understanding the subjective meanings of individuals” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 86). Contrasted with positivism, which claims the existence of an objective reality outside one’s perception of it, the interpretative tradition proposes that there are alternative ways of viewing reality. The aim of interpretative social science is enlightenment and “through enlightenment, rationality in a critical, moral and reflective sense” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 94). Progress towards enlightenment and, ideally, social justice can be achieved by asking the “informants,” those who live the event or process that one proposes to study.

Interpretive research presupposes more than one world view and suggests that the world is complex, thus avoiding narrow viewpoints. Bogden and Biklen write that qualitative researchers are “more interested in exploring statements of general social processes...[due to] the assumption that human behavior is not random or idiosyncratic” (1998, p. 32). The “way of looking” will affect the interpretation of

“facts” (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p. 115). The interpretative approach avoids a positivistic cause-effect explanation of behavior, but seeks to make actions understandable to others; “people’s actions are explained in terms of their reasons or motives” (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p. 127). An advantage of qualitative research is getting closer to others’ perceptions of their world. “If you want to understand the way people think about their world and how those definitions are formed you need to get close to them, to hear them talk and observe them in their day-to-day lives” (Bogden & Biklen, 1998, p. 32). Studies that include participants from cultures other than the dominant culture may be better served by strategies that avoid narrow worldviews and instead attempt to capture the authentic world views of those who live inside those cultures.

A limitation of the interpretive approach is its relativism, in the same way that positivism is criticized for its claim of independence from theories that explain it. The relativistic nature of the interpretive stance marries it to social conventions, thus resulting in what can be labeled a “rule-governed” assessment (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). Goodman responds to this concern by claiming there are “many ways the world is, and every true description captures one of them” (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982, p. 135).

Narrative inquiry is a methodology that resides within the interpretive approach. It is used in this study to reveal the higher education stories of urban American Indian women. Creswell (2002) writes “When people tell stories to researchers, they feel

listened to, and their information brings researchers closer to the actual practice of education” (p. 520).

Methodology of Study and Rationale

Narrative research in education has become more prevalent as teachers reflect on their practice. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) published one of the first overviews of narrative research in education. They expanded their exploration of narrative research with their book *Narrative Inquiry* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in which they explore the use of narrative and the key terms of “change” and “learning” in the inquiry methods of anthropologists Clifford Geertz (1995) and Mary Catherine Bateson (1994). In addressing narrative as a way of coming to terms with a changing world, Bateson claims “Our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories” (p. 11).

The purpose of Clandinin’s and Connelly’s exploration into narrative inquiry was intended to illuminate their research practices in education and reveal the tensions that arise between the narrative approach and the more traditional approaches to educational research (referred to by Clandinin and Connelly as “the grand narrative”) (2000). These tensions include temporality, which in the grand narrative is seen as “timelessness,” but for Clandinin and Connelly is inextricably woven into people, action, certainty (“tentativeness”), and context. The grand narrative looks for the universal, but the narrative approach reveals the unique story of a person in context. “In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories” (p.43). The issue of justification is paramount in narrative inquiry. The personal interest in the

topic must somehow be linked with a public interest to reveal a social significance.

Clandinin and Connelly ask “What do we imagine that we can learn about the phenomenon by engaging in narrative inquiry that will be special or unique?” (p. 123).

Max van Manen (1990) writes about the uniqueness and temporal nature of lived human experience, and the importance of reflection upon the experience in order to derive meaning from it, remarking that lived experience “can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as past presence” (p. 36). In his presentation of the phenomenological method of inquiry, he emphasizes the importance of language, and the ability of the researcher to hear “the subtle undertones” (p. 111) of the speaker. There is also silence to be heard: literal silence when the speaker cannot reveal parts of a story, silence of the researcher so the story can unfold without manipulation, and “epistemological silence” that results from a confrontation with the “unspeakable” – that which is beyond our ability to describe or name (p. 113). Narrative and anecdote arise from the use of language in relating experience. For van Manen, the act of reflection on the experience is what reveals its meaning. “Anecdotal narratives (stories) are important for pedagogy in that they function as experiential case material on which pedagogic reflection is possible” (p. 120-121).

A compelling argument for the importance of narrative is presented in *The Call of Stories* (1989) by child psychiatrist Robert Coles, who as a resident in a psychiatric ward was first introduced to the professional use of stories by a supervisor who advised him over and over to listen to patients’ stories. He told Coles,

The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is *their story* (Coles, 1989, p. 7).

The supervisor cautioned Coles against the premature embrace of a theory and demonstrated that the Greek root of the word “theory” translates as “I behold.” “To behold” may require looking with one’s ears as the story is revealed and reflected upon.

Storytelling has a long and rich history, valued as a tool to transmit social knowledge and foster relationships in indigenous cultures of the Americas (Lawrence & Mealman, 1999). The telling of the story, of the lived experience of how we learn as children and adults, has somehow gotten swallowed up by the grand narrative that measures and plots and derives generalizations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Brooks and Clark (2001) describe the advantages of using the narrative process to understand transformative learning:

Narrative provides a way to connect the past, present, and future. Narrative allows us to reflect upon and make sense of our life stories in the present, and to connect those stories to what we envision our future to be. Our stories may include plots, themes, protagonists, denouements, and foreshadowing of the future.

Narrative moves us through the psychological, social, cultural, and historical dimensions. Euroamerican culture tends to maintain an “individualistic understanding of the self within society” (p. 2). Brooks and Clark demonstrate how the personal narrative of the self is informed through “our past and the past of our family, ancestors, community, nation, and world” (p. 2). Our individual experiences become

part of the psychological, social, cultural, and historical dimensions we inhabit, and we create meaning for ourselves through our narrations.

Narrative makes use of cognitive, affective, spiritual, and somatic abilities and vulnerabilities. Our stories help us to justify and rewrite our past, and impose order on what may feel chaotic to us. The affective and spiritual components of some stories touch our lives, our beliefs, and our actions.

*I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
All we have to fight off
illness and death.
You don't have anything
If you don't have the stories.
(Silko, p. 2)*

Words, language, and stories are part of the American Indian oral tradition that preserved the personal and tribal history of the Indian peoples. Today, Indian poets and novelists “map distinctive identities conveyed through a powerful language. Words, then, are not mere referents, they are life-giving” (Coltelli, 1990, p. 2). In a 1985 interview, Laguna/ Sioux novelist and poet Paula Gunn Allen talked about how acculturation changed the lifestyle of American Indian women. The effect has been a loss of respect and status for women in both women-centered Indian cultures and those that were not and the horrifying battery against Indian women that continues. Allen desired to document the shift in status but has been unable to procure grant funds because “They’ll pay me to write about Indian novels, but they don’t want me to write

about Indian women. And that says something, says something terribly important” (Coltelli, 1990, pg. 14).

Despite the push to acculturate, many native women continue to embrace the narrative fabric of their families’ lives. Angela Wilson (1998) relates the value she experienced listening to her grandmother’s stories. “It is through the stories of my grandmother, my grandmother’s grandmother, and my grandmother’s grandmother’s grandmother and their lives that I learned what it means to be a Dakota woman, and the responsibility, pain, and pride associated with such a role” (p. 27).

Researcher Disclosure

I am a European-American-Indian, with Choctaw ancestry on my mother’s side. She was born and raised in McAlester, Oklahoma – Indian Territory when her father was born there in 1899. Growing up, I heard the family stories that Granddad’s mother was Indian, was in fact Choctaw. I have confirmed that my grandfather, his siblings, and his mother all were assigned numbers on the Dawes Rolls. Even his white father was listed as the parent of an Indian. From my grandfather, I heard nothing of this. I did hear stories of my mother’s first husband, the father of my oldest sister. Years later I learned that he, too, is Indian. There were some things we didn’t talk about, or even know to ask about, as children growing up in a middle-class suburb of Los Angeles, California.

As I pursued this topic in Indian Country, which is defined as any place where Indians are, I was undoubtedly at first perceived as a Euroamerican outsider, despite

my grandfather's and great-grandmother's status as enrolled Choctaws. Eventually I was accepted as a researcher of mixed-Indian heritage who was permitted to pursue this research study. My professional justification for examining the going-to-college experiences of Indian women is my position as a senior administrator at a community college. I see outreach and recruitment efforts targeted towards African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians and seek to discover what impels American Indians to enroll and stay in college when their very presence is cloaked in invisibility.

Data Needed

In narrative research, the data needed takes the form of "personal, firsthand accounts" that relate the experiences of an individual (Creswell, 2002, p. 521). This study is comprised of individual stories of five urban American Indian women, and it explores why they enrolled in Northern California (San Francisco Bay Area) community colleges. Providing American Indian women an opportunity to tell their stories will illuminate some of the ways in which they navigate the many paths to higher education. Some of the questions asked included the following: What were some of the reasons you enrolled in community college? What have you found challenging and rewarding about attending a community college? Did you share with any student services staff that you are a native student, and if so, can you tell me about it?

Study Site and Participants

The study focused on selected urban American Indian women who are currently enrolled in Bay Area community colleges or have attended within the last five years. According to Census 2000, California has the largest American Indian population in the nation, almost double that of Oklahoma, the state with the second largest population (Ogunwole, 2002). Bay Area Census data reports that the San Francisco Bay Area has over 43,000 Indians living within its environs (Bay Area Census, 2000). Thus, the study was limited to Bay Area community colleges.

Criteria for participation in the study included the following:

- Past or present attendance at a Bay Area community college;
- Lived experience in the urban environment of the San Francisco Bay Area;
- Identification as an American Indian woman, which implies bi-cultural experiences.

Data collection began with in-depth interviews with five urban American Indian women who are or who have been enrolled in a Bay Area community college. Study participants were identified using opportunistic and convenience sampling (Creswell, 2002), and names of potential study participants were collected through referrals by members of the local American Indian community (the American Indian Charter School, La Clinica de la Raza, Native American Health). The number of participants was selected in order to conduct in-depth interviews that will move beyond the superficial and provide space for interviewees to tell their stories and reflect upon their

narratives. While I anticipated that common themes would emerge, I intended to provide space to unfold the unique story of each participant.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through audiotaped interviews with women I have met in Indian Country, or to whom I have been referred through acquaintances. The San Francisco Bay Area Indian population is multi-tribal, a result of Oakland being a relocation site for many reservation Indians during the relocation efforts of the 1950s, so my data collection efforts were not focused on any particular tribe (Olsen & Wilson, 1984; Grounds, Tinker, & Wilkins, 2003).

After selecting participants based on the criteria for participation, I conducted two sets of interviews with sufficient time between the sets to allow for transcription of the interviews. The length of time scheduled for both sets of interviews was sufficiently flexible to accommodate the narrator's gift of her time at a mutually agreed-upon site, to permit taping of the interview, and to provide a distraction-free and private setting. The primary criterion for the setting was that it would be a place where the participant felt comfortable.

The first interview included signing the informed consent form, collection of biographical data, including tribal affiliation/identification, and open-ended interview questions. At the end of the first interview I provided each participant with a journal and asked that she reflect in writing upon stories she shared with me, writing details

and capturing emotions that she may have forgotten or was reticent about sharing in the first interview.

A second interview session was scheduled to explore stories in greater depth. Participants were asked to bring their journals in order to share stories or feelings they remembered as they reflected upon their experiences. Although the length of interviews was not predetermined, they lasted an average of ninety minutes.

After transcribing all interviews, I created a restory of each participant's experiences on her journey through education. I then shared the restories with the participants, asking them to check for accuracy of content and authenticity of voice. Each participant responded that I had accurately and authentically revealed their experiences and their voices (emails from participants).

Data Analysis Procedures

As I reviewed the stories of these American Indian women, I identified themes that occur and reoccur from story to story. In speaking of field texts, Clandinin and Connelly remind the researcher that movement must be made from field texts to research texts (2000). In this movement to research texts, I attempted to retain the uniqueness of the experience for each individual participant by capturing her authentic voice, rather than imposing my researcher voice. Richardson (1997) comments that although the researcher is always present in the text, so, too, is the storyteller.

It is the task of the researcher to construct meaning from the various field texts derived from interviews. Rather than being laid out as a "series of steps," this process

is one of “negotiation” that begins when the interviewing begins (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pg. 132). Thus, as the researcher and “meaning maker,” I worked closely with the field texts as I searched for narrative threads, patterns, and themes.

Strategies to Ensure Soundness of Findings

In qualitative studies, researchers refer to “verification” rather than “validity,” which is a hallmark of quantitative research. Many qualitative researchers shy away from the language of quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba speak of “dependability” and “confirmability;” Eisner refers to “consensual validation;” and Wolcott writes about understanding instead of validation (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) prefers the term “verification,” describing it “...as a process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study” (p. 194).

Van Manen writes about objectivity and subjectivity in the context of exploring the lived experience of research participants. His definition of objectivity refers to the researcher’s stance, in that the researcher is “oriented to the object,” in other words to the participant and is faithful to report the experience/narrative of the object. To Van Manen, “subjectivity” refers to the researcher’s ability to remain “perceptive, insightful, and discerning” (van Manen, 1991, pg. 20).

There is always a possibility in narrative research that a participant may provide false or distorted data, a risk in any research study which relies on a narration for data. “Nietzsche once observed that all language, and therefore all truth and error, is metaphoric in origin” (van Manen, 1990, p. 49). Narrative research reveals individual

experiences that the researcher may restore to place in chronological order. The researcher collaborates with participants while collecting their stories, and validates the accuracy of the restore with the individual participants. After creating the restores, I contacted each participant to share with her the gift of story she had provided, and to check for accuracy of content and authenticity of voice.

Strategies for Protection of Human Subjects

The Oregon State University Institutional Review Board has strict guidelines that must be followed by researchers using human subjects. This research proposal was reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board in July 2005, and potential participants were contacted only after the research proposal was approved by the IRB. In the summer of 2003, I completed the Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams course through the National Institutes of Health website. I have adhered to the guidelines in the *Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Research Handbook* (IRB, 2002) by obtaining signed participant consent to conduct interviews. In addition, I employed the following strategies:

1. Prior to the first scheduled interview, each participant received a letter describing the interview process and the protections afforded by informed consent.
2. At the first interview session with each participant, I obtained a signed consent form (see Appendix B).

3. At the beginning of each interview session, the interviewee was informed that she could stop the interview process at any time should she feel uncomfortable.
4. Each interviewee was informed that if she shared information that she wished, upon reflection, that she had not shared, that information would be removed from the restory.
5. Participants were assured of their own anonymity through the use of a pseudonym selected by the participant.

Summary

Chapter 3 presents the study design and the rationale for choosing narrative inquiry to explore educational pathways of five, urban American Indian women. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use narrative inquiry to explore their research practices in education and to capture the unique story of a person in context. Max van Manen (1990) writes about the ability of narrative to reveal the uniqueness of lived experience, and Robert Coles (1989) discusses the importance of listening to stories as a way of understanding the truth of the lives of the storytellers. Brooks and Clark (2001) describe the advantages of using the narrative process to understand learning that transforms us.

Participants for the study were chosen from urban, American Indian women currently or previously enrolled in San Francisco Bay Area community colleges. The data that comprises this study consists of in-depth narrative interviews with

participants and common themes identified from transcripts of the recorded interviews. The narratives were reshaped into restories organized around the common themes revealed in each narrative, and these restories were sent to participants for verification of accuracy and authenticity. Participant identity was protected through the use of a pseudonym selected by each participant, and human subject protection was strictly adhered to according to the guidelines established by the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Research findings are presented through the authentic narrative voices of study participants in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents data gleaned from conducting two sets of interviews with all the participants: urban, American Indian women who have attended community college in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The chapter begins with a definition of terms used in the narratives. Following the list of terms is a restory of each participant's educational journey, shaped from interview data and presented thematically, beginning with a family history that impacted her journey and ending with the participant's sense of "being seen" as an American Indian community college student. Each narrative begins with a description of how contact with the participant was established and particulars about the interview setting and is followed by a detailed narrative of each woman's journey arranged in five sections: Family Story; Academic Path; Native Identity; Challenges and Barriers; and Invisibility. At the conclusion of each narrative, I offer my reflections on the interview process and on shaping the stories.

Each restory is presented as a description of the participant's experiences in community college and the ways in which family dynamics, native identity, and encounters with the institution itself impacted those experiences. The voices of the participants are an integral part of the narratives; they were invited to tell their stories and were assured that I would attempt to portray their authentic selves through their

own voices. I have reproduced their words faithfully from the interview tapes, upon occasion combining sentences on the same topic from different interview sessions. The completed restories were sent to each participant for review, specifically to correct inaccuracies and to assess the narrative for authenticity. This was a critical part of my research study. These women were not treated as “informants” of the world of native women in community colleges. They were asked to relate their own unique stories, and I am honored that they agreed to share these stories with me and with you, the reader.

Inevitably there were similarities in their stories, and those similarities are presented in Section II: Emergent Themes. An examination of the themes is not intended to invite comparisons; rather, it is intended to demonstrate that many of these experiences are common experiences for Native women on the path to educational achievement. All participants chose pseudonyms for this study, wishing to protect their privacy and family confidentiality due to the extremely sensitive and compelling content shared by each about her personal struggles.

Glossary: Working Definitions

American Indian or Native American. These terms are used interchangeably. Vine Deloria, Jr., Standing Rock Sioux and well-respected professor and scholar, used both terms in his published works (1969, 1983, 2001). Rayna Green, Cherokee and Director of the American Indian Program at the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution, also uses both terms in her publications (1984, 1992). Russell

Thornton (1998) provides a discussion of the naming and identity of the indigenous peoples of North America.

Bear Butte. A sacred place for the Lakota and Cheyenne nations. An entrepreneur from Arizona plans to build a biker bar and music amphitheatre to attract more tourists to the Sturgis Bike Rally in South Dakota. American Indians have protested against this development.

Boarding school era. Beginning in 1879 with the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, thousands of Indian children have been educated in off-reservation boarding schools operated by the federal government, many forcibly taken away from their families, and others eager to attend schools that their siblings and parents had attended. School enrollments decreased in the 1940s, as Indian children had greater access to public education. For narratives of boarding school experiences, see *Away from Home* (Archuleta et.al., 2000) and *Children Left Behind* (Giago, 2006).

College assessment/placement test. Many community colleges require “matriculating students” – those with educational goals – to take placement tests in math and English upon entry to the institution in order to determine their levels in these foundation skills.

EOPS. “Extended Opportunity Programs and Services” departments were designed to provide additional college support systems to low-income and educationally disadvantaged college students.

“Oakland Riders.” Four Oakland police officers in West Oakland were accused in 2000 of assaulting citizens and falsifying police reports. The officers were ultimately acquitted of all charges.

“Promotion of underachievement.” An interviewee used this term to refer to the practice of setting lowered academic expectations and career goals for people of color, particularly women of color.

Relocation. Indians from many reservations were “relocated” off the reservation by the government to urban areas in order to find financial stability through jobs in the city. Oakland and San Francisco, California, were both major relocation cities.

Restory. A narrative researcher retells a participant story by rewriting it in chronological sequence and highlighting key elements of the story. See *Educational Research* (Creswell, 2002).

Schizoaffective/schizophrenic. People with schizoaffective disorder and schizophrenia experience hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking.

Trail of Tears. This name refers to the removal of the Cherokee Nation from their homelands in the Southeast to Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma.

Transgenerational or intergenerational trauma. This refers to trauma that is experienced by successive generations, such as the trauma triggered by experiences of slavery, the Jewish Holocaust, and the genocide of the indigenous peoples of North America. See *Healing the Soul Wound* (Duran, 2006).

Urban Indians. In the 1950s, the United States government relocated many Native peoples from their tribal homelands into major metropolitan areas such as Chicago,

San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles. An urban Indian is one who dwells within a city (a city is defined as having more than 2,500 inhabitants who live closely together), but for many Native Americans relocated to cities, the connection to their tribal homelands was not severed. See *Is Urban a Person or a Place?* (Lobo & Peters, 2001).

Section I: Hearing Their Voices

Women have power. Men have to dream to get power from the spirits and they think of everything they can hoping that the spirits will notice them and give them power. But we have power. Children. Can any warrior make a child, no matter how brave and wonderful he is?

Maria Chona, Papago

Narrative 1: Red Wolfe

Making Contact

I was given the name and contact information of a potential participant by a mutual friend, who had already paved the way for me by discussing my study with this native woman. She indicated to him that she was interested in my research, so I contacted her to establish a meeting time to explain the study and conduct the first interview.

The Interview Setting: June and July 2006

I asked the participant to select a setting for the interview in which she would be comfortable, and she invited me to her apartment. When I arrived, she greeted me warmly and offered me fruit and lemonade that she had prepared. I explained the purpose of my study, and when she reiterated her willingness to participate, I reviewed with her the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B), obtained her signature, and asked her to select a pseudonym for the research study. She immediately chose the pseudonym “Red Wolfe.”

Red Wolfe gave me permission to tape the interview, and within a few minutes lost awareness of the tape recorder. After gathering demographic data, I began asking her formal interview questions. The first interview lasted about one hour and fifteen minutes. At the conclusion of the interview, I gave her a journal and asked her to jot down stories she might remember, so we could discuss them during the second interview. We met again about a month later after she returned from a prolonged visit to her mother and family in Idaho. She was disturbed by the visit and spoke about feelings she had about her family relationships and her identity as a native woman. This is Red Wolfe's story.

Family Story

Red Wolfe grew up in Boise, Idaho, and left her mother's home when she was 16. She moved to the Bay Area by way of Oregon and then Santa Cruz, California. There was much family turmoil in her young years: her Native American father divorced her mother and remarried twice, and there were alcohol and drug abuse in the family. Red Wolfe managed to avoid substance abuse through engagement in sporting activities in high school, but an older sister has brain damage from crystal methamphetamine use, and an older brother was killed by the San Francisco police in a drug-related incident. At a fairly young age, Red Wolfe was aware of her parents' drinking and partying and attributes her father's cancer-related death to his unhealthy lifestyle. Although she has fond memories of her father, she suffered in relationships with her step-mothers and step-father. She describes her childhood:

My childhood was a rough one, and I was basically pushed around, neglected, abused, and when my mom remarried her second husband he was always telling us that we were going to amount to nothing and that we'd grow up to be prostitutes. I think he wanted us to be his prostitutes. My mom never showed up when I played basketball, volleyball, or any sports event; she never supported me. She never showed up to any of my choir practices, and I was head of the Pep Club. I tried to engage in all sorts of stuff but I didn't get any support from my mom, and finally when I left I said bye-bye....I've got a new family now.

Red Wolfe relates more stories of abuse suffered by her step-sisters and step-brothers and is still pained by their suffering and the consequences of her parents' choices. She embraced diversity at a young age, playing with other mixed-race children, and endured rules where they were not allowed in her house. When she was 14, she and a friend were lectured at length by the friend's grandfather and admonished for spending time with friends of color. Red Wolfe knew that her father was Native American and was also aware that the family hid that fact by claiming that he was Italian. Red Wolfe's mother did not acknowledge her husband's Indian identity and still harbors very bitter feelings toward him even though he is deceased.

After Red Wolfe married a well-educated African man in California, her mother did not speak to her for five years. But when the grandchildren were born, her mother was willing to make amends in order to see the children. Red Wolfe has two multi-racial children: they are African, Native American, and Caucasian. She speaks with pride of her children and seeks to support them in ways that she was not supported.

Academic Path

Red Wolfe completed high school in Boise, but barely made it through her senior year even though she was an A/B student. She commented that her high school teachers were upset with her when she made B grades because if she had applied herself she would have made A's. This was during the time she moved out of her mother's house and was living elsewhere in town. She moved to California and the Bay Area at age 22 where she met her African husband. After they married, she attended one of the local community colleges but dropped out due to morning sickness. Red Wolfe withdrew from college to have two children, but she knew that she would return to study health care. When she traveled to Africa she was touched by the lack of available health care there and was inspired to study nursing.

Red Wolfe returned to community college when she was 30 years old, the only one of her siblings to attend college, and began taking prerequisite courses for the registered nursing program. She expressed how much she enjoyed being in college, "I loved it. It made me feel young. It made me feel like I was exercising my brain." Her husband, however, pressured her to enroll in a short-term program for nursing assistants, so she could seek immediate employment even though the wages were very low – about \$7 an hour at that time. She completed the nursing assistant program and went to work for a few years in a nursing home. She describes the job as very physical and demanding.

I loved it though. I respect my elders. I don't know if I got that from my Native American heritage. But I really respect my elders and feel sorry for them especially when people put them in nursing homes – their family members. A lot of them are forgotten. It took its toll on me plus the wages I

just had to let it go even though it hurt and the older — the people I was taking care of really wanted me to stay. It was so hard. So I really want to go back [to college] to be a nurse so I could come back if I needed to and be in charge instead of at the bottom.

Red Wolfe had a plan to attend community college in order to open up career opportunities. She wanted to obtain her degree in nursing and then take classes in massage therapy and herbal medicine in order to have the skills to practice alternative medicine. But when she and her husband separated, she was hampered as a single parent struggling to support two children with no additional child support from her estranged husband. Nevertheless, she views community college as the avenue to assist her in providing for her children.

I always tell my kids you're not going to go far without an education. I have a high school diploma. I've been out there trying to find a good job, a secure job with benefits and all that. It's very difficult right now. Also a job where you can grow and expand and move up the ladder — that's difficult too. And I'm finding more and more the older I get the more difficult it is to start a new job and come in there without the degree. Yeah, I have experience, but I also have varied experience with different sorts of levels and to try and combine all that experience and then sell it to an employer is often difficult.

When Red Wolfe first enrolled in community college in California she went through the assessment and orientation process. She assessed at the pre-algebra level in math and at college level in English. She refused to enroll in pre-algebra, enrolling instead in algebra and earning a B. She laughs that had she purchased the book, she might have done better. She received a C in her English 1A class, somehow ending up in a class composed primarily of high school students. The students who were disruptive tried to change grades in the roll book, and the instructor blamed Red Wolfe even though she was a married woman with two children. I probed whether or

not a counselor had commented on or congratulated her for placing into English 1A since only about 10% of entering students taking a community college assessment test place this high. But she said that no counselor or instructor commended her for her high placement in English.

Red Wolfe's academic goal was to have obtained her registered nursing degree and license by the time she was 40 years old. At the time of the first interview, her 40th birthday had passed, and she had not yet entered a nursing program although she has completed with good grades the majority of the rigorous prerequisites for the nursing program. She equates having this degree and a hospital job with "having my act together," and states that she has failed herself by failing to accomplish her goal. She last enrolled in community college in 2003 and tells herself every term that she needs to get back to college and register for courses. She says that her struggles to support herself and her children and her strong commitment to meeting her children's needs, continue to interfere with her ability to make space for her own education.

Native Identity

Red Wolfe spoke of early memories of being viewed as native and of being called a "wild Indian" by her grandmother. Although that could have been just a figure of speech or a term of endearment, it resonated with her perception of herself as Indian. She would carry around a postcard of an Indian chief in a headdress and tell people that it was a picture of her father. Her experience with her own father was that he was absent much of the time. He had been raised in juvenile homes, and although he was

quite bright according to Red Wolfe, she believes that he did not complete high school. Red Wolfe is Choctaw through her father's lineage, but most of her life she believed that they were of the Cherokee nation. Her father claimed to be Italian rather than native because of the rampant discrimination against native peoples in that part of the country (Utah/Idaho area). Red Wolfe remembers meeting her paternal grandfather once when he was already elderly. She remembers that he wasn't "quite all there" and remarks that he, too, was an alcoholic.

When questioned how she identifies herself on documents such as applications for college admissions, Red Wolfe shared that she claims herself as native and Caucasian. Ethnic and racial identity have become critical issues for Red Wolfe as she has matured, attempted to navigate the social systems of the dominant majority, and given birth to multi-racial children. She states that when she tried to qualify for the EOPS program, "they shut the door on me every time....they didn't offer any explanation; they didn't give any details on why I was being turned down." Red Wolfe has had additional experiences of being perceived as a middle-class white female when she has applied for social services. In her words,

I've gone into the social services agency...and they just look at me and say oh, you're just a privileged white girl...But I'm not going there because I want a free ride. I'm going there because I need help feeding my kids. That's when I didn't have child support, and I'd lost my job, and things were just...oohh...spiraling down terribly. And that sort of below-human feeling. I believe there was stereotyping. Some people see me as a privileged white girl...I'm still waiting for those privileges.

The racist environment in which she was raised became more intrusive as she entered her teens and associated with non-white friends. Her friends of color were not

welcome in her house, and she endured lectures on the perils of associating with those people who were “nothing but trouble.” So while she was developing her own sense of self as a bi-racial Native and Caucasian young woman, her family sent her the overt message that the Native part of her was a part to deny and to be ashamed of. Even in her current diverse circle of friends, a friend of hers attempts to paint Red Wolfe as “the white girl,” thereby denying her native consciousness. Adding to her identity confusion is the frequent perception that she is Italian or Hispanic. She laughs that people will often come up to her and begin speaking Spanish, and she says that she feels invisible as a native woman.

Red Wolfe commented that in certain community college classes she was willing to share her native identity. She took a “Racism in America” class that addressed the issues of racism that concern her, and she revealed in class discussions that she is part native. She felt that particular class was very respectful of the racial diversity of the students. Although she did not attend events on campus targeted for native students (and she said that she was unaware of there being any such events), she did encounter some native students. “I acknowledged them but I didn’t say...hey you’re native, what tribe are you from? But I acknowledged them as like I *see* them.”

Challenges and Barriers

Red Wolfe has experienced many challenges in her educational journey. During her formative years she encountered neglect and family substance abuse, and her academic achievements and extracurricular activities were largely ignored. At 16 years of age she left home and then struggled to complete a high school diploma. After

completing high school, she left Idaho to begin a new life in California and embarked upon an educational path intended to lead to a registered nursing degree and license. Two pregnancies interrupted her plan, and when she eventually returned to college, her husband insisted that she complete a short-term, low-wage certificate. Finally, single-motherhood necessitated her finding employment to support her children, and her educational plans were again put on hold. I asked Red Wolfe if she had experienced barriers from the educational institution itself. Her response was the following.

Not at all. It's my own personal barrier trying to arrange my schedule and making sure my kids have all their needs met at the same time. That's another reason why I had to put school on hold was because I was in school plus I was engaging in my own activities and taking drum classes and dance classes. At some point my son, he was very young at that time, he started acting up and throwing funny temper tantrums, and I just felt I needed to put everything on hold for a minute and spend some time giving my kids the attention they needed, 'cause I felt like I was on some kind of flight to avoid everything, and it's just all about me and what I want and need right now. I had to just stop and refigure that. And then when I did that I ended up sacrificing everything that I love to do at the same time. It's about trying to find a balance, and still getting some good things for me, that make me feel good and make me feel like I'm accomplishing something.

Red Wolfe did not refer to the failure of the institution to assist with her financial difficulties by refusing to allow her to enroll in the EOPS program. To this day she does not know why she was disqualified for the program since she met the two main criteria: 1) qualifying for the Board of Governors fee waiver, and 2) enrolling in 12 units of credit. Red Wolfe believes that completing a degree at the community college would give her that sense of accomplishment she yearns for and quiet the voice that tells her she's a failure on many levels.

I feel like I've already failed by getting a divorce. I separated in 1999 and started looking for a replacement. Here it is 2006 and I can barely get a date. When I got married I didn't want to be a statistic and get on that divorce list and be another family separated. And I didn't want my kids to go through that. So it was very devastating, and it still hurts me on some level.

I was thinking of picking up a class this fall. I guess at some point I gave up hope and said I'm never going to do this...this is impossible...and so I tried to scratch it out of my mind but every now and then it comes back up and I start to feel like a failure.

I questioned Red Wolfe regarding whose voice is telling her that she's a failure, and she admitted that it isn't her voice but someone else's and spoke again about her abusive childhood. She recognizes that although she has encountered many negative voices on her path, all of which have characterized her as a failure, she says now that the voice that matters the most is her own voice.

Invisibility

Red Wolfe has experienced years of being invisible. She was neglected by her family and not recognized as being native. Her husband derailed her from her career track and then left her for a 63-year-old woman. She has striven to become the first of her siblings to achieve a college degree, but the failure to achieve her educational objective weighs heavily upon her. She struggles to assert herself as a native woman and to achieve a degree or certificate that will enable her to more effectively provide for her family. She expressed her belief that her gender and ethnicity contribute to her inability to make headway in an educational institution.

As we spoke, Red Wolfe neglected to give herself credit for her accomplishments: finishing high school; completing most of the prerequisites for a nursing program;

earning an overall community college G.P.A. of 3.5; supporting her two children and providing them with a strong multi-racial identity. She is a resilient survivor of a horrific childhood, and she is finding her voice as a native woman. She spoke of her heroes: Martin Luther King, Jr.; Gandhi; Malcolm X; Geronimo; Leonard Peltier and commented that she felt like she needed to stand up for something. So she protested the war in Iraq and was arrested along with other protestors. While the others played games to entertain themselves, she couldn't help remembering what had happened to her brother when he was in the custody of the police, and she broke down and cried.

I asked Red Wolfe if it would have made a difference in her persistence in or re-entry into college if she had been “seen” as a native student when she registered for classes or met with a counselor. She answered,

It probably would have assisted me a lot in trying to finish like the experience I had with the EOPS program. I thought they were the worst, but I think it would have helped me a lot to stay in school and finish school. I am beating myself up because I said when I was 40, I would have my act together and that meant having a degree – my nursing degree.

I just turned 40 in April and my last few jobs I keep hitting this same kind of dead end road. I feel like I'm too good for the jobs I have, and I'm being held down at a lower level. I don't get the respect I deserve. I have a strong work ethic. Even in my dating life I think I have a little chip on my shoulder 'cause I'm more interested in men who have their act together, and they don't want to deal with a single mom with two kids who's broke.

Reflections on Red Wolfe Interviews

Wanting to hear these female, native voices, I transcribed the interviews with Red Wolfe and with all other participants. I caught nuances that might have been missed by a professional transcriptionist. For example, Red Wolfe laughed frequently in reaction to information she was sharing with me. As I took note of the laughter, I realized it

was not mirthful. Instead, it seemed to express regret for those moments in her life that had been painful. She speaks passionately about ethnic identity and compassionately about justice. But when she speaks of herself, she refers to her failures rather than to her accomplishments. In her narrative, she expresses that she has not lived up to her own high standards, and she does not excuse herself even though she encountered formidable barriers on her path to education.

The heart of the family is the mother because life comes from her.

Onondaga Proverb

Narrative 2: Enlightin

Making Contact

A year ago I met a young woman who had contacted me for assistance on a private matter. As we spoke in person, I gazed at this supposedly African American female and knew that her face told a deeper story about her racial lineage. After meeting with her two or three times, I finally mustered the courage to ask her, “Are you Native American?” She sat back, smiled, and said, “You are the only person who has ever asked me that.” I explained my reason and described my research study, and she expressed interest in participating. Thus began my study relationship and friendship with the young woman who chose the name “Enlightin” for this research study.

The Interview Setting: July and August 2006

I asked Enlightin to select a setting for the first interview where she would be comfortable, and she asked if I would meet her at a local café where she studies. When I arrived at the café, she greeted me warmly and offered me some of the food she had ordered. I explained the purpose of my study; when she reiterated her willingness to participate, I reviewed with her the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B), obtained her signature, and received her permission to tape the interview. After

gathering demographic data, I began asking her the formal interview questions. We spent about two hours together in this noisy café, with me worrying the whole time about the quality of the audiotape because of the background noise. Enlightin is an interviewer's dream. She takes a question and reflects on it, expounds on it, and brings out subtle nuances. Her strong voice and strong sense of self easily overcame the distractions of the café.

At the conclusion of the first interview, Enlightin agreed to meet with me for a second interview after I had transcribed her story from the audiotape. We met about a month later at another café, this time sitting outside so there would not be too much inside noise. We did encounter traffic noise, and again Enlightin's strong voice drowned out the distractions. This is Enlightin's story.

Family Story

Born at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, Enlightin grew up in a rural part of Marin County, near Mt. Tamalpais. Her father is a first-generation U.S. citizen, his parents having immigrated from Scotland and Norway. Her mother is African American and Native American – Blackfoot or Sioux. Her parents met as students at the University of California at Berkeley. At the outset of the interview Enlightin began speaking of her childhood memories of being native and practicing native traditions with her mother. She spoke about walking an old Native American trail from the side of Mt. Tamalpais to the ocean, a trail she says that the Indians walked to go fishing in the ocean.

I used to love to walk that trail because I always thought I was going to get something at the water, even though I wasn't really bringing anything back physically from the trail. I would think metaphorically I am – I'm still fishing. It was an amazing mental adventure.

Enlightin is unsure of the Indian nation or nations that her people come from. Her maternal grandparents were sharecroppers and lived in the Dakotas or in Idaho. She told me of the fragmented stories she had heard as a child.

My grandmother's husband was like Geechee, from the East Coast, the Carolinas. The people there are so native; he looked so native. We don't know anything about his family. His father was an alcoholic and died. He froze to death on the train tracks after [his wife] died in childbirth. So he was drinking and froze to death on these train tracks....and basically left my grandfather an orphan at the age of 12. And he just started to follow the rails; he just walked the rails. This is the Geechee grandfather.

It was after he met her grandmother that Enlightin's grandfather became a sharecropper in the Midwest. Enlightin speaks of her grandmother's mother and states, "She was not African. She had straight hair and brown skin. She identified herself as Black although she didn't quite look Black. She looked more native from what I've seen." According to the stories Enlightin was told, her relatives were runaway slaves who intermarried with Indians, and when it was safe they came out of hiding and became sharecroppers. She regrets that so much of her family history has been lost because her grandmother "was so vague. She would never give you the whole story." Enlightin summed up her family history:

The thing is, no one really knew. We had the ceremonies, we had the diets, we had the no eating dead food. Most of our native experiences centered around food and our home environment. But we could never identify it, just like Africans who came into the U.S. They can't tell you what part of Africa they're from. They just tell you this is what we did, this is our favorite food, and then by deducing all of that we can figure out what tribe we came from

in Africa. That's the only way I'm going to figure out what tribe I came from in America.

As a child, Enlightin and her mother stayed on a reservation in Lassen County every summer, and her father would visit them there when he could take time off from work. In addition to her own native and Black mother, she had an "Indian mother" who was a member of the tribe on the reservation, and who would tell her that "Since you can't find your tribe, this is your new tribe." In relationship with their "new tribe," they would walk for miles to hunting and cooking areas, and the adults would train the children how to walk quietly and how to clean their catch.

Enlightin's father remarried when she graduated from high school, and she and her mother moved to the East Bay to live. She discussed the culture shock she experienced because of the city environment and what she calls a lack of nature. She had a child when she was 20 years old, and her child's father was killed in an accident when her daughter was only four months old. Her first encounter with social services occurred when she applied for assistance so she could support her child, and she was told she had to declare her race.

I said I don't know which one to pick; I like them all. And she said well, what is your father, then? And I said my father is European. And she said fine! You can just be white, then. And she said it in a way that was such a put down that I got the point that it didn't really matter to other people. That whatever I was it was just gonna be a check on a box. So now I put whatever it is that is going to have them serve my paperwork better.

From this encounter, she surmised that no one really cares about her authentic ethnicity.

Academic Path

Enlightin attended both private and public high schools in Marin County and earned “As.” The private high school she attended was a small, college preparatory high school that favored seminars and group projects as learning methodologies. She finished her high school education at a large, public high school. In her eyes the high school campus, and Marin County itself, celebrated diversity as being “more exotic.” It was only after Enlightin moved to Alameda County that she felt forced into “the Black box.”

Enlightin began attending community college in the Bay Area in 1993 while her daughter was still very young. She claims that she had no educational goal at the time and was not connected to the college. She dropped in and out and collected a multitude of “Ws” on her transcript. She struggled from a lack of resources and was not provided any services. She maintains that

There wasn't anybody like me, so everyone wanted to serve me simply as a Black person. And I wasn't welcomed by the other Black people because I wasn't Black. That's what I was saying about Marin versus here: resources are scarce [in Alameda County], everyone kinda divides up into their groups, and people kinda clump together, and it's like musical chairs. Where do I sit down? The chairs are all taken by people who are going to be just Hispanic or just this or just that. And I was like, ok, where do I sit?

Her initial journey at the community college was guided by her making Indian headaddresses and someone recommending that she enroll in design classes at a community college. However, she ran out of money and was forced to drop out because she had no knowledge of how to navigate the financial aid systems at the

college. When she met with a counselor, she was advised to enroll in general education courses that were transferable but was never asked about her career goals.

When asked how it felt to be her in the college classroom, Enlightin commented that although the instructors treated her well, the students could be “kind of cruel.”

It was kind of uncomfortable I guess. I mean, people are not very nice. And because I was lumped in with the regular Black kids...but the regular Black kids were like we don't want you over here with us...you're not one of us. There wasn't a native...even another bi-racial person there.

So you have to be really careful and either just try not to discuss it or if you're with Black people you have to pick Black, 'cause if you don't pick Black, they're all going to be mad at you and act like you're some kind of sell-out or that you're trying not to be Black. It's a sensitive subject, and it really shouldn't be because of all the places in the world I've been there are more people of multiple race [here] than I've ever met anywhere else, but it's one of those places where they're least proud of that...or least in touch with that.

Enlightin stated that she has enjoyed the instruction she has received through the community college but was frustrated by her lack of knowledge about the system. No counselor asked her what *she* wanted to do; rather, the counselors *told* her what academic path she should travel. She expressed regret that she had been led in many different directions, without a clear educational goal. On her initial academic journey, Enlightin did not take assessment tests nor did she attend any orientations. She did not ask for tutorial assistance or supplemental instruction assistance. She only accessed counseling services where she was told what she needed to do. She was not asked about her career goals and says that she was at the mercy of the college counselors. She then dropped out of college and went to work to support her daughter.

When she returned to community college a few years ago, Enlightin realized that she could achieve an educational goal by embarking on a clear path. She had learned

what stations she needed to stop at along the path, so she took the assessment test for English. She came back to college with a goal in mind and a determination to achieve that goal.

So I could [now] say just tell me what to do to get to A and B...don't tell me what to do. This is what I want to do. Just tell me how to get from here to there. But when I was younger it was take this class, take general ed, take that class, depending on who you asked. And I think it came down to that in the minds of people who used to look at my transcript and think oh, she didn't want her education. But no, I did, I just didn't know what that education was yet.

Now, she has defined that educational goal for herself and has recently applied to law school.

Native Identity

Enlightin has a strong sense of her native self. She recalls the native practices and traditions taught to her by her mother, her grandparents, and the tribal members of her “adopted” tribe in Lassen County. Her mother taught her the importance of eating natural food and avoiding poisoning her body with toxins, and they grew their own fruits and vegetables and raised chickens and rabbits when Enlightin was a child. Enlightin says that her practice of eating natural food separated her from her non-native friends who ate fast food. Enlightin's own sense of difference separated her from others when she moved to Alameda County. She experienced the culture shock of moving from a rural environment to an urban one and created two worlds for herself – the one at home and the one outside. In the outside world, she tailored what

she shared of herself with others in relation to “how much prisoners they were in the urbanism” because her way of life seemed foreign to them.

In high school in Marin County, Enlightin was not confronted with her differences. She says that “Everybody was trying to be more exotic. No one was just white; no one was just Black; no one was just native.” These young high school students defined themselves in all their myriad diversities. When I asked what box she checks on college applications, Enlightin responded that she just checks everything because she resents having to identify with just one racial group.

I don't try to answer that question honestly. The people who want you to check that box...they just want you to fit a demographic that serves a financial funding picture. Also being in Alameda County it forced me to go Black...to not really be focused on my native traditions. If you have brown skin and you don't speak Spanish, and you're not East Indian, then that makes you Black. Or if you weren't born on a reservation. I don't know...it's very divisive, I think. It's very divisive.

Sometimes I just make up stuff to check on the box. I used to never use the word “Black.” I used to say I'm African, and Indian, and European. This Ethiopian lady in the Laundromat said “You're African?” And I said, “Yes.” And she said, “I can see it in your eyes.” And she was laughing; she thought it was so funny that I didn't call myself Black, or African American, or Native American, or anything else.

The topic of Black Indians surfaced in our discussion about racial identity. I shared with Enlightin a review of William Katz's book, *The Black Indians*. The reviewer, Dr. Arthur Lewin, writes, “In the 1960s, with the rising tide of Black consciousness, it was seen as a denigration of our African heritage to celebrate, or even mention, one's Native American roots” (Lewin). I asked Enlightin if that attitude had influenced her willingness to declare her native identity in the community college. She responded quite passionately:

Definitely! And it affected my ability, my drive, especially being in an urban area again, and being in the Bay Area specifically. I figured out a long time ago, in my first few encounters with people, that if they asked me what race I was, and I told them I was Native American, I'm African American, and I'm Scandinavian - just that statement alone was enough for me to be deemed 'stuck up,' or that I thought I was better than the others, like "What are you doing? You're black like the rest of us. You'd better get in where you fit in."

So I figured out a long time ago to stop telling people. We'll make it simple for them, and make my day simple. I didn't want to have that fight every day with some girl at the college campus. They were already wanting to fight with me anyway, because I supposedly possessed the finer qualities, the straighter hair and the lighter brown skin.

Enlightin acknowledged the contradiction of being pressured to declare herself as "Black" while not being "Black enough" to participate fully with her African American classmates. She explained that her solution to this dilemma is to just quietly be herself, try not to attract attention, and focus on getting an education: "That's my real battle there. So I don't need to have a fight with everybody on the bus because they don't think I'm black enough" (Enlightin).

Challenges and Barriers

The primary barrier to Enlightin's academic success has been a lack of knowledge of how to successfully navigate the educational system. Even though she is not a first generation college student in her family, she states her belief that the path has been more difficult for her generation than it was for her mother's generation. Her mother calls Enlightin's generation the "backlash generation" because programs designed to assist people of color "allowed too many revolutionaries to get through." Enlightin did not receive the level of recognition and assistance that would have more quickly engineered her academic success. She believes that her appearance and economic

status have been instrumental in holding her back. She explained that although her parents taught her how to survive in the natural world, they did not teach her “how to be in poverty.”

They [the college system] automatically deemed me a poor mother, you know what I mean? You need to just get a trade...there's a name for it...something like 'the promotion of underachievement.' It's a pattern that exists in a lot of oppressed communities. Just like *'Don't try too hard...don't think you're going to be a doctor or a lawyer. You're poor, you have just a high school diploma, you're at a community college, you're not saying you're Black which is pissing me off!'* Not that they say that to me, but it's the look.

I could have told them that a job was not going to satisfy me. But they see a brown face with a kid on the lap and it was *'Don't you want to be a mechanic? Women are the fastest growing group of mechanics.'* I wouldn't want to spend all this time in school just to get a job.

I asked Enlightin if it would have made a difference in her educational journey if she had been asked by counselors or others what she wanted to do. She responds:

Yes, and if I had been shown how it would be possible. From everyone's perspective it seemed so impossible. If I had walked into [College X] as a single mother on welfare they would have been 'What? You want to be a lawyer? Good job Sweetie, good goal to dream.' I don't think anyone has told me that it's possible; I would have done it sooner. I would have been done already. I wouldn't have had to wait until I grew up and got out into the business world and figured out how to assert myself and figured out who I was, and how I wasn't this black impoverished person, that I was really who I was growing up all along, which is Native, Black, Scandinavian, who had this totally different life experience and being okay with that, and not feeling like I had to keep that hidden. And so I had to become a grown up woman before I went out and asserted myself enough and made it happen for myself.

The second challenge is the theme of racial identity that permeates my interviews with Enlightin: the theme of racial identity. She reveals in the interviews that how she was seen by the world affected, at times, how she saw herself. Enlightin's identity journey has taken her through a strong sense of her multi-racial self as she was

growing up, to the societal demand that she deny her native and Scandinavian selves, to finally a self perception of the integration of her multi-racial identity. She struggled to reject the labels imposed on her by others, and she spoke about assisting her 15-year-old daughter with her own identity struggles.

My daughter still has to go through that time and place where she's going to be bombarded with all these other people's ideas about her and who she is and where she wants to go and who she wants to be. But I think the fact that I am who I am can help her navigate it a little better, and I can be more of an influence on her to navigate it.

Invisibility

For Enlightin, to be seen by outsiders is to be only partly seen. As a child, her multiple heritages were acknowledged and honored. Her family told stories about their Geechee and native relatives, and her father was present in her formative years to validate her Scandinavian heritage. However, as a young woman she consciously chose invisibility as a strategy that would advance her progress in education. When I asked her what she had found most challenging about attending college, she answered, "I had to learn to be silent." Staying silent in class and not participating in discussions saved her from being a target in the classroom.

I explored this theme with Enlightin because the theme of invisibility is one of the primary reasons for this research study. She explained her stance on invisibility:

You want to be invisible, you want to be something else, you want to be a chameleon...you want to not be seen. Not be seen for what you are because then you can protect that, I guess. I pulled off being invisible. Being invisible was an art for me.

Laughing, Enlightin admitted that she could never actually achieve invisibility. She is a striking woman who attracts attention, so she knows that people *see* her. But she says that they see her in the way they choose to see her, as Hawaiian, or Latina, or African American, but never as native.

In the first interview Enlighten had commented that she *wanted* to be invisible. In the second interview I asked how that desire to remain invisible serves her in her quest for an education and in her identity as a native woman. She responded at length:

I think that has changed. I don't really care anymore. I'm just going to move through the world. I am not going to try to change anybody else's mind or try to open their world up to understand that I don't have to be just black because I have some black in me, or native or any of those things. I don't have to fit into their definition of what I should be. I'm not going to be defined by somebody else. So I don't think I want to be invisible anymore; I just don't think I have a concern whether other people see me or not.

I don't really care if someone wants to give me an education because I'm black, or native, or white. If they're not going to make my way for me then I'm either going to go through them, around them, over them, under them, or sneak past them when they're not looking. I am not going to be stopped from reaching my goal.

How it affects my identity is...it doesn't. Because I go home and I'm myself. And I walk around the world and I'm myself. I'm not asking anyone else's permission, and I'm not doing anything to appease their racism be it from black, white or anyone else. I refuse to spend my energy making someone else comfortable about themselves, unless they're a guest in my home.

Reflections on Enlightin Interviews

The interviews with Enlightin reveal that she has reflected at great length about her identity and her attempts to achieve an educational goal. She brings to light her struggles as a student with various ethnic backgrounds discriminated against by social services, student services, and her own classmates because there has not been a "place

to sit” with others throughout her educational journey. I could hear the anger in her voice as she related experiences of not being black enough or white enough to participate with groups on campus. She expresses strong determination to succeed in being admitted to law school and practicing law in order to help others navigate systems.

*A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground.
Then, no matter how brave its warriors nor how strong its weapons, it is done.*

Cheyenne Proverb

Narrative 3: Lois

Making Contact

To assist in my search for participants for my research study, a friend posted my recruitment letter on the Bay Area Indian Calendar. I received an email from a potential participant indicating her interest in the study and wanting to know more about it. We agreed to meet in person in July 2006 to explore the purpose of the research study and her potential participation.

The Interview Setting: July and September 2006

I asked the participant to select a setting for the interview in which she would be comfortable, and she invited me to her house. When I arrived, she greeted me and offered me a beverage. I explained the purpose of my study, and she confirmed her willingness to participate. I reviewed with her the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B), obtained her signature, asked her to select a pseudonym for the research study, and received her permission to tape the interview. She chose the pseudonym “Lois,” and I began the interview process by gathering demographic data and then asking formal interview questions. We spent about an hour in this quiet setting, accompanied only by the noise of her purring cats.

At the conclusion of the interview, Lois agreed to meet with me for a second interview. I gave her a journal and asked her to jot down stories she might remember

so we could discuss them during the second interview. We met again in late September, at her house. She had written in her journal, and she shared with me what she had written as well as a newspaper article, fragile with age, that explored the practice of putting Indian children in foster care. This is Lois' story.

Family Story

Lois grew up in San Francisco and moved to the East Bay in 2001 to a house owned by her father, so she could more easily afford to return to college. Her maternal grandmother is Coushatta from Louisiana, and her maternal grandfather is Choctaw from Oklahoma. Her mother was born on the reservation in Oklahoma, one of five children supported by their mother's job as a nurses' aide. Their father was unable to keep a job because of his alcoholism. Both of her grandparents were products of government boarding schools, her grandfather being taken to the school when he was only three or four years old. The family did not preserve their native languages. Grandfather could only remember words when he was drunk because of the beatings he endured as a child in the boarding school whenever he spoke Choctaw, and Grandmother refused to speak Coushatta to her children because she did not want them speaking English with an accent.

Lois never met her grandfather, who died when her mother was only 15. She remembers meeting her grandmother once, "a strict disciplinarian. She was tough, a tough lady." Lois also remembers the stories her mother told her about family abuse, intergenerational trauma, alcoholism, and abject poverty.

My mom and aunt have very differing stories. I think my mom had a much more hostile relationship with her mother. She was beaten pretty severely. My aunt said they liked being around their father because he was fun and laughed, and was charming and gregarious when he was in a good place. And she recalls a memory of them being with their dad and playing a game and being very excited and happy being around him...and then having this brooding figure of a mother in the other room, obviously disconnected from them, watching. It sounded very sad to me, and it was a different picture than what my mom had painted of her being a real mean woman. I think they both are probably true.

Grandmother was a staunch advocate of education and persisted in earning her certificate even though rocks were thrown at her when she attended school. Lois' mother also experienced racism when attending school in Oklahoma. According to Lois, they were targets because they were poor and Indian. Determined to get an education, Lois' mother left the reservation to go to college, only to be chastised by her mother who said, "You think you're better than us, but you're going to come back with your tail between your legs!" So even though she advocated education, she did not support Lois' mother when she pursued it.

Lois' mother completed a bachelor's degree in Microbiology, earned a master's degree, and was working on her doctorate when she passed away. Lois' father, born of working class English parents, attended university for a while but then dropped out and did not return to college. Lois attended a private elementary school, and then her parents began divorce proceedings when Lois was about 8 years old. The next fourteen years were marked by Lois' struggle to have a normal relationship with her mother, who suffered mental breakdowns as a result of the childhood trauma inflicted on her. At times Lois had to be the parent, caring for her mother and performing

household duties while her mother grappled with mental disorders. Her grades suffered as a result. She relates:

My mom and I were very close, and I think she depended on me a lot, even at that age. I did a lot of the home care, cooking and cleaning and making lunches. So they [grades] just got progressively worse in 5th through 8th grade.

Lois was enrolled in a college-prep high school, but her grades continued to spiral because of her own traumatic home life. At 16, Lois was removed from the home and put in foster care for two years. Social services attempted to find a native family with which to place her, and they proposed sending her to Oklahoma to her tribe. But neither Lois nor her mother wanted her to be sent away, so she was placed with a non-native family in the Bay Area until she was 18 and reunited with her mother.

Lois speaks of her mother as a survivor: a survivor of her own childhood abuse, and a survivor of the “transgenerational trauma” that afflicts oppressed peoples. Lois referred to a paper she had read about post-traumatic stress disorder expressed in the great-grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. These children had never suffered in a concentration camp, never been abused, and never experienced any of the sort of experiences that their great-grandparents survived, yet they were affected by this disorder.

How do you explain that [transgenerational trauma] except that on a cellular level somehow trauma changes our DNA in some way? This is kind of deep stuff, but I wonder about it because I also work with abused kids, and I see it’s through the generations.

If you look at how many Indians have been decimated, and it’s a longer period of time than the Holocaust, for example, but it was a holocaust of its own...and traumatic...and many, many people were lost, and a lot of pain and sorrow.

From that, and the Trail of Tears, and relocation and all that, and you move onto the boarding schools and taking children away. There’s an article that says

how do you parent if you've never been parented? How do you know how to be a good parent? So I see that as another factor. Both of my grandparents didn't know how to parent because they hadn't been parented, so you have a whole new generation of children who also haven't been parented who end up being abused because...that's what happens.

Lois lived in the "ghetto" in San Francisco while attending a high school with classmates whose parents had millions of dollars, so she was exposed to a multitude of experiences and opportunities. She states that culturally she relates better to native families, but she views it as a blessing that she grew up in an urban environment rather than on the reservation, so she was spared the culture shock of moving from a rural to an urban environment. She has chosen to work in the mental health field with abused children and believes that her life experiences have prepared her for this work.

Academic Path

Lois was a good student until about 5th grade when family problems affected her ability to stay focused on her academics. Although she was accepted to a premier high school, the problems at home continued, so she seldom attended school. She was finally asked to leave. She completed her high school diploma through an independent study program and enrolled in community college when she was 18. She spent four years attending this college while working.

Lois credits her mother with putting her on the path to college.

What she said to me was that it seemed like the only way out. The only way to earn a living, the only way to get out of poverty, to get out of the reservation...out of...everything. So she was very big on education. It's the way to get out to get better things.

Her mother was the educational role model for Lois' aunt, who followed Lois' mother to a university out of state, to graduate school in California, and to a major in science.

Lois was raised with the academic success and perseverance of her native relatives.

It was just sort of a given... I wasn't necessarily invested in going to college. But by the force of her will I knew I was going to college. I remember being 12 years old, and my parents were in the middle of a divorce and my mom was in medical school. We had a walk-in closet, and she would sit in there and study because it was quiet and peaceful and no one would bother her. She was very dedicated.

When she entered community college, Lois took the college assessment test, placing into one level lower than college-level English and into Elementary Algebra. She accessed various services at the college: EOPS, financial aid, and counseling services. However, she felt isolated at her first community college, partly due to her own identity issues and partly due to the lack of "fit" at that college. She comments that she took the English class over and over and never completed that particular level. I asked her why.

This gets into family stuff again. I was fearful of writing. When I used to write papers in school my mom...I remember her standing over me and correcting me. She made me so nervous because of the abuse that my hand would shake when I would write in front of her. So she would just take over, and she would end up writing the paper for me. So I had this phobia that I can't write.

It's interesting how those early experiences sort of shape your view of your ability and how you handle it. And the same with math. She just wanted me to get it done, and she had limited time and patience, and I was resisting.

As a child, Lois had separate history lessons at home from her mother because of the inaccurate portrayals of native peoples in the history books. Her mother tried to be the native voice in her schooling, even coming to her school for a lesson plan on Thanksgiving and telling the children how Indians arranged their tipis.

After spending four years in community college, Lois left to take care of her mother who was diagnosed with a terminal illness. After her mother passed on, Lois returned to college, this time choosing a community college in the East Bay. She says this college is a better fit for her because of the greater diversity of the student body and the faculty. She had to take the assessment test again and was delighted that she placed into college-level English. She has completed most of her general education classes and has taken additional classes in study areas that interest her, such as psychology. Her success in college can be attributed not only to the “better fit” of the institution she currently attends, but also to her personal growth.

I think I feel better in general as a person. I’ve had a lot of years between all that stuff that was going on. It’s almost painful for me to talk about a lot of this stuff now...mostly the family stuff. But I feel like I’ve come a long ways since then just as a person, so that has a lot to do with it. The biggest ordeal for me was always that inferiority feeling, feeling like I didn’t fit in, and feeling like I didn’t have a place.

Lois has found a way to be the native voice in the classroom that her mother had been for her. She says that she is terrified of class participation and public speaking; nevertheless, she chooses research topics that center on Native Americans for oral presentations. For a project on mediation, she chose the conflict of Bear Butte, a battle over land that pitted private land development against tribal desire to maintain the serenity of Bear Butte as a sacred place for ceremony. In this way she brought not only the issue, but also her native identity to the classroom.

I got nervous, not just about public speaking, but I got nervous about the content. I did not want to offend anyone, and I also felt pressure to do justice to Native Americans and to have their voice be heard as well. I chose the issue for that very reason. I knew that no one would know anything about it.

It's hard to be that voice that would be educating them or putting it into words. I find that hard, personally, to be that voice, and to do it justice.

Even though she now attends a community college where she feels more of a sense of place for herself, she continues to encounter isolating incidents in the classroom. Just recently, an instructor told the class about a young native man who received extra credit for joining a political group, stating as his goal a desire to learn politics and return to his reservation to help his people. And then she dismissively stated, "Oh, he ended up working in a casino." In her statement Lois heard the message of lowered expectations for native peoples. Despite these experiences in the classroom, however, Lois claims success on her educational path.

This time I was in school for my own reasons whereas before I felt like I was there because it was what was expected, and I knew that's what everyone wanted me to do, but I don't know that I was ready. Now I am.

For over eleven years, Lois has worked as a paraprofessional with abused children. She enjoys her work, but her lack of a degree keeps her at a much lower pay scale than if she had a master's degree in social work. Her educational goal is to complete the few general education courses that she needs for transfer and apply for admission to a university, preferably University of California at Berkeley.

Native Identity

Just one generation removed from the reservation, Lois has a strong sense of identity as a native woman through her mother. Nevertheless, she reveals how her bi-racial identity has contributed to her sense of alienation in the classroom and in her life.

I felt isolated. I think that's been pretty much of a theme throughout my life. I never felt like I fit in my father's world, and I never felt like I fit in my mother's world, either. So I felt like I had a foot in each. And when it came to talking about racial or cultural issues [in the classroom], not only did I not want to speak in general, but I certainly did not want to speak as the lone voice of the American Indians.

Lois explains that it has been difficult for her to speak up at all in the classroom. She believes that her reluctance to speak is cultural and shares that her mother had the same inhibition but worked through it. When Lois felt that she had the support of the instructor, she pushed herself to contribute to class discussions and participate in oral presentation assignments.

Lois speaks about her mother's traditional native background, and the fact that she often carried an attitude of "you're not an Indian" when she encountered natives who had not been raised with native traditions. Lois struggles with the question of how one defines an Indian, and the expectations that others might have of her because she is native.

There are some things that I know so when I go around Indian people there are certain things I know I should do, how to behave, that are different than if I'm walking into a social situation or a classroom setting or a...dominant society setting.

[In the dominant classroom setting] I know what the expectation is. It's hard for me to meet that expectation. I know I should be volunteering and speaking up and asking questions. But that's an effort, a stretch for me to do. I don't feel comfortable. In fact, I push myself now because I have to, in the work world as well.

But I can go to a predominately native setting and not feel comfortable either. I can feel happier to be there, but I can also feel like I don't know everything that is expected...that maybe I'm going to miss something somehow. I feel like they're going to look at me and see that [that she looks native], like I should know better. And maybe I don't and I'll miss something or I'll get something wrong. Or I don't know something that I should.

Since her mother's passing, Lois has established a closer relationship with her father, but they still struggle with issues of her identity.

I feel like he doesn't understand me a lot, or what I've gone through. And we just see things differently. He's an older white man, and he's conservative. He's pro-Bush, pro the war and has these very Christian morals. He sees the world as a white man, and that's not who I am at all. So we don't understand each other very well.

Lois expressed the burden of responsibility she feels of having to live up to her mother's expectations of her to get an education and help her people. She says that whatever she did, playing piano or tennis or going to school, she was expected to achieve a high standard. Each generation is expected to be more successful because of the sacrifices that have been made by their elders. Lois writes in her journal:

There is also pressure to be successful in the dominant society...pressure from knowing how many members of my family wanted the opportunities I have, who fought hard so that future generations (like me) could have an education, get a degree, make a living...leave all the struggling behind. I remember my mother telling me I had to work harder, perform better, always be a good example of an Indian because there are so many negative examples. That is a lot of weight to place on a child's shoulders...(Lois, p. 3-4).

Lois talked about the risk in trying to educate others partly because there are Indians in the room who are offended by the negative stereotypes, who are offended by the words "redskins" and "squaw" and "Indian giver." For her, there are multiple risks: the risk of offending others, the risk of becoming the target of someone's anger, and the risk of incurring emotional pain. She wrote a research paper on government boarding schools, and her instructor was deeply moved by it; neither the instructor nor any of her classmates knew of the boarding school saga in our nation's history. But Lois suffered in the writing of it but felt the need to educate her peers.

The pressure I felt completing that paper was enormous – almost to the point where I didn't do it. I was crying, having nightmares and breaking down over everything. That pain again, that debilitating pain (Lois, p. 8).

Challenges and Barriers

Lois has triumphed over significant challenges in her path to higher education. Clearly intelligent and reflective, she was an underachiever in her high school course work. Her understanding of what was proper for a young native person – respecting elders, avoiding direct eye contact with elders, refraining from voicing an opinion, and refraining from shaming others in competition – all worked against her in the college classroom where she was expected to make eye contact, engage in discussions, offer her opinions, and compete with her classmates. She speaks about her struggles to get an education.

Hearing the struggles that happened, and having the struggles I had growing up, there was sort of this feeling of 'all is not well in my world.' I was starting behind other people, in a way, because of hardship, because of abuse, because of...you're just not starting in the same place. You have to work harder for that education, you have to work harder to overcome stereotypes, you have to work harder to change things, somehow, to explain the values. So I think that was a feeling of inferiority, that somehow we don't all have the same starting point.

She identifies barriers in her early attempts to prosper at the community college: her youth, her invisibility as a native woman, and her sense that she was just “a person in line” when she asked for services such as counseling and financial aid. She did not feel supported by the counselors; they gave handouts to the students and told them what they needed to do, but they did not encourage Lois in her educational path. Lois shared that she now understands that struggle and pain are a part of life, and as a

survivor of childhood trauma, she sees that she has much to offer children caught in dysfunctional or abusive family care.

Invisibility

The theme of invisibility permeates Lois' educational experiences as both a cultural practice and a survival strategy. When she first attended college and accessed student services, she did not share with counselors or others that she is a native student even though she checked that box on her college application. Culturally, she did not want to be noticed and was extremely uncomfortable when eyes were on her during class discussions or oral presentations. If she were late to class, she often would not attend, feeling too self-conscious to walk into the classroom and have her fellow students look at her.

[Participating] has been my biggest stumbling block. It has been all the way through school. When I had to walk into classes late that was bad enough...to go and scramble for a seat. That was enough attention on me. So when you have to give your opinion...my hands would be shaking and my voice would be quivering.

Paralyzed by feelings of inferiority and respect for her elders, Lois has struggled to overcome her fear of expressing her thoughts and opinions in class. A friend shared with her one of his experiences in the classroom with a bigoted instructor and a native student who tried to present the opposing point of view but could only express emotion and hostility. Lois says:

I fear being like that young man my friend mentioned – all emotion because of how the past hurts and helpless to make others understand. Helpless to argue effectively. Helpless to defend our truth. It is easier to remain silent – so I do (Lois, p. 7).

Lois refuses to bring her mother and her personal pain into the classroom and worries that speaking even in general terms might open the floodgates of emotion for her. She now addresses this fear by structuring accurate information about natives in a non-threatening way through a research paper or a class presentation that presents both sides of an issue. This approach not only refrains from accusing the dominant society, it also protects Lois from the apprehension of losing control of her emotions. Having learned that she can write and that she can educate others on issues that affect native people, Lois is more willing to be the native voice in the classroom. She can now show her classmates that values in the Indian community differ greatly from mainstream society. She expressed the hope that someday she will be able to write her mother's story and some of her own.

Reflections on Lois Interviews

Hearing Lois' narrative made me simultaneously wish to abandon my study and, conversely, ensure that her story is told. There is much to despair over in her story, particularly the cycle of transgenerational abuse that most assuredly can be traced back to the boarding school experiences of her grandparents.

I struggled with my emotions as I transcribed her interviews, listening to her soft voice that refused to accuse or condemn anyone in her circle of relatives for the pain she has suffered in her life. I came to the conclusion that it would dishonor her story if I were to remain the objective observer untouched by the pain of her life, her mother's life, and the lives of her grandparents. The beauty of her being, her humility, and the

depth of her empathy for oppressed peoples makes me feel honored that she has been so willing to share the story that she cannot take into the classroom. She is a native woman who will not let her heart be on the ground.

My ideas of womanhood, passed on largely by my mother and grandmothers, Laguna Pueblo women, are about practicality, strength, reasonableness, intelligence, wit, and competence.

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*

Narrative 4: Tyndall

Making Contact

I was given the name and contact information of a potential study participant by a neighbor who knew about my research study. He had already briefed her on my intent to interview urban, native women about their community college experiences, and she had expressed interest in participating in my study. I contacted her to establish a meeting time for explaining the study and conducting the first interview.

The Interview Setting: August 2006

I asked the participant to select a setting for the first interview where she would be comfortable, and she chose a local Starbucks café. Arriving early at the café, I wondered how I would recognize her. Then I saw an imposing woman walk in by herself, and I ventured to approach her. She was the woman with whom I was scheduled to meet, and we found a relatively quiet corner in which to sit after we purchased refreshments at the counter. After I explained the purpose of my study, she reiterated her willingness to participate. I reviewed with her the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B), obtained her signature, asked her to select a pseudonym for the research study, and received her permission to tape the interview. She chose the

pseudonym “Tyndall” for the study. After gathering demographic data, I began asking her formal interview questions. We spent about an hour together inside the café, with me again worrying about the quality of the audiotape because of the background noise.

After we completed the first interview, I gave Tyndall a journal for jotting down additional memories she might have before the second interview. We agreed to meet a week later at the same café, but for that interview we sat outside to escape the inside noise of the coffee grinder and latte machines. This is Tyndall’s story.

Family Story

Tyndall grew up in Nevada and moved to the Bay Area in 1985 after she had completed high school. Tyndall’s father is German and Scottish, and his family lived in Utah and Wisconsin. Tyndall’s mother was born on the Blackfoot reservation in Browning, Montana; all of her mother’s family is from that area. Both Blackfoot and Cree, Tyndall is not enrolled as a member in either tribe because of the blood quantum requirements based on a law which was passed a year before she was born, and the manipulation of a great-great aunt who stated that the family was Sioux and changed the family’s blood quantum on the 1920 census. The lack of enrollment status frustrates Tyndall tremendously. She is a first-generation Blackfoot Indian born off the reservation who will eventually inherit land on the Blackfoot reservation even though she is not an enrolled member.

Tyndall’s maternal relatives had the greatest influence on her as she was growing up. Her biological grandfather was murdered when Tyndall’s mother was only 4 years

old. Tyndall's grandmother remarried and moved the family to Nevada for the warmer weather (the Blackfoot reservation is in Montana). Her grandmother deemed the education system in Nevada inadequate in the late 1940's, so for high school Tyndall's mother attended a Catholic girls' boarding school in Utah. Even though Tyndall's mother was popular at the boarding school and the Mormons actively sought to convert Indians to their religion, she nevertheless suffered from prejudice and stereotyping that she ultimately had to overcome.

For the Mormons the Indians were a tribe that could never get to the highest estate in heaven. [The Mormons would] get higher points towards their own status when converting a person of color to the Mormon religion, as well as adopting a child of color and converting a savage.

Tyndall remembers that when she was a child, they frequently traveled to the reservation in Montana to visit with family, and her great aunts would come down to Nevada to spend time with them in the winter time. The family has a variety of records that confirm they are Blackfoot and not Sioux: enrollment records, birth certificates, marriage certificates, baptismal certificates and Indian Agency records. They even managed to find parish records in the Methodist and Catholic churches because the reservation was split between these two religious groups. They were able to trace their lineage in the tribe to pre-reservation times from their oral history, but Tyndall claims that some of the oral history died out with the elders who spoke primarily Blackfoot.

Tyndall's only sibling is a foster sister. Tyndall explains the tribe's view on family:

Fostering and adoption are very much accepted and very much a part of life in many tribes, and that's how it is in Blackfeet. I've had a revolving series of pseudo uncles and aunts and cousins while growing up that I didn't understand

weren't related to me. But they were family, because we're really big on family.

Tyndall's mother wanted more children but had a hysterectomy when Tyndall was only 3 years old. Tyndall's grandmother was sterilized in a government program without her knowledge or consent when Tyndall's mother was only 2 years old.

Grandmother was living on the reservation at the time, and her husband was at war in the military services. When her appendix burst, she needed emergency medical care.

So she went in to have her appendix removed and as part of the 'services,' the doctor chose to sterilize her while he had her open for the appendectomy. And he did it so badly that he severed nerves into both of her hips. So she had to go in for corrective surgery for that, and the guy who went in was a non-government doctor and he was furious...he was absolutely livid. He said 'A butcher could have done a better job than what this man did to you.'

This story triggered other family stories of governmental abuse. Tyndall's grandmother and great uncle were both sent to a government boarding school in Montana where atrocities were committed against them because of their Indian heritage. One of the family stories recounts an experiment performed on young Indian children in which holes were cut in their eyelids to assess what exposure to constant light would do to eyesight. The holes were ultimately stitched up, but the scarring on the inside of the eyelid caused scarring on the cornea. Her Uncle Bud was almost completely blinded by this experiment.

Tyndall's grandmother told her that every morning in the boarding school she would get up early to race to her younger sister's floor to help with making the beds because the children were beaten if their beds were not perfectly made by a certain hour. And the boys were more severely beaten with rubber hoses for infractions of the

rules. To Indians who maintain that the boarding school era wasn't that bad because at least it provided an education for Indians, Tyndall responds:

My grandmother did find that there were certain nuns where she went to school that she really liked, and she did feel were good to them. But there were others that were just, probably virtually psychotic. I remember my Uncle Bud talking about it and his experience was totally different, totally horrible. And he was like, no, they were crazy. And it was very much the intent to educate the Indian out of the Indian.

Tyndall recalls the family history that her great-grandmother was placed in one of the first boarding schools in the late 1880s. Later she had intense hallucinations, possibly as a result of her boarding school experiences.

We're not sure exactly what was wrong with her, but she was either schizoaffective or schizophrenic. We're not sure how much of that was influenced by her experiences, but she had some pretty horrendous experiences [in boarding school].

Academic Path

Tyndall's parents advocated higher education, and she attended a local community college in Nevada while she was in high school. At the time, both her parents were enrolled there also, and she and her father took the same algebra class. In high school she had taken advanced placement courses but was often a C or D student because of family turmoil. Tyndall explains some of the distractions that prevented her achieving academic success in high school.

It was an alcoholic mother...abusive father...they had huge conflicts. Although my parents encouraged me to read and that learning was important, they didn't teach me the discipline of studying and managing my time and all that. So when I was younger it was very hard. And because there were such huge distractions, mentally I would check out.

Tyndall's parents both returned to college when they were older and completed their bachelor degrees, and her mother, who has been sober for over 20 years, completed a certificate for drug and alcohol counseling. Her parents have been divorced for almost 20 years, and by her own choice Tyndall does not communicate with her father.

When Tyndall graduated from high school, she attended a university in Nevada for one semester. After dropping out of the university, she enrolled in a local community college part-time for two semesters. About this time she was admitted to a private university in San Francisco, California. She knew the area well since her parents had lived in San Francisco in the 1960s, and they vacationed there frequently as a family to attend the theater and museum exhibits. Tyndall's path to the private university was a bit unusual. She knew that she would attend college somewhere, and she knew that her parents had put away money for years in a college fund for her. But she had not decided where to apply.

And then my mother (this is a little odd), my mother was drinking at the time and she wanted to get me away, in a sense to rescue me. So she sent in my application to University X, without telling me. Wrote the essay, did everything. And I got accepted, and that was it.

Tyndall attended University X in the Bay Area for two years and then was forced to leave after discovering that her father had drained her college fund. She got a full-time job and enrolled in a state university as well as a Bay Area community college to fill in gaps in her general education courses. The highest level courses she took at the community college were critical thinking and literature, but she avoided taking math as long as she could. She has now completed a bachelor's degree at the state university

but has enrolled once again at the community college in order to take algebra as preparation for the statistics requirement for a master's program.

I questioned Tyndall about her community college preparation for transfer to a four-year university.

I thought it was great. I really did. I felt like I was prepared for the level of work that I was going to do at the university level. And I was also prepared for the fact that I wouldn't have as much contact with the instructors [in a university]. A lot of them [community college faculty] said, 'Take advantage of it now, because you're not going to have the same experience when you go [to university].' And I heard it many times: this is the place [community college] to get more help; this is the place to ask questions because you're not going to have as much of a chance. Your [university] classes will be led by graduate students and they're not going to be instructors with a lot of experience, so take advantage while you're here.

When I asked Tyndall if she had tried to take advantage of grants or scholarships reserved for native students, she responded:

At the time I didn't understand about financial aid. And my family had been putting away money for such a long time that ostensibly my college career would have been paid for. And then it was gone. So I was left adrift not knowing anything about financial aid or who to talk to. And also, I'm not enrolled in either tribe. So I just kind of wrote it off because I know there are resources out there, but finding them that don't say you have to be a card-carrying member of a tribe is pretty difficult. So I basically finance school through loans and my own money.

In comparing community college experiences to her university experiences, Tyndall shares that there are things she prefers about the community college: smaller classes, greater access to instructors, flexibility in taking classes, a more supportive environment, lack of cutthroat competitiveness, and the cost. The student services she accessed at the community college included assessment, orientation, job fairs, university recruitment events, and tutoring for math classes. She even participated as

an English tutor in a pilot program at one of the Bay Area community colleges she attended.

Although she always identifies herself as Native American on college applications, none of the activities she participated in were designed specifically for native students, nor was she aware of any clubs for native students at the community colleges she has attended. This is in sharp contrast to the university she attended, which does schedule events intended to attract native students, and which has a very active and vocal group of native students. She attributes this difference to existence of native faculty at the university even though there is a larger Indian population in the East Bay where she has attended community college.

In recent years the state budget cuts have resulted in decreased availability of classes at community colleges that she needed to take to complete her general education pattern, and it has become increasingly more difficult to get hold of a “live person” when she has needed an answer to a question.

Tyndall’s educational goal is to earn a master’s degree in social work in order to work both in private practice and for a social services agency. She currently works for a social services agency that she describes as “functional and extremely well-balanced.”

Native Identity

Tyndall strongly identifies with her mother’s and grandmother’s people, the Blackfoot tribe in Montana. Nevertheless, she has attempted to “stay under the radar”

in her interactions with her fellow community college students. She is not usually recognized as native because she does not, she says, “fit a stereotype” of what a native person should look like.

I’ve gotten everything from Latina to Jewish, Tongonese, Hawaiian, people say, oh, you must be from... wherever. I think part of it is I don’t fit a stereotype of what a lot of people perceive to be as “Indian.” The [Indian] friend that I had who went to Harvard and Oxford, he had the same experience. He would come in to teach a class and people would be shocked that he came in an Armani suit and cufflinks and a tie.

Tyndall avoids identifying herself as native until she gets a sense of those with whom she is interacting, and she is most comfortable revealing herself to other native people because they are more likely to have a common understanding of what it is to be native. In the past, when she has revealed her identity to non-native students, she has had to endure questions such as “Are you really?” and “Can you communicate with animals?” So she prefers to do “some kind of check in where I’m 99% sure that that person is Indian. And so there’s sort of that racial check-in that goes on initially.”

Towards the end of the second interview, Tyndall revealed that she had given much thought to the issue of native people protecting their identities.

For me partly it’s my own social experiences and it is, in a certain sense, political. But there are also cultural taboos and internalized oppression and internalized shame that are generational.

Complicating the issue of identity is the debate over how one defines “to be an Indian.” Tyndall understands the tribal stance that as sovereign nations they have the right to define their tribal membership. But she agonizes over it:

At the same time I resent...it being based on blood quantum since that isn’t a cultural standard of who you are. If I didn’t have any family up on the reservation, if people there didn’t know me...But I have the same history as far

as these are who my family are, this is what I've been exposed to, this is the knowledge that I have, this is the cultural influence that I have. But if no one up there knows me, could I still say I'm an Indian? Because part of what that identity is...is being held by the tribe as who you are. So would it make me less of an Indian if no one knew me? And I think for a lot of urban Indians who have lost contact with family...that's their experience.

And in the Blackfoot tribe there was a lot of adoption of non-Indian people, but if you're one of us, you're one of us...that's the cultural thing. And it isn't necessarily a matter of ritual and history, but it's an affiliation. So you are our family because we say you are our family.

In reflecting on what it means "to be an Indian," Tyndall told me a story about a young girl she met at Native American Health Services. The girl's mother, who is African American, became pregnant by a Blackfoot in Montana and returned to Oakland to have her baby. The girl's father finally located her, and she was excited that she would finally meet her father's family in Browning, Montana.

Phenotypically she looks African American. She's 13 or 14, and this is the first time she's going up to stay with her dad's family. And she was so excited. She said, "I guess that means I'm Indian, huh?" And I said yeah! So it was interesting. Obviously she's Indian even though she doesn't have any connection yet. When I think about it, it's like a matrix. It's not simple.

Challenges and Barriers

Mathematics has been a challenge for Tyndall, both in high school and college. She avoided taking courses in math as long as could, and signed up for math tutoring in community college to assist with a statistics course in which she was enrolled.

It was extremely frustrating, but not because of them [the tutors]. Because it was statistics. Obviously their [tutor's] job is not assessment, but they weren't telling me that I wasn't prepared. There were functions that I wasn't prepared to do, and so they were trying to get me to do higher-level things.

The greatest challenges that Tyndall encountered on her academic journey were family dysfunction and the plundering of her college fund. Although she was a

capable student in elementary and high school, it was difficult for her to realize her academic potential because of family conflict resulting from alcohol abuse and parental violence. Tyndall does not dwell on her struggles with family issues, nor does she blame either parent for creating obstacles for her. However, she regrets that she was forced for financial reasons to leave the private university where she excelled in academics. Had she stayed, she was on a path to finish her bachelor's degree coursework in 1989, rather than completing her degree in 1999 while having to work full-time to support herself.

A more insidious challenge that Tyndall discovered as a young woman was prejudice against Native Americans. She was only 18 years old in 1982 when she accompanied her grandmother, great-aunt, and great-uncle to a restaurant in Yuma, Arizona.

My grandmother and my great-uncle are obviously Indian...big, barrel-chested Plains Indians. I asked for a table for four and he said, 'We don't serve your kind.' And I said, 'What kind?' I honestly didn't understand what he was saying. And he said, 'We don't serve Indians here.' And I turned to my relatives and said 'go wait outside.' And my Uncle Bud had a big smile on his face and he hustled them out and they could see me from outside gesticulating. And I told him off and said 'you should be ashamed of yourself...what the hell is wrong with you? In this day and age?' And I came out and said I'm so sorry. And Uncle Bud said no, that's a good thing...he was so happy that I had done something because it was just...I was so shocked. I didn't even know [that it was illegal]. I was just immensely pissed off and had no qualms about saying so.

Invisibility

Tyndall grew up in a part of Nevada where there is a significant Indian population. However, she says,

It's not seen. They're there, but they're invisible. And I'm not perceived as Indian usually. So there's a difference in knowing my culture, knowing how I was raised, knowing who my family is, and knowing how other people saw me. So unless I verbally identified myself as Indian, I wasn't perceived as Indian.

Tyndall is now careful to whom she reveals her identity. Tyndall's mother was born in the 1940's in an era when it was still shameful to be Indian, and she was given a difficult time about being Indian when she attended boarding school in Utah. So Tyndall was raised to be cautious around people she didn't know and was taught that "who you are is private, and it's not necessarily something you give away to people."

There's a thing that I see in a lot of my relatives now and in urban Indians who are away from the comfort zone, where there's a desire to be below the radar...to just sit back before saying here is who I am. Because I'm not always perceived as being Indian I hesitate to say, yo...here I am...until I know the people. There's no shame about my ethnicity, but it's also something that is guarded.

Although Tyndall is not hesitant about checking the "Native American" box on college applications, she assumes that at the community college information on racial identity is not used for any purpose that benefits the student.

Reflections on Tyndall Interviews

I feel honored that Tyndall has shared with me stories that she does not share with many people. She is intelligent, self-confident and has a strong sense of her native identity through her mother, her grandmother, her Uncle Bud, and the tribe that holds her as one of their own. When Tyndall and I first met, her grandmother had just passed on, and even though Tyndall did not speak at length about her relationship with her,

the sorrow in her voice revealed the connectedness she feels to her grandmother and her grandmother's people, who are indeed Tyndall's people as well.

Our most important sense of self and continuity...came from the very old, who were so kind, gentle, considerate and wise with us, particularly as children.

Mourning Dove, Salish

Narrative 5: Alashanee

Making Contact

For several years I have known a Latina/Native American woman and admired her turquoise and silver jewelry, much of which has been crafted by family artists in New Mexico. When speaking to her about my research study one day, she said, “Oh, you need to speak to my niece.” She prepared the way for me and gave me the contact information, and I set up an initial interview with her niece.

The Interview Setting: August and September 2006

The potential participant was very busy at work, so it took two months for us to establish a mutually-convenient interview date. She agreed to meet me in early August, and I asked her to select a setting for the first interview where she would be comfortable. She asked me to come to her workplace because she had to fill in for her supervisor while her supervisor was on leave.

I explained the purpose of my study, and the young woman reiterated her willingness to participate. I reviewed with her the Informed Consent Document (Appendix B), obtained her signature, asked her to select a pseudonym for the research study, and received permission to tape the interview. She hesitated at selecting a pseudonym during the first interview and asked if we could wait. Eventually, at the

second interview, she chose the name “Alashanee.” After gathering demographic data during the first interview, I began asking Alashanee formal interview questions, and we spent about an hour together. At the conclusion of the interview, I gave Alashanee a journal and asked her to collect any additional thoughts she might have before our next scheduled interview.

Due to conflicting schedules, I was not able to meet with Alashanee for the second interview until late September. We met in her office, and she informed me that a co-worker had found a fitting pseudonym for her: Alashanee, which means “she who plays a lot.” We spent another hour together, and at the end of our time I assured Alashanee that I would contact her with her narrative after I had transcribed the tapes and created a restory of what she had shared with me. This is Alashanee’s story.

Family Story

Alashanee grew up in the Bay Area and attended community college right after graduating from high school. She is a third-generation Californian on her mother’s side; her great-grandmother was born in Mexico, and then the family immigrated to California. Her maternal grandfather is part native, but he kept his tribal affiliation hidden from the family. Alashanee’s father is Apache and Spanish. His father was born on the Apache reservation in New Mexico, and his mother’s family was from Spain. When Alashanee’s grandmother married an Apache Indian, she was disowned by her wealthy Spanish family. She refused, however, to raise children on the reservation, so although Alashanee’s father was raised in New Mexico, he was not

raised on the reservation. Alashanee claims that her father's family are all urbanized, and she says about herself, "I'm a city girl, I grew up here. I was raised American."

Alashanee remarks that although she does not now speak Spanish, she was exposed to it while she was growing up and spoke it when she was in preschool. Both of her paternal grandparents spoke Spanish in the home, and her paternal grandfather also spoke German, Italian, French, and Japanese because he had been in the military. She does not remember hearing her grandfather speak Apache. Alashanee's mother had not learned her parents' native language of Spanish, so she was unable to converse in Spanish with Alashanee's father.

Alashanee's father was a strong supporter of academics and instilled in her the idea that she should major in engineering, aeronautics, computers, or anything that required math because she excelled in math. Her father and her grandmother have been the greatest influences in her life. She speaks of her grandmother:

She lived in New Mexico, but she was a huge influence in my life as far as a mothering type, because my mother wasn't very nurturing. And my Nanny was just everything you could want out of a nurturer. She was there for you...she did everything. She used to participate in all of my games and she was just always there. When I had problems I'd talk to her in the summers when I'd go over there and stay with her for the summer. We'd always talk about things that were going on in my life, and she'd listen and comfort me. So she was a huge influence.

I asked if her mother was a support or a role model for her, and Alashanee emphatically said, "No!"

My mom didn't have much interest in me...at all. I don't really have any relationship with her now. My mother's side of the family is highly dysfunctional, and it's unhealthy for me. I decided it would be healthier if I were to just detach myself and realize that I have people in my life who love me.

In high school Alashanee availed herself of every opportunity to be out of the house and away from her mother, and eventually she went to live with her aunt.

Academic Path

Alashanee attended a private elementary school and a public high school. She was a “B” student in high school, excelling in math and struggling with English. Although she doesn’t remember being recruited for college when she was in high school, she had planned to attend a state university. She had a qualifying G.P.A. and SAT scores, but she “failed on the paperwork.” When I asked the cause of her not submitting her paperwork on time, she responded:

Probably my home life. I was living with my mom at the time and my home life there got really awful because of her husband, and I just had a lot of family issues that I was dealing with. And I knew I wanted to get out, but the concentration on education wasn’t there. It was more just get out right now!

Rather than enrolling in a university, she went to live with her aunt and registered for classes at the local community college where her high school friends had enrolled.

After a semester, she realized that it wasn’t working for her. Attending college with her friends interfered with her goal to be a serious student, so she left that college and enrolled in another community college, farther away from home. She performed well there, playing on the basketball team, taking a minimum full load (12 units of credit), working a temporary job during the day and a part-time job at night as a UPS loader. She couldn’t avoid taking English at this college and used its tutoring services for assistance in her English class.

Alashanee attempted to follow her father's advice to major in engineering, but she quickly realized that major did not suit her.

When I actually took an engineering class I freaked because of the science that comes along with it. It was an intro to engineering class to give us an idea of the different types of engineering that are out there. So I took that class and was overwhelmed. I didn't feel it was me, so I moved on and was taking my g.e. courses because I didn't have a major anymore.

Exploring her options, Alashanee realized that she had a passion for animals and decided to go into pre-veterinarian science. Today, she cannot see her way financially to achieving that career goal since she cannot afford to quit work to attend school full-time for the length of time she would need to be in veterinarian school.

Although she was achieving academic success at the community college, she dropped out when her grandmother passed away. She stopped out of college for a while and then enrolled in a third community college. She started over, not bothering to transfer any units of credit from her previous college experiences. She believes that her foundation skills for writing were established in English classes at this institution. When she finally took college-level English, she performed well and felt good about her ability to succeed.

Alashanee is now working on her career goal of becoming a physical therapist, prompted by her current position as a certified ergonomics specialist at a health clinic, and she plans to transfer soon to a pre-master's program at a state university. I asked if she could see congruence in moving from engineering to pre-vet to ergonomics.

I do, because I have a passion for math, and whether I would have chosen engineering or pre-vet science, you would have to have some sort of high level math involved, and with ergonomics you do as well because you have degrees, you have measurements that you have to figure out, and plotting on CAD. So

there's a lot of math involved...and maybe not so much with engineering but with pre-vet science and ergonomics, I'm helping.

She sees her goal to become a physical therapist as an extension of her role as an ergonomics specialist and believes that it will allow her to contribute in a deeper way to address her clients' pain and assist them in healing.

Alashanee's success in college can be attributed in part to discovering strategies for herself that work. When she realized that she was not applying herself at the first community college, she enrolled in a different college. There, she involved herself in athletics, claiming that it helped her to focus as a college student.

When you join any kind of a group or club, whether it's sports or not, it makes you feel more a part of the school itself. So in order to feel somewhat part of a group...I think sports really did it for me. And in order to stay on the team you have to maintain your G.P.A. and the amount of units you have.

After she re-enrolled in college and encountered a math instructor from whom she couldn't learn math – her best subject – she began visiting a variety of classes to “shop” for instructors. Accessing tutoring services assisted with both her English and math skills, and at her third community college she has been helped several times by the same counselor, who just recently revised her educational plan to prepare her for a major in physical therapy. Since she works full-time, she takes only one or two classes at a time, so she can maintain a high G.P.A. She will have completed all of her general education requirements when she transfers to a university. She plans to be a full-time student but has not explored grants or scholarships intended for native students.

According to Alashanee, she had to navigate her educational path on her own.

Who was going to push me to do it other than my dad just telling me...but he was in New Mexico. So all he could do was just talk to me on the phone. But

someone being there, pushing me and making sure on a daily basis “did you do this?” Checking in with me...I didn’t have that. And it was more of an independence because my excuse was to always be out of the home, because that’s where I was most unhappy. So I knew I needed to go to school, make good grades, go to college...those were the steps I needed to be successful.

Native Identity

Alashanee proudly identifies with being Spanish and Apache. Since she has a Latino surname, she is frequently seen as Latina and addressed in Spanish. On college applications she checks the box marked “Other” because she identifies with both ethnicities, but she feels separated from the reservation.

I wasn’t really raised around a reservation. I know my history...I know where I come from. I have visited it and my grandfather spoke of it, but I wasn’t ever really there. I was raised American.

Alashanee doesn’t make it a point to tell others that she is native even though she is often stereotyped as being Latina. One reason for Alashanee’s hesitancy in declaring herself native is her lack of documentation. She feels pressure to provide documentation that she doesn’t have even though her native heritage is as close as her full-blood grandfather, and she feels ties to New Mexico.

When you go to New Mexico you have to show you are what you are sometimes to go to certain powwows and the dances...I appreciate that way of life and I understand the culture. Even though I’m in the city and not on a reservation, I do things that reflect who I am. And I’m happy with that.

But she corrects those who call her Mexican, disassociating herself from that heritage, because she is disconnected from her mother and her mother’s family.

I don’t really identify with my mother’s side of the family in regards to nationality, because I was disconnected to my mom. I wasn’t brought up in that environment and tradition. Native and Spanish culture are a lot different than Mexican culture. So it’s a disconnect for me.

Challenges and Barriers

Alashanee's challenges in pursuing her academics were both educational and personal. She was academically capable, but she initially allowed her association with her friends to interfere with her quest for a college degree. When she realized that she was sabotaging her own journey, she changed course and embarked on a new path with strategies designed to facilitate academic success.

Another challenge in her life is the struggle with lack of documentation of her native heritage because she is not full blood. She says,

We're talking urban natives...they're not full, 100% native, right? We're all mixed with other stuff. And I think it's really important to stress the fact that Indians did not see race, and color. You may be part native and something else, but you are native. And you are part of this family. You don't need documentation to be proud of who you are.

The lack of documentation, however, inhibits her from applying for scholarships for natives.

Her personal challenges have been more daunting. She overcame a damaging home environment by leaving home to live with her aunt. But the passing of her beloved grandmother resulted in her stopping out of college for a while. When she re-entered the community college, it was with a renewed determination to complete a career goal. She now has an educational plan and a timeline for achieving her educational goals. She and her fiancé have purchased a house and made wedding plans for summer of 2007, and she tries to balance school and work with time off for herself to travel and enjoy life.

Invisibility

Alashanee does not remember meeting other native students in her college classes or at college events, and she did not identify herself as native when meeting with a counselor, registering for classes, or taking an assessment test. Although she is comfortable with her identity, she checks the “Other” box when filling out applications because her ethnicities are not adequately represented as choices. Although she challenges those who label her Mexican, she says, “I don’t exploit the fact that I’m half native to everybody around me at school.” As a Native American college student, she has managed to stay under the radar. Rarely, in class, has she had an instructor who used class materials that encouraged her to declare her native self.

I’m pretty hesitant...I don’t tell anybody anything. I just come and go to school and do my thing, and I go home and live a normal life. It’s not like it’s something new – the isolation, the feeling...it’s something that is deeper rooted. It’s been there for how long?

It’s really tough because there isn’t a huge population. I don’t know if it’s because we’re not coming out saying we’re this or that. Because you walk around campus and you **know** there’s a lot of Asians, and you **know** there’s a lot of African Americans, and you **know** there’s a lot of Caucasians or Italians or whatever. You know that because you see it. With Indians, it’s really hard to just say, ‘Oh! There’s a group of Indians, of natives, right there!’

Reflections on Alashanee Narratives

Alashanee’s story reveals a bright, hard-working, determined young woman who has crafted strategies that will enable her to succeed in life as well as in school. Her mixed race heritage causes her to be both proud and conflicted. When she claims she is Spanish and Native American, she is claiming that she is European and American Indian, but she leaves out the fact that she is Mexican on her mother’s side.

Alashanee's rock and support growing up were her grandmother and her father. Her grandmother nurtured her in the way that her mother could not, and Alashanee speaks of a strong and loving bond with her father's family. Although she identifies with city life and with being raised "American," Alashanee expresses regret for not knowing more of her Indian culture and traditions so that she can more fully participate when she visits the reservation in New Mexico. Although she does not easily reveal her native heritage to others, she says that she would like to be "seen" as a native student on the college campus.

Section II: Discussion of the Emergent Themes

I transcribed each interview myself from audio tapes to hear the actual voices of these native women in order to better hear their authentic selves. I used the transcriptions of the first interviews to discover topics that I wished to investigate further in the second interviews.

After completing all transcriptions (over 120 pages), I worked with the written narratives to identify themes. I coded thirty-nine themes that occurred in two or more narratives and created a table for these themes. I then returned to the narratives to seek out which themes were overwhelmingly important in each narrative and identified six themes that emerged as particularly powerful. These themes are the following:

- Perseverance in Higher Education
- Academic Aptitude and Success
- Institutional Support
- Challenges and Barriers
- Native American Identity and Self-Image
- Invisibility and Isolation

All six of the themes relate to sections in the participants' narratives: Academic Path; Native Identity; Challenges and Barriers; and Invisibility.

Perseverance in Higher Education

There are similarities in the paths to higher education embarked upon by the native women interviewed here. Prior to entering college, Red Wolfe and Alashanee escaped

from their home environments to protect their sense of themselves. Alashanee, Enlightin, Lois, and Tyndall were all raised with the notion that a college education and academic success were expected of them by their families, and they all entered community college as young adults. However, family support did not in every case accompany family expectations. Alashanee and Lois have worked since their teens to help support themselves and have worked either full or part-time while enrolled in college. As young, single mothers, Red Wolfe and Enlightin had to access social services to provide for themselves and their children while taking classes at the community college. Red Wolfe's goal to earn a registered nurse's degree was thrown off course by a husband who pushed her to enter the workforce with minimal skills and an entry-level degree. Tyndall was forced to drop out of a private university and enroll in community college while working full-time to support herself after her father depleted her college fund.

Some of the interviewees had positive role models to encourage their dreams of higher education. Lois' mother earned a master's degree in science and was well on her way to completing a doctorate when she passed on. She impressed upon Lois that an education was the only way to escape the reservation and poverty. Alashanee was prompted by her father to embrace science and math, and his encouragement and support planted the seed for her current major of physical therapy. Enlightin's mother earned a nursing degree, and she says that both her parents valued education. Unfortunately, they did not show her how to define an educational goal or how to reach it once she knew her goal.

All interviewees have stopped out of college one or more times and have re-entered community college or university depending on their place on their educational path, their financial status, and their ability to attend. Tyndall has completed her bachelor's degree and has returned to a community college for transfer math classes in preparation for a master's degree. Enlightin has completed prerequisites and applied to law school in spring 2007. Alashanee and Lois are working to complete general education courses for transfer to public universities while Red Wolfe struggles to return to college. At 41, recently laid off from work, she is raising two teenagers and agonizing over her financial inability to return to college and complete a degree. She has accumulated over fifty community college credits, and although she has earned a certificate as a nurses' aide, it is such a low-wage job that it will not enable her to support her family.

A striking similarity in the educational paths of each participant is a desire to enter the helping professions. Red Wolfe desired to become licensed as a registered nurse and completed a certificate as a nurses' aide. Both Lois and Tyndall plan to complete master's degrees in social work. Alashanee has chosen a career as a physical therapist to ease others' physical pain, and Enlightin plans to earn her law degree. Enlightin's words could very well encapsulate the feelings of her sister interviewees:

I don't think having a law degree is about me finding a career, even though in itself it creates a career. I think it's also about me being able to navigate through it all, like through the woods and through the city. It increases my capacity to help people, I'll know how to fill out paperwork to keep people from getting trapped and lost in the system.

Academic Aptitude and Success

Each woman interviewed has achieved academic success in some measure and has demonstrated academic aptitude. Red Wolfe has completed over 50 units of community college credit with an overall G.P.A. of 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale). When she first took the placement test, she tested into college-level English, a performance achieved by, at most, 10% of entering students who take this test. She has completed all of the prerequisites for the associate degree nursing program – rigorous courses such as Anatomy and Physiology, Microbiology, and Chemistry – and earned A's and B's, except for a C in Microbiology. Her personal goal has been to earn A's and B's in her college coursework.

Enlightin has accrued over 90 units of community college credit with an overall G.P.A. of 2.55. She completed a certificate in Paralegal Studies as preparation to enter law school. Aside from her Paralegal coursework, she has taken an array of classes, which is indicative of her lack of focus in her early years in community college. She has completed her general education transfer classes and plans to transfer to law school in fall 2007.

Lois has completed 75 units of community college credit with an overall G.P.A. of 2.8. Upon taking the assessment test, she placed into pre-college level English (one level below college-level English) and elementary algebra. To date, she has completed all her general education transfer courses except for statistics. When taking classes she didn't like, such as Biology, she earned an "F" and then earned "A's" when she retook them. She attributes this pattern to a lack of interest and a lack of consistency. She

plans to apply to University of California at Berkeley and eventually complete a master's degree in social work.

Tyndall has completed 40 units of community college credit with a G.P.A. of 3.75 and has earned a bachelor's degree. She took only the math assessment test when entering the community college but did not reveal what course she placed into. She shared that she struggled with statistics in community college and was not successful in passing it even with tutoring assistance. She realized that she was missing critical algebra concepts necessary for statistics and has vowed to retake algebra. After completing a transfer statistics course at an area community college, she plans to enroll in a university to earn a master's degree in social work.

Alashanee did not note the number of college credits nor her overall G.P.A. on the demographic data sheet. However, through the interviews, she revealed that she has carefully engineered her academic success by taking only one or two classes per term. She took the assessment test when she first entered community college and placed into pre-college level English and college-level math. Since she works full time, she carefully plans her curriculum to maximize success, taking all the required courses in one discipline and then moving on to take the required courses in another discipline. She has completed all the English and math courses for transfer and will begin taking required science courses when she returns to college in fall 2007.

Institutional Support

Most of the participants felt that they had to navigate educational institutions on their own, with little institutional support in place for them. At first, they had limited success. Red Wolfe applied for EOPS services, and when she was denied she assumed it was because she was stereotyped as a “privileged white girl.” She didn’t know that the institution was obligated to communicate to her the basis for the denial, so she never pursued the reason. Lois did qualify for EOPS services but was cut off because of poor academic performance. Although intelligent and capable, her college transcript is riddled with “W’s” because she frequently withdrew from classes due to family turmoil. No counselor questioned her about her under-performance; they merely told her what she needed to do in order to complete an associate’s degree and transfer to a four-year institution.

Enlightin never received career counseling. Rather, she was advised to enter fields beginning to open up for women, such as auto mechanics. She maintains that this is because counselors and instructors assumed she wanted a job, not a career. To this day she is resentful when she recalls that she was never asked by counselors what she wanted to do in her life or on her educational path. Once she decided for herself, she knew what questions she needed answered, and she then navigated the system on her own. Tyndall did not understand the financial aid system, and this lack of understanding delayed her path to her bachelor’s degree. After her college funds were depleted, she went to work full-time rather than applying at the community college for

the financial aid for which she was qualified. When she finally understood the system, she was working full-time and making too much money to qualify for aid.

Alashanee, the youngest participant, has had the most success with institutional support. She accessed tutoring services for English and math classes, created strategies that assisted her in navigating success in academics, and was fortunate to find a caring counselor who helped her with her educational plan. Still, she works full-time while taking community college classes. When she transfers to a university, she will then attend college full-time.

Challenges and Barriers

These strong women have risen above the challenges in their lives and persevered on their educational path. Red Wolfe left home when she was sixteen to escape an abusive stepfather and negligent mother. She was estranged from her substance-abusing father for 18 years, and her mother cut off all communication with her when she married an African man. In the last 10 years, Red Wolfe has struggled as a single parent, receiving no financial assistance from her ex-husband or from family in Idaho. She says that it was necessary for her children's sake to put her educational aspirations on hold while raising her children and supporting them in their academic and extracurricular endeavors. She remembers how it felt to be a neglected child, with her parents working and then partying half the night with drugs and alcohol. She also recalls how she felt as a bi-racial child whose family refused to acknowledge her American Indian heritage. Although her father claimed to be Italian to outsiders, Red

Wolfe and her siblings knew and claimed the part of their ethnic heritage that was Indian even though Indians were disparaged and discriminated against in Idaho where she grew up. Red Wolfe relates her plans to return to college, but she did not qualify for financial aid while she was employed full-time. Now that she is unemployed, she plans to explore her financial aid options.

Alashanee moved out of her home and in with her aunt to escape her stepfather, her mother, and family turmoil. Growing up, she was nurtured by her Spanish grandmother who provided guidance and love. Alashanee has always succeeded academically in school, finding ways to conquer the few challenges she did face, such as writing. She claims her Apache heritage from her paternal grandfather, and her Spanish heritage from her paternal grandmother but rejects her Mexican heritage from her mother. She says that her maternal family's dysfunction was harmful to her, so she detached herself from her mother and her mother's side of the family. Her father returned to New Mexico after the break-up with her mother, and Alashanee works full-time to support herself and her educational goals. Although her father provides encouragement and some guidance, Alashanee has shaped her own path.

Lois was removed from her home by Child Protective Services when she was sixteen after suffering a childhood fraught with family conflict and transgenerational abuse and spent two years in foster care. She was allowed to return home after her mother completed parenting classes. By this time, her father had been gone for several years, and her mother was her role model for higher education, working on master's and doctorate degrees while working full-time to support Lois and herself. When her

mother became terminally ill, Lois stopped out of college to nurse her through her illness. Lois was only 22 when her mother passed on. After her mother's death, Lois reunited with her father and currently lives in one of his rental houses in the East Bay. Throughout her schooling, Lois struggled with writing and math phobia because of family abuse. She was also fearful of being "seen" in the college classroom, and states that throughout her life she has felt isolated from both her father's and her mother's ethnic and cultural heritages. With the passing of her mother, she lost connection to her Choctaw and Coushatta roots, but at the time of this interview she expressed a desire to reconnect with her mother's sister.

Tyndall's family life was marred by an abusive father and alcoholic mother. Despite the family turmoil, she was firmly on the path to a university education when her father plundered her college fund, and she was left to navigate her own way financially. She is estranged from her father but has had a close and loving relationship with her Blackfoot mother and maternal relatives, particularly her grandmother, who passed away last year. Tyndall's mother has been sober for over 20 years, completed her bachelor's degree at fifty-one, and went on to get a certificate in drug and alcohol counseling. Tyndall speaks of her pride in her mother's success in conquering her alcoholism, achieving her educational goal, and working to help others with similar afflictions. On her own academic path, Tyndall has encountered barriers because she was not taught the discipline of studying and time management. Despite her economic struggles, she has now completed her bachelor's degree and is preparing to enter graduate school. The first generation born off the reservation, Tyndall relates

her frustration over the failure of the Blackfoot nation to recognize her as a member. She believes she does not qualify for scholarships intended for native students because she lacks sufficient blood quantum for either Blackfoot or Cree tribal membership.

Enlightin's story reveals a peaceful relationship with her parents as she was growing up. Her father remarried when she was 18, and she did not see him much after that. She had a child when she was 20 with a man she had known her whole life, and although he was killed when their baby was only four months old, she says it's as if they spent a life together. Enlightenment's challenges arose primarily from poverty; her parents had not taught her how to live in poverty or how to provide for her daughter. She was daunted by institutional bureaucracy and the insistence of others to brand her as a poor, black, single mother. She had no support for her educational goals and no assistance in defining a career path that would lead to both satisfaction and self-sufficiency. Her achievements are "in spite of" achievements: she has accomplished her short-term educational goals in spite of a system that blocked her path because she lacked the navigational tools given to students of privilege to move quickly through the system. She dodged the stereotyping of instructors and counselors who saw only a poor, black, single mother struggling to make ends meet and who tried to push her into being satisfied with a job rather than a career as a lawyer. She maintained her native identity in spite of those who insisted that she declare herself solely African American and then rejected her as not really "one of us."

As I fashioned this section about Challenges and Barriers, I realized that only one of the participants, Red Wolfe, has had a meaningful relationship with siblings.

Enlightin's half-sister is ten years older and treated her badly whenever they were together as children. Lois and Tyndall are only children, and Alashanee is estranged from her younger brother. The lack of sibling support could be viewed as a challenge.

Native American Identity and Self-Image

All five participants identify with their Native American heritage. Red Wolfe is perhaps the farthest removed from it since it was not acknowledged or honored as she was growing up. Instead, she was lectured and reprimanded for associating with people of color, and her mixed-race friends were not allowed in her house. She was not told until she was a grown woman and reunited with her father that her ethnic heritage is Choctaw rather than Cherokee, learning then that her father's people came from Mississippi. Although she met her native grandfather only once, she remembers that he was an alcoholic, and they did not get along well together. She is most often misidentified as Latina, and some of her friends attempt to portray her as "the white girl" even though they know she claims her Choctaw heritage. As a young girl, Red Wolfe was proud of her father's Indian heritage. As a grown woman, she passes on this heritage to her mixed-race children. But she talks about being a failure because she did not accomplish her educational goal by the age of 40, the benchmark she had set herself for "getting her act together" through attainment of her registered nurse's degree and a position as an RN in a hospital. She is floundering educationally and economically, and her native identity neither helps nor hinders her.

Enlightin was raised in a rural environment with parents and grandparents who encouraged traditional practices and ways of eating. She spent every summer with her mother in Lassen and Shasta counties, living on tribal land with family friends. She claims her Native American, European, and African American heritages and resents being forced to check only one box on applications for college and social services. She remembers stories about her Geechee grandfather and her Sioux great-grandparents and decries her grandmother's elusiveness when she spoke of the family history.

Aside from her brown skin, when Enlightin looks in the mirror she does not see a Black woman; she sees a mixed-race woman. When she moved to the city from the country, she was bewildered by the battle over resources, and the clamoring that she declare herself only Black and deny her European and Indian heritages. She had had no experience with welfare, food stamps, or social services. It was only after she experienced her own poverty as a single mother, trying to support a child in an urban environment, that she understood the struggles of disenfranchised, economically disadvantaged minorities. She lived in West Oakland during the era of the Oakland Riders, experiencing the "social structure that allows the insular poverty to continue," as well as the social policy that allowed once-thriving neighborhoods to deteriorate. And she engaged in the struggle. She proclaims:

It took me a long time to get that people hated me, not just me but groups of brown-skinned people, Black, Indian, Mexican. 'You all can just rot and die in the 'hood; we don't care!'

Her experiences changed her, and her awareness of racism and hatred have made her even more determined to succeed and help others who are poverty-stricken and defeated by the system.

Lois ardently identifies with her Native American mother more than her English father. Her mother was raised on the Choctaw reservation in Oklahoma and ran away to escape poverty and abuse and acquire an education. The family lost their languages; the Choctaw language was beaten out of her grandfather in boarding school, and her grandmother refused to teach Coushatta to her children or speak it around them. Lois was raised knowing that textbook accounts of natives and native history were often inaccurate; her mother corrected the misrepresentations and helped Lois have positive images of her people. Lois continues that practice through selecting Native American topics to share with her college classmates, hoping to educate them about issues that concern Indians.

Although she declares on applications that she is American Indian, Lois struggles with her identity, feeling that while she has a foot in both worlds, she belongs to neither. In the classroom, she believes she has been the lone native person, and she was unwilling for her voice to be heard in fear that others would think that she spoke for all native peoples. She has struggled with feelings of inferiority, feeling that she didn't fit in and that there wasn't a place for her. When she has spoken on native issues, she applies pressure on herself to do justice to American Indians and have their voice be heard. Conversely, she is fearful of offending classmates who might hold an oppositional view. One of the few times she revealed her native identity in the

classroom was when the class discussion centered on Simon Wiesenthal and the Jewish holocaust. She informed her classmates about the Native American holocaust even though it was difficult for her to be that voice.

Tyndall represents the first generation born off the Blackfoot reservation in Browning, Montana. She is not perceived by others as American Indian and seems amused by some of the labels people put on her: Tongonese, Hawaiian, Jewish, Latina. She was surprised when she first met Black Indians because, she pointed out, there is limited intermarriage on the reservation in Montana. When she met Indians such as Seminoles and Lumbees who “don’t look Indian just like me!” she was able to identify with them and realize that her lack of an Indian phenotype does not adequately reveal who she is. Her inability to become enrolled in either the Blackfoot or Cree nation bothers her especially since she has enrolled cousins with less blood quantum. In spite of the fact that the tribe passed a law that affected those born after 1963 and Tyndall, born in 1964, got caught in the politics of it, she argues that blood quantum is not a cultural basis for being Indian. One-half Indian, she does identify as Indian through blood and culture and believes that being raised with tribal traditions and practices is an integral part of being Indian. But she is cautious about revealing herself to non-natives, fraught as that revelation is with cultural taboos and anticipated stereotyping.

Alashanee, “she who plays a lot,” identifies as being native and Spanish, but checks the “Other” box on applications because she does not wish to be labeled as having only one ethnic identity. Her grandfather was born on the Apache reservation in New Mexico, and Alashanee has visited it several times with her aunt and spent

summers visiting her grandmother in New Mexico off the reservation. She speaks lovingly of her Spanish grandmother and regrets that she did not keep up with the Spanish language that she spoke as a preschooler. But her grandmother, grandfather, father and mother all communicated with Alashanee in English, so she did not experience any language problems while she was growing up. She did, however, suffer from being rejected by her mother and mistreated by her stepfather, so she refuses to claim any Mexican heritage from her mother's side.

When her grandparents married, Alashanee's grandmother stipulated that she would not raise children on the reservation, so Alashanee's father and siblings were raised in town off the reservation. Alashanee asserts that she does not have identity issues, but she hesitates to reveal that she is native because she has no documentation and because she was raised in the city away from the reservation and the Apache way of life. She sees herself as a product of her urban environment, having been raised "American," and does not want to offend other native people with her ignorance of native ways and traditional dances, so she approaches her Indian culture cautiously and respectfully.

These native women proudly relate to their Native American heritage and at the same time have qualms about sharing that heritage with non-native outsiders. There is a sense among the participants that they want to guard and protect their identity so it becomes neither stereotyped with negative characterizations nor co-opted by those who view it as "trendy" to be Native American.

Invisibility and Isolation

Red Wolfe relates that her academic journey would have been easier if she had been approached as a native woman and provided EOPS and financial aid services. She resents that she is often stereotyped as a “privileged white girl” because she identifies as part native. According to her story, her mother’s side of the family was racist, and her mixed-race friends were not allowed in her house. As a young teenager living in that environment, she received mixed messages about her identity. As a mother of mixed-race children – African, Native American, and Caucasian – she instills in her children pride in their ethnicity and a desire to learn more about their heritages.

Red Wolfe speaks of isolation and hopelessness in her attempts to gain a degree. She is evasive when I ask her if she can congratulate herself on her academic successes: her grade point average of 3.5 and the completion of rigorous prerequisites for the associate degree nursing program. Instead, she focuses on a lack of confidence in writing and on her failure to complete a degree by the time she turned 40 years old. She says that at some point she just gave up the struggle to finish her education.

When Enlightin moved to the Bay Area cities from the rural environment in which she grew up, she says that she immediately felt separated and isolated from her peers in her belief system, her ways of eating, and her ethnic heritage. In first entering college, she stayed under the radar; she did not take an assessment test, attend orientation, or attend school events. She was not allowed to self-identify as being native, so she practiced being invisible or, at the very least, being a chameleon in order

to get by. Pressured to fit into the “Black box,” she acquiesced or resisted, depending upon what assistance she needed. She carefully crafted her interactions with others on campus and kept her private life at home, determined to hold on to her own identity quietly without calling attention to herself because her real battle was to get an education and provide for her daughter. She spoke with me about “the promotion of underachievement” and her perception that she was pigeonholed as a single Black mother who needed to get a job. In her narrative she reveals the pain of racial discrimination, urban poverty, and the power struggle between whites and people of color. She asserts that people of color are taught failure and kept prisoner in the urban environment.

Isolation and invisibility are themes that resonate with Lois. Extremely self-conscious, it is painful for her to share herself with others in a classroom setting or a group setting at work. She says that for her, this inhibition is cultural and that it’s a challenge for native students to talk in front of strangers; her mother struggled with the same reticence to be “seen.” Lois has also been fearful of being the lone Indian voice in the classroom and of doing justice to the Native American voice. Her current community college is more diverse than the one she attended when she was younger, and she feels that it’s a better fit for her when there are other indigenous students in the classroom.

Two other issues arise for Lois regarding the theme of invisibility and isolation. The first is the issue of trust. She writes in her journal about a training she had

attended, in which the trainer had spoken about institutionalized racism and sexism that continue to marginalize oppressed groups. Lois writes:

She [the trainer] also talked about trust being a big factor and stressed how marginalized peoples do not trust (and rightly so due to effects of colonization/mistreatment) institutions/ practitioners/others of dominant society so it is up to members of dominant society to be aware of that (Lois, pp. 1-2).

The second issue is that of isolation from family. For years, Lois has been alienated from her mother's sister and brothers and wishes to re-establish contact with her aunt. Since her mother's passing ten years ago, Lois' family affiliation has consisted of her relationship with her father. Although they care for one another, he is unable to see her as a Native American woman.

Tyndall's approach to "being seen as native" is much like that of Lois'. She comments that she sees in urban Indians, and in her own relatives, a desire to remain "below the radar" in terms of declaring themselves to be native. They choose invisibility over visibility, as does she. Although she declares herself to be native on school applications, she has assumed that little is done with that information other than capturing demographics for reports. Throughout her schooling, she has never been approached concerning her native identity based on her self-identification on a school application. She does not believe that she needs to be seen as a native student in order to be academically successful but comments that it would have made a difference for her on a social level if there had been an identifiable group of native students with whom she could have interacted. As revealed earlier in this study, she recognizes that

many native men and women hide their ethnic identity and cultural heritage because of “internalized oppression and internalized shame that’s generational.”

Finally, Alashanee is hesitant to reveal her native heritage for several reasons, one of which is the lack of documentation to prove that she is, indeed, Apache. She refuses to check “Native American” on school applications, checking “Other” instead because she identifies with both her Spanish and Apache heritages. She speaks about isolation and invisibility as being deeply rooted in the native community, and her isolation from her native roots in New Mexico makes her reluctant to cross a boundary where she might be perceived as knowing more about the traditions and practices than she actually does. Despite her vigilance to refrain from crossing what she terms a “line of respect,” she speaks of her pride in who she is and pride in her cultures.

Summary

Chapter 4 presents the research findings from interviews with five research participants, all of whom are urban American Indian women who attended community college in the San Francisco Bay Area. The chapter begins with a definition of terms used in the narratives. Following the list of terms is a restory of each participant’s educational journey, shaped from interview data and presented thematically, beginning with a family history that impacted her journey and ending with the participant’s sense of “being seen” as an American Indian community college student. Each narrative begins with a description of how contact with the participant was established and particulars about the interview setting and is followed by a detailed narrative of each

woman's journey arranged in five sections: Family Story, Academic Path, Native Identity, Challenges and Barriers, and Invisibility.

Restories are presented as descriptions of participants' experiences in community college and the ways in which family dynamics, native identity, and encounters with the institution itself impacted those experiences. The voices of the participants are an integral part of the narratives. They were invited to tell their stories and were assured that I would attempt to portray their authentic selves through their own voices. I have reproduced their words faithfully from the interview tapes, upon occasion combining sentences on the same topic from different interview sessions.

It is not my goal to use the research findings to arrive at far-reaching generalizations applicable to all community college-going American Indian women in urban environments. However, as I interviewed participants and crafted the restories, several powerful themes emerged from each narrative.

- Perseverance in Higher Education
- Academic Aptitude and Success
- Institutional Support
- Challenges and Barriers
- Native American Identity and Self-Image
- Invisibility and Isolation

All six of the themes relate to sections in the participants' narratives: Academic Path, Native Identity, Challenges and Barriers, and Invisibility. The themes of identity and invisibility strike at the core of how these women perceive themselves, and how they

navigate the urban educational environment in which they find themselves. In agreeing to participate in this study, interviewees openly grappled with their own sense of how they stand in the world as native women. The presentation of themes is intended to assist the reader, native and non-native, in achieving a deeper understanding of the experiences and struggles of native women as they navigate the educational system.

The final chapter of this research study, Chapter 5, will focus on and address the following subjects:

- Reflection on themes
- Recommendations for practice
- Recommendations for future research
- Epilogue

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Every Native American is a survivor, an anomaly, a surprise on earth. We were all slated for extinction before the march of progress. But surprise, we are progress.

Louise Erdrich, *Foreword, First Person, First Peoples*

America can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a native school of thought. The Indian can save America.

Luther Standing Bear (Lakota) (1933/1978)

This study explores effective college practices and support systems that helped five Native women navigate educational paths in community colleges. The concept for this study arose out of the desire to learn what brings Native women to our community colleges, and what assists them in persevering on an educational path. The most authentic way of learning about the experiences of Native women in college is to ask them. This study asks American Indian women about their experiences in the modern world of higher education through narrative accounts of their journeys in community college. Narratives are powerful explications of life and experience and can inform the listener about life-changing events. Although these personal accounts are bound by time and place, there are some common threads in all five narratives which may mirror native experiences on many of our community college campuses.

In a very real way I have “heard the voices” of these Native women, and I hope that my study honors the experiences and struggles of the participants as they confronted issues of claiming education and navigating their identities in institutions in which they were the “other,” and in which they feared being the lone Indian voice.

Their experiences of isolation and identity echo the stories of anguish, struggle, and success told by Native American graduates of Dartmouth in *First Person, First Peoples: Native American College Graduates Tell Their Life Stories* (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Whether at university or in the community college, Native students find themselves to be part of an invisible minority, a minority so small and so misunderstood by non-Natives that their very presence at the institution is a curiosity.

Chapter 5 of the research study begins with a reiteration of common themes identified in the narratives presented in Chapter 4, and a reflection on those themes in relationship to the current study. An outcome of the themes and narratives is a list of recommendations for future practice in community colleges. The next section presents potential areas for future research to continue to add to the body of literature on the education of Native students in community college and elsewhere. Finally, a reflective summary identifies areas of significance as they pertain to the educational paths of five urban, American Indian women in the San Francisco Bay Area. The chapter closes with an epilogue.

Reflections on Themes

Six themes were presented and discussed in Chapter 4: Perseverance in Higher Education, Academic Aptitude and Success, Institutional Support, Challenges and Barriers, Native American Identity and Self-Image, Invisibility and Isolation. A reflection on those themes is presented here, and it is hoped that the experiences of the study participants in relationship to these themes may assist faculty, staff, and

administrators in recognizing that there can be striking differences in the ways that Native and non-Native students are greeted by the community college, and in the ways that these students approach the institution.

Theme 1: Perseverance in Higher Education

As presented in Chapter 4, each study participant has persevered in pursuing a college education, regardless of the level of institutional support or lack of support. Somehow, in each of these women, a value for education was inculcated. The common thread in their educational experiences is that they persevered as individuals, rather than as members of a “seen” minority group. There are advantages to being a member of a recognized minority group on a college campus, such as academic success programs targeted at particular groups of students (e.g. the Puente Program for Latino students; and the Daraja Program for African American students). Even after the passing of Proposition 209 in California in 1996, which prohibits “preferential treatment” in public education (and elsewhere in the public sector) “on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin” (Proposition 209, retrieved 2007), student members of underrepresented minorities continue to reap the benefits of these programs which now strive to be more inclusive. But to be recruited into one of these programs, a student must be identified as belonging to a target group. While efforts are being made on some campuses to recruit students from a variety of ethnicities, it is noteworthy that not one interviewee reported participating in recruitment activities. So for the interviewees, being “seen” on campus and participating in recruitment

activities were not factors that influenced their determination to persevere on their educational paths.

Theme 2: Academic Aptitude and Success

Academic success has been achieved by each study participant, and their achievement of success can be viewed in the context of their struggles. All are still in college although Tyndall has completed a bachelor's degree and is beginning work on a master's degree. Only Alashanee is younger than 30 years old, and she is at least 3 years away from completing her bachelor's degree because she works full time to support herself. Family turmoil and life circumstances have prevented all the study participants from pursuing a traditional educational path that leads from high school to college and a degree. This is the case with many community college students, particularly those who enter the workplace early on and then return to higher education as re-entry students. Yet again, the study participants navigated their educational journeys alone. They did not see themselves reflected in the classroom, or the faculty and staff, or in the student body. In our community colleges we speak and write about the value of diversity and how important it is that students see themselves reflected on campus in faculty and staff, so they can then envision their own academic success. If we accept the essential truth of this concept, then the reverse may be true. If Native students do not see themselves reflected anywhere in the institution, it may hamper the ability of Native students to succeed in institutions of higher education. When students see themselves reflected in the faculty and staff who provide

instruction and services and in the student body that attends the institution, they can assume that a safe place has been carved out for students like them. Conversely, if they do not see themselves reflected in the institution in any fashion, they may approach the institution tentatively. While some minority groups assert themselves and play an active role in the institution through student government or peer services to fellow students, Native students are more likely to keep their ethnic identity “under the radar” if there is not an institutional recognition of Native students. By “institutional recognition” I refer to a formalized method of greeting students of color which recognizes and honors each cultural and ethnic heritage equally. When focus groups and clubs advertise on campus and Student Services activities are targeted at African American students, Latino students, and Asian students, and **not** at Native students, it is more difficult for Native students to see themselves reflected in the institution.

Theme 3: Institutional Support

“Institutional recognition” could be considered as one form of institutional support. The more common forms are financial aid, tutoring, academic counseling, and career counseling. Tyndall and Alashanee accessed tutoring, and Lois and Red Wolfe were awarded some financial aid. But none of the participants was familiar enough with the community college system to apply for and access sufficient aid to maintain full-time student status. During college orientation sessions, student support services are described and application procedures thoroughly explained. Although some of the study participants attended these orientation sessions, they did not achieve

a high level of self-efficacy within the institution. Instead, they relied on their support systems outside the institution, and primarily on themselves, to provide resources to meet their basic needs and enable them to attend community college.

Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers

It is safe to say that most community college students face challenges of one kind or another. However, it is noteworthy that four of the five study participants experienced some sort of trauma or abuse within their immediate families. Only Enlightin escaped family abuse, but she was left alone at age 20 to raise a baby in extreme poverty after her daughter's father died. Transgenerational trauma in American Indians due to genocide, colonization, and boarding school experiences has been recognized, but it was not addressed in the community college experiences of any of the study participants. Academic ability was not a barrier, but learning to navigate the educational system presented a challenge for most of the women interviewed. All of them lacked a cohesive relationship with the institution and with those in positions of power within the institution. In fact, the lack of recognition of these women as Native students contributed to their sense of invisibility and isolation.

Theme 5: Native American Identity and Self-Image

A criterion for study participants was that they identify as Native or part Native. All five of the interviewees are mixed race Native women, a characteristic which reflects a large proportion of the Indian population of the San Francisco Bay Area, and

all five identify as part Native. Outside the community college, these women have the freedom to be whomever and whatever they wish to declare themselves. Inside the community college, they are reluctant to claim their Native heritage for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is that their presence is an anomaly; there is an assumption that Indians do not exist in urban environments, and some people act as though Indians altogether are extinct. What other racial or ethnic group is promoted as a sports mascot? What other racial or ethnic group is ridiculed with absurd and degrading caricatures? The women studied have suffered from the stereotyping and ignorance of non-Natives, and they are reluctant to allow their voices to be heard. These women struggle within themselves to establish and hold on to their Native identities, and they vacillate between what is easier and what is right for them. Alashanee declared, "I was raised American!" Yet she claims and honors her Apache and Spanish heritages.

Theme 6: Invisibility and Isolation

Theme 6, Invisibility and Isolation, is reflected in all the themes. The Native women interviewed were not seen as Native women in the community colleges they attended. Red Wolfe was regarded as a "privileged white girl" when she tried to access services for her family. Enlightin was pushed to declare herself African American only and to deny the Native and European parts of her heritage. Their institutions of higher education have not created a space for the Native voice. Not only did their academic institutions fail to recognize and acknowledge their ethnicity, but these women also failed to recognize other Native women and men who shared their college

environment. Not seeing themselves reflected in the student body led to a greater sense of isolation and a greater reluctance to be that lone, Indian voice in the college classroom.

Recommendations for Practice

I anticipate that the stories of how these five Native women navigated the pathways to and within higher education will assist college administrators as they consider ways to attract and support marginalized Native women and men. The following are suggested practices that grew out of the narratives as possible ways to address some of the issues voiced by the participants, in particular the issues of being invisible as Native women on college campuses, and lacking the knowledge to effectively and efficiently navigate the college environment.

- Sponsor clubs for indigenous/Native students.
- Encourage Native students to write and disseminate a newsletter.
- Create interdisciplinary studies curricula that include courses in Native American studies.
- Schedule ongoing workshops on campus for students, faculty and staff that address issues of race, power, and privilege.
- Schedule ongoing workshops on campus for faculty and staff on cross-cultural communication.
- Create a climate on campus that leads to increased student involvement from all ethnic and cultural groups represented on our college campuses.

- Establish referral services to academic, career, and personal counseling for Native students.
- Establish information services for scholarships and financial aid specially designed for Native students.
- Establish outreach efforts to high schools and middle schools that have significant populations of Native students.
- Create liaisons between tribal education programs and Native students on campus.
- Ensure that cultural events on campus include events that reflect Native cultures.
- Collaborate with college Anthropology and Native American Studies departments to present seminars to the college community on the past and present histories of Native peoples.
- Expand the library holdings to reflect Native scholarship.
- Recruit Native faculty in a variety of disciplines.
- Include information on Native students in faculty orientation sessions.
- Create a Native student mentoring program on campus.
- Establish peer mentoring groups on campus for Native students.
- Involve the Native community outside the college in education for Native students inside the college.
- Collaborate with students to design and build a multicultural center on campus where every student will be greeted and welcomed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Scholarly research by Native Americans about Native peoples is on the rise (Mihesuah, 1998), but there is still a lack of information about the Native presence in our colleges and universities, particularly in our community colleges. The publication in 1997 of *First Person, First Peoples: Native American College Graduates Tell Their Life Stories*, an account of Native graduates of Dartmouth College told in their own voices, seems to underscore the dearth of published research focused on Native graduates (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). Universities such as Dartmouth and University of California at Berkeley recruit Native students from reservations, but there are limited outreach efforts made at recruiting urban Native students from California rancherias, despite the fact that in California alone there are over 100 federally-recognized tribes and over 40 non-recognized tribes.

The following are suggested topics for future research using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, arranged according to the six themes identified from the participant narratives and presented in Chapter 4.

Topics for Future Research

Perseverance in Higher Education

- Investigate the influence of collegiate Native American clubs and events on the retention and persistence of Native students.
- Compare the college-going experiences of Native college graduates to the college-going experiences of Native students who have stopped out of college.

Academic Aptitude and Success

- Examine traditional Native methods of educating Native students to assess how those methods could be incorporated into pedagogy and curricula at the college level.
- Examine the efficacy of collaborative study practices for Native students.
- Investigate the influence of mentoring relationships on the success of Native college graduates.

Institutional Support

- Investigate college recruitment of urban Indians in relationship to the federal government relocation policies of the 1950's.
- Examine collegiate best practices that lead to increased retention and persistence of Native students.
- Examine practices of incorporating Native histories, environmental issues, and literature in interdisciplinary studies in order to increase knowledge within the general student population of how these histories and issues affect the lives of contemporary Native peoples.

Challenges and Barriers

- Explore the impact of mixed-race identity on the educational achievement of Native students.
- Explore the impact of self-efficacy on the success of Native college graduates.
- Assess the influence of bilingualism on the educational achievement of Native students.

- Assess the influence of biculturalism on the educational achievement of Native students.

Native American Identity and Self-Image

- Compare the experiences of Native students attending tribal colleges to the experiences of Native students attending non-tribal colleges.
- Investigate the impact of culture-based curricula on Native students.
- Investigate the influence of Native teachers on populations of Native students.
- Explore ways to involve tribal elders and tribal communities in the education of Native students.

Invisibility and Isolation

- Examine the effects of transgenerational trauma on school-age Native children.
- Identify classroom practices or biases that reinforce a Native sense of alienation in the classroom.

Reflective Summary

I have been involved in community college education and leadership since the mid-1970s. The first two-thirds of my career focused on teaching English in the community college, and I moved from teaching in community colleges in Southern California and Eastern Tennessee to educational institutions in Northern California. I have been an administrator in the California community college system since 1997. As a vice president of instruction who regularly implements outreach initiatives to community constituencies, I observed the lack of visibility of Native students in the

California community college system. In general, the Native population in the majority of California community colleges is .5-1%, which mirrors the Native populations of most of our communities. These numbers, however, only reflect students who choose to self-identify as Native. Some Native students on our campuses do not identify as Native on their college registration applications, often claiming “other” as a racial identity. It is significant that these men and women are not seen as Native students either in the classroom or when they request support services from the institution.

In considering a topic for my research study, I continued to wonder about our Native students: Where are they going to college? Do they complete their educational goals? Do we provide support and services that are culturally appropriate? Do we hear their voices? It was important to me as a community college administrator and as a mixed-race European-Choctaw woman that I explore the community college experiences of local American Indian women in my ongoing work in order to expand access, retention, and success to underrepresented populations in Northern California community colleges.

The narratives presented are stories from five women who have navigated the community college system, each in very different ways. But what I heard from each interviewee, and heard in each voice, was a longing for community, a desire to be “seen” as Native by an institution that would *care what that meant*. And, concomitantly, I heard a reluctance to reveal oneself to an institution that was perceived as indifferent or unaware of the presence of Native students and of the

historical struggles faced by Native students in claiming their identities. Even well-meaning non-Native people of color are often unaware of the historical shame in naming oneself “Indian.”

Ironically, although the era of shame has passed, the urban, mixed-race Native woman encounters another side of the double-edged sword – that she is not *Native enough* to claim her Indian self. Mixed-race urban Indians have often lost their tribal affiliation and tribal recognition. Even if they are first-born off the reservation, their grandparents’ and parents’ intermarriage with members of other tribes or with non-Natives may have diluted their blood quantum such that they cannot qualify for enrollment in a tribe that requires a minimum level of blood quantum. Tyndall faces this dilemma. First born off the Blackfoot reservation, her Cree and Blackfoot heritage comprise but 50% of her ethnicity, and she believes that her Blackfoot blood quantum is insufficient to secure enrollment in the tribe even though she will inherit an allotment on the reservation.

Accompanying the reality of diluted Indian blood in many urban Indians is the loss of tribal practices and traditions. Of the participants interviewed, Lois and Alashanee were most fearful of overstepping boundaries through ignorance of traditional ways and of being regarded as disrespectful by tribal elders. Alashanee in particular voiced her concern about others expecting her to know more than she does when she visits the Apache reservation. She regards herself as a modern, urban woman, and she approaches her Native self with a sense of respect. Through a strong connection with her Apache aunt and her loving memories of her Spanish

grandmother, she declares, “I know my history. I know where I come from.” She is proud of her mixed heritage and proud of her ability to manage her educational path.

Finally, I reflect on my choice to interview only Native women. From the beginning concept of this research study there was a powerful pull to hear women’s voices, not to posit their stories as more important than male stories, but to make a space for them to be heard. The female voice is often silenced or over-powered by the male voice. The voices of the female participants in this study are strong and insightful of their places in the urban educational environment.

Since one of the missions of California Community Colleges is to strive for and reach educational equity for underrepresented minorities, it is important to acknowledge and support the presence of Native students in our educational institutions. Native voices need to be heard in our educational institutions, and Native women’s voices need to be empowered. The experiences of these urban Native women in Bay Area community colleges echo many of the experiences of Native students in higher education, particularly the difficulty in being recognized and valued as members of the Native community. The narratives presented in this study illuminate some common experiences of Native women in community colleges, and administrators may be able to construct meaning from these stories in order to increase access and success for female American Indian populations.

EPILOGUE

On March 17, 2007, I attended a memorial service for my Aunt Jimma Lou. She was born in Crowder, Oklahoma, the younger sister of my mother, who she predeceased. In her later life, Aunt Jimma Lou embraced her Indian identity and was accepted into the Choctaw tribe through enrollment. After the memorial service, as the family reminisced about our beloved aunt, my Uncle Jean revealed that he, too, has enrolled in the Choctaw tribe. And then, for the first time in my 57 years, we talked as a family about our Choctaw heritage. The journey of my research study has been also a journey of personal identity for me and an honoring of my Indian heritage. I give thanks to Aunt Jimma Lou and Uncle Jean for their willingness to claim their heritage and pass on this legacy to their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. Most of all, I thank the research participants for their courage and kindness as they shared their lives and their hearts with me.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter

To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act.
In a Different Voice, Carol Gilligan

Dear Community College Student:

My name is Linda Berry-Camara. I am a doctoral student in the Oregon State University Community College Leadership Program.

I am writing to see whether you will consider participating in a study that I am conducting for my dissertation on urban (San Francisco Bay Area), female, American Indian community college students. I am seeking access to stories of up to five urban, female American Indian community college students through a series of individual interviews. Discovering what brings American Indian students to Bay Area community colleges, and what assists them in staying, is a goal for those of us concerned about access and equity to California community colleges for Native students.

Your participation in this study would involve meeting with me in person 3 times over two to three months to tell me stories about your experiences in a San Francisco Bay Area community college. Our meetings will consist of me asking you questions and audio taping your answers. Participation is limited to female American Indian students who have completed at least one year of course work in a San Francisco Bay Area community college in the past five years, who are over 18 years of age, and who identify with a native community, urban or non-urban.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and you can end your involvement at any time. I hope that your stories about your experiences in our community colleges will help us shape policies and procedures that will better serve the native students who follow you to the community college. Women have been chosen for this study because too often women's voices are silenced. Carol Gilligan writes, "...by restricting their voices, many women are wittingly or unwittingly perpetuating a male-voiced civilization and an order of living that is founded on disconnection from women" (1993, p. xi).

If you are interested in voluntarily participating in this research study, please contact me at lberry@peralta.edu or (510) 524-7550. After confirming your interest, I will ask you to sign and return an Informed Consent Document that describes your role and protection, and will schedule the first interview session with you. At that session I will explain the procedures for the study.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will be able to share your stories with me.

Linda Berry-Camara

Linda Berry-Camara
Doctoral Candidate
OSU School of Education

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: ***Hearing Their Voices: Community College Experiences of American Indian Women***
Principal Investigator: **Dr. Betty Duvall, School of Education**
Co-Investigator(s): **Linda Berry-Camara, School of Education**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to discover what brings urban, female, American Indian students to Bay Area community colleges, and what assists them in staying. Volunteers will be interviewed for their stories of struggle and/or success, and to learn how they may have used on-campus or off-campus help to stay in school. These stories will be included in a doctoral dissertation and will aid community colleges as they consider ways to increase the number of American Indian women in college.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have completed at least one year of community college in the past 5 years in the San Francisco Bay Area; you have identified yourself as an American Indian female; and you are over 18 years old.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for about three months. Your part in the study will consist of three interviews lasting one to two hours each, and there will be approximately three weeks between sessions. The interview sessions will be conducted by the student researcher, Linda Berry-Camara, and will be opportunities for you to tell stories of your educational experiences in community college. These sessions will take place in a setting of your choice that will allow your stories to be tape recorded without distracting background noise. Either the student researcher, Linda Berry-Camara, or a professional typist will type a

record of your interview from the audio tapes. You will be shown copies of your typed-up stories so that you can make corrections of the content if necessary.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

The researchers do not anticipate any risks with this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable after having told a story, and ask that the story not be included, your request will be granted. In addition, you may withdraw from this study at any time.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

There will be no direct benefits to you from this study. However, we hope that future American Indian college students will benefit from this study through improved student services that are culturally based, and through increased recognition of their presence on community college campuses.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, we will ask you to choose another name for use in the written study, and only Linda Berry-Camara, the student researcher, and Dr. Betty Duvall, the Principal Investigator, will have ongoing access to the original data.

One aspect of this study involves making audio tapes of your stories which will then be typed on a computer by either the student researcher, Linda Berry-Camara, or by a professional typist. Computer files will be deleted at the end of the study, and any typed copies will have your false name and not your real name. Audio tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study, and paper copies of your stories will be kept in a locked cabinet for a maximum of two years. The dissertation committee will see the results of this study, but your identity will not be shared with them or made public.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. During the interview sessions, you can choose not to answer certain questions, and you may stop the interview at any time if you are tired, hungry, or uncomfortable. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, and request that your stories not be used, the researchers will honor that request and will destroy the information that you provided.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Dr. Betty Duvall at (503) 292-3745 or by email at duvallb@oregonstate.edu or Linda Berry-Camara, at (510) 524-7550 or by email at lberry@peralta.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

Demographic Data Form

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

NAME: _____

AGE: _____ REQUESTED PSEUDONYM: _____

PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

TRIBAL AFFILIATION (optional): _____

COMMUNITY COLLEGE(S) ATTENDED: _____

LOCATION: _____

TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS in COMMUNITY COLLEGE: _____

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE GED NOT HS GRADUATE DEGREES: ASSOCIATE BACHELOR'S MASTER'S PhD PARENTS' HIGHEST DEGREE: ASSOCIATE BACHELOR'S MASTER'S
PhD

STUDENT SERVICES UTILIZED: [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

 EOPS DSPS FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING PUENTE LEARNING CENTER TRANSFER CENTER TUTORING VETERANS CalWORKS CAREER CENTER STUDENT ACTIVITIES
SCHOLARSHIP

YEAR YOU LEFT COMMUNITY COLLEGE (if not currently a student):

TRANSFERRED: YES NO

IF TRANSFERRED, PLEASE NOTE WHERE AND WHEN: _____

_____ **DATE** _____

EDUCATIONAL GOAL STATED ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE APPLICATION:

- TRANSFER** **ASSOCIATE DEGREE** **VOCATIONAL DEGREE OR
CERTIFICATE** **NEW JOB SKILLS** **UPDATE JOB SKILLS** **CAREER
GOALS**
- CULTURAL ENRICHMENT** **UNDECIDED**

TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE CREDITS: _____

- **GPA (optional):** _____

Contact Information: phone _____ email _____

APPENDIX D

Sample Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions**Experiences of Urban, Female, American Indian Community College Students****Historical/Personal Information**

Where did you grow up?

When did you move to XXX if you weren't born here?

Did you attend public or private high school?

Did your parents go to college? Did your grandparents?

What community college have you attended in the Bay Area?

When did you go there?

How did you hear about _____ Community College?

What were some of the reasons you decided to enroll in _____ Community College?

Academic Experiences

How well did you do in school before enrolling in _____ Community College (use scale of A, B, C, D, F)?

What level of classes did you first take at the community college? Basic or college level?

What is the highest level of classes that you have taken in a community college?

Tell me about some of your classroom experiences at your community college.

What have you enjoyed about attending college at your community college ?

What have you found challenging about attending college at a community college?

Did you ask for help with your classes while you were at the community college?

Who are some of the people that helped you at the community college? What kind of help did they give you?

Student Support Services

Did you attend any recruitment or orientation events? If so, what were they like for you?

Were any of these events that you attended meant specifically for native students?

Did you meet other native students at these events?

Did you take the college assessment test? If so, what level of courses did they recommend for you?

What has been your experience with advising and registration?

What has been your experience with tutoring?

Did you share with any student services staff that you are a native student? If so, can you tell me about it?

Student Life Experiences

Have you joined any clubs or groups at your community college?

What have your interactions with other students been like?

Have you attended events on campus sponsored by the student government?

There are probably clubs on your campus for Hispanic, Asian, and African-American students. Is there a club for Native students? If there is, have you participated in its activities?

LB 6/28/06