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## **A Thematic Exploration of the Liberation of Identity Through Indigenous Self-Determination: Themes of Native American and Alaska Native Identity**

Martha Fiskeaux

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A Thematic Exploration of the Liberation of Identity Through Indigenous Self-Determination:  
Themes of Native American and Alaska Native Identity

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A Clinical Research Project submitted to the Faculty of the Florida School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology.

Tampa, Florida  
April 2022

The Doctorate Program in Clinical Psychology  
Florida School of Professional Psychology  
at National Louis University

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Clinical Research Project

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This is to certify that the Clinical Research Project of

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has been approved by the  
CRP Committee on April 11, 2022  
as satisfactory for the CRP requirement  
for the Doctor of Psychology degree  
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## **Abstract**

Strong ethnic identity is associated with overall well-being, resilience to change, and higher self-esteem (Kiang et al., 2006; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Umaña-Taylor, 2003; Yip & Fuligni, 2002) and serves as a protective factor against the stress associated with discrimination (Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Phinney et al., 1998). Given the historical and systemic barriers faced by the Native American and Alaska Native population, including the history of genocide, colonization, and intergenerational trauma, the development of a strong Indigenous ethnic identity is a necessary area of research focus. Specifically, Native American and Alaska native individuals are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide than any other ethnic group, a number that has gradually been increasing since 2003 (Leavitt et al., 2018), with 26% of all completed suicides occur between the ages of 18-24 (CDC, 2018). Patterns of high suicide risk align with Newman and Newman's (2018) Early and Later Adolescence developmental stage, during which individuals are seeking to manage the psychosocial crisis of individual and group identity versus alienation and identity confusion. Such findings support the value of research emphasis on the concept of Indigenous identity as a protective factor among Indigenous communities. This project utilized Indigenous sources of scholarship to explore the concept of Indigenous identity development through three research questions: 1. What is the impact of colonization on Native Americans and Alaska Natives? 2. How does marginalization impact identity development among Native Americans and Alaska Natives? and 3. What factors contribute to identity development among Native Americans and Alaska Natives? Five themes are identified as the foundation for future research exploration, and clinical implications are provided.

**THEMATIC EXPLORATION OF THE LIBERATION OF IDENTITY  
THROUGH INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION: THEMES OF  
NATIVE AMERICAN AND ALASKA NATIVE IDENTITY**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Growing up in rural Alaska afforded me the privilege to glean and benefit from the richness of native culture. I would like to think these experiences have instilled within me a set of values that remain a soft and special part of who I have become. For that, I am so thankful. However, I acknowledge that growing up in a native community can bring a sense of false familiarity with a culture whose daily burdens I never had to experience or carry. As a descendant of White Christian missionaries to the Yupik and Inupiat regions of western Alaska, I would like to recognize and acknowledge the ways in which my heritage has served to create and uphold oppressive systems. Through this work, I seek to hold myself accountable for my commitment to decolonization within myself, my profession, and my community. I acknowledge that this work is vastly and wholly inadequate to fully represent the spectrum of Indigenous experience. I present this offering with a keen awareness of my own ingrained colonial bias and framework that I continually strive to deconstruct. To the Indigenous community, I continue to be in awe of your beauty, ingenuity, and tenacity. I hope that these efforts may offer a small contribution toward a world in which you may live in restful ease.

I would like to thank Dr. Gary Howell and Dr. Patricia Dixon for being the mentors, clinicians, and advocates that I continually strive to emulate. Their guidance has significantly impacted the course of my career in so many meaningful ways. I would also like to thank Dr. Kristie Knows His Gun for her mentorship. She has taught me the importance of using sources of Indigenous scholarship, and her guidance assisted me in making appropriate adjustments to protect against the pitfalls of overgeneralization. I feel so grateful for the opportunity to work with such an incredible committee. Thank you all for your encouragement and support!

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Through millennia, Indigenous communities have demonstrated a profound fortitude evidenced by their tenacious resistance to colonialism and strategic acts of survival amid a long and continual history of genocide, oppression, and marginalization. Despite the various barriers constructed by colonization and attempts of extinction, they are grounded in resilience that has empowered them not only to survive threats but to call upon their ancestral wisdom and healing traditions to thrive. The development of ethnic identity holds a unique position in Indigenous communities, whose history of oppression, erasure, and colonization create barriers to connecting with the strength and resilience of their traditional and cultural ways.

The development of racial and cultural identity is a growing area of research within the field of psychology and has implications for treatment considerations regarding mental health. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significance of racial and cultural identity related to mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Research indicates that positive ethnic identity is positively related to well-being in multiple ethnic groups (Kiang et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor, 2003) and is correlated with greater well-being, resilience to changes, and higher self-esteem (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Yip & Fuligni, 2002). Affiliation with one's ethnic group is a protective factor against the stress associated with discrimination (Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Phinney et al., 1998).

Many identity stage models have been developed to capture racial identity, such as the Black identity model (Cross, 1971, 1995), Latinx/Hispanic identity model (Ruiz, 1990), White identity model (Helms, 1995), and Asian identity model (Kim, 2012). Perry Horse developed a thematic model of Indigenous consciousness (2012) outlining five factors that influence and impact Indigenous awareness. The need for culturally appropriate tools within the field of

psychology cannot be overstated and remains an essential step in creating more culturally competent treatment methods. Additionally, it is important to identify and acknowledge the systemic challenges within the field of clinical and research psychology related to conducting culturally competent treatments and representative research within Indigenous communities.

Perry Horse's model has been used to represent the process of Indigenous identity in cultural research in the field of counseling psychology (Sue & Sue, 2016) but does not align with the same stage process and progression as other models. There remain numerous factors that make the development of a stage model uniquely challenging for Indigenous populations. Some of these challenges include a lack of representative research by Indigenous authors and a shift in the current culture of standards in scholarly research that often excludes writings that go against Eurocentric and quantitative values (Lynn-Cook, 1996). Additionally, the significant diversity among nations and tribes makes it difficult and dangerous to make generalizations (Horse, 2005; Whitesell et al., 2012) and to develop a cohesive and representative model of identity development. These issues are discussed and acknowledged in greater detail in this project. Considering these factors, this project sought to build and expand upon Horse's model of consciousness using the works and contributions of Indigenous researchers and storytellers. Additionally, this development of themes sought to explore and integrate the perspective of psychology regarding racial development, acculturation, internalization, and externalization of marginalization and resiliency factors. Using research by Indigenous authorship, this project provides an exploration of identity to contribute to the development of themes surrounding Indigenous identity.

## **Statement of Problem**

Research and exploration of Indigenous identity and mental health factors, aside from substance abuse, remains scarce compared to other ethnic minority groups (Albright & LaFromboise, 2010). As one of the smallest groups of ethnic minorities in the United States, only 0.9 % of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), they often go unrecognized. Researchers often lump Native American and Alaska Native participants in with the ethnic identifier “other,” failing to acknowledge their existence or any unique interpretable values of their participation. Researchers have long utilized poor and improper data collection methods to present findings emphasizing the burdens of Indigenous people, contributing to the problematic fostering of stereotypes and misinformation about Indigenous communities (Jacobs, 2019). The lack of adequate and culturally appropriate research within psychology is particularly notable considering the significance of the historical trauma, bio-psycho-social, and economic disparities faced by Indigenous peoples compared to other minority or White counterparts. Current research, although likely underreported, reveals the result of a longstanding compounding of multiple factors that have developed as a result of colonization and historical traumas. For example, studies reveal significantly disproportionate rates of health (Khan et al., 2013; Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2021), mental health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; Chartier & Caetano, 2010; Duran et al., 2004; Jackson & Lassiter, 2001; Rieckmann et al., 2004; Twenge & Crocker, 2002), economic (Espey et al., 2014; Macartney et al., 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) and academic (Allison & Vining, 1999; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013,) disparities among the Native American and Alaska Native communities.

Indigenous researchers and scholars have long been examining the contributors to such disparities within their communities and have generated significant findings related to the importance of Indigenous ethnic identity development. Studies show that being connected to and feeling pride in their ethnic group was moderately correlated with greater abilities to manage psychosocial changes in a sample of Navajo adolescents (Jones & Galliher, 2007). Having a strong cultural identity appears to have a modest impact on reducing symptoms of depression, possibly as a result of the resiliency factors associated with establishing cultural identity among Native Americans (Rieckmann et al., 2004). Among Native Americans, cultural identification was positively correlated to higher levels of self-esteem, although the results were small to moderate in this study (Whitesell et al., 2006). Strong identification with culture is protective for American Indian youths and those with collectivistic cultures (Waller et al., 2003), and positive ethnic identification is a protective factor against substance use (Okamoto et al., 2004; Waller et al., 2003).

### **Purpose of Literature Review**

This critical review of the literature evaluated research and works by Indigenous authors to explore the concept of racial identity. The unique process of identification and alignment with Indigenous heritage and its implications for mental health and well-being are discussed. The study examined the limitations of previous research and specifically amplified Indigenous researchers' voices. Themes were developed to find commonalities among a highly diverse population to provide a foundational understanding of Indigenous identity from which future research may be conducted.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were explored:

1. What is the impact of colonization on Native Americans and Alaska Natives?
2. How does marginalization impact identity development among Native Americans and Alaska Natives?
3. What factors contribute to identity development among Native Americans and Alaska Natives?

Chapter II reviews research and sources discussing the impact of colonization on Native American and Alaska Native people highlighting historical events from Indigenous perspectives. As the history curriculum within the U.S. school system presents a Westernized view of the history of Indigenous peoples, the true atrocities of genocide and forced acculturation are often grossly misrepresented or excluded altogether. By providing an accurate account of the history of the United States, the topics of colonization, genocide, broken treaty agreements, forceful relocations, residential schools, and sports mascots are discussed. Only through understanding the unique and traumatic history of Indigenous people can there be an understanding of the current trends in mental, social, health, and economic deficiencies as they are observed. Unique barriers of transgenerational trauma and sociopolitical standing are addressed from a strengths-based approach, highlighting the creativity and resilience of Indigenous peoples not only through colonization, genocide, and oppression but also through their successful efforts in preserving and maintaining their cultures and societies in ways that allow them to continue thriving.

Chapter III discusses the unique history of systemic oppression and marginalization related to ethnic identity development and outcomes research. Such factors have impacted the Native American and Alaska Native populations regarding deficits in outcomes research regarding mental health, physical health, academic, and employment. Ethnic identification through blood quantum, diversity among tribal membership requirements, federal tribe

recognition, and trends and patterns in choices in self-identification and census representativeness are also areas of discussion. The impact of intergenerational trauma is discussed through the lens of contextualizing the well-documented disparities within native communities (Duran et al., 1998) that impact the view of native people by the outside communities but also individual attitudes and beliefs about one's self and the ethnic identity they represent. This discussion includes reference to the complexity of factors impacting ethnic identity, including the "invisibility and misrepresentation" of Indigenous people through faulty research methods (Jacobs, 2019) and cultural challenges in treatment outcomes based on culturally inconsistent evidence-based treatments (Cruz & Spence, 2005). Additionally, this chapter provides a discussion of cultural components of the intersectionality of identities within the Native American and Alaska Native communities to include two-spirited people (LGBTQ+), those with disability, socioeconomic concerns, and cultural attitudes and traditions surrounding age and gender.

Chapter IV provides a discussion of important cultural variables and factors that impact the construct of ethnic identity, as well as a discussion of previously developed enculturation and acculturation models used with Indigenous populations. The components of racial identity are discussed and explored within the context of their variability among diverse tribal groups, as well as their overall similarities related to the progression and process of Indigenous identity development.

Chapter V provides context for generating overarching themes surrounding the topic of Indigenous identity development. Using the foundation and context of Indigenous history, themes are generated with the integration of the research and content regarding the impact of marginalization as well as the unique resiliency factors related to identity formation based on

cultural values and attitudes. As this research spans a variety of tribes and nations, the provision of themes is provided with care and acknowledgment of the dangers of overgeneralizations. As such, a discussion is provided regarding the future methods and models of research suggested to more accurately and appropriately capture the process of Indigenous identity development in a manner demonstrating cultural respect and research competency.

### **Indigenous Research Approach**

This project utilized a mixed-method research approach using theoretical, qualitative, and quantitative data to inform the creation of themes of identity development. The importance of mixed methods approaches to Indigenous studies is recommended as the best manner of capturing the richness and truths of Indigenous ways of being from a holistic and complete perspective (Jacobs, 2019). Historical narratives of Indigenous peoples are often couched in colonized and Eurocentric perspectives. Many writings include a narrative focusing solely on the grueling history of colonial trauma and highlight the impact of these atrocities through deficit-based research and statistics. With this limited perspective, the humanity of Indigenous peoples becomes centered in the misrepresentative stories of oppression, failing to accurately and adequately recognize their unique contributions to culture, tenacious efforts to reclaim their land, and acts of self-determination and resilience. Additionally, many accounts portray Indigenous history within the context and timeline of European events and milestones as if Indigenous peoples only exist in the context and contrast of Whiteness. Far too often have the outcomes of quantitative research methods been historically utilized as tools of oppression and marginalization of Indigenous communities. Researchers who lack cultural competence created and promoted studies that misrepresent Indigenous communities. In fact, tribal protections over data collection rights within Indigenous communities were developed in response to the abuses

of researchers and academics seeking to quantify and define Indigenous perspectives in Eurocentric terms and values. Selecting appropriate study methods, meaningful research variables, representative participant samples, and providing sound interpretations must include Indigenous involvement, perspectives, and alliances (Jacobs, 2019). With this understanding, this project was designed as an exploration of themes using qualitative approaches, making it less likely for a self-identified White writer to enforce preconceived research variables and methods that may be inconsistent with Indigenous values. Additionally, the project was completed with the involvement and guidance of an Indigenous psychologist and researcher to assure appropriate interpretations, conclusions, and synthesis of data.

To provide themes related to the identity of the Native American and Alaska Native peoples, research data primarily focused on collections of data from tribes located within the present-day United States. Narrowing this project to geographical land barriers provided a specific scope of histories and ancestries of tribes located on this land. However, it must be noted that the significant variance and differences among each tribe offer unique perspectives, traditions, and histories and cannot be easily generalized. This project sought to provide a general approach to identity development based on commonly identified themes within the Native American and Alaska Native populations with full recognition and humble acknowledgment that a generalized approach will be wholly insufficient in capturing the rich and valuable differences between tribal communities. Instead, this work may identify more common elements shared among nations with the understanding that this research is only a preliminary foundation for continued exploration.

Giving a name and identity to a people is a powerful and impactful message of the name-giver's beliefs and attitudes toward the named group. Over the centuries, many terms have been

used to describe Indigenous peoples, such as Native American, Indian American, Indigenous, Inuit, Eskimo, Alaska Native, Native, and First Nations. Although names have slowly changed over the years in efforts toward political correctness, there continues to be much controversy involved in the naming of this community (D'Errico, 2005). Believing that he had discovered India, Christopher Columbus first authored the name *Indios* meaning a “person from Indus valley,” to refer to the communities that had long inhabited the Americas prior to his arrival (Pauls, 2008). When it was later recognized that this land had already been discovered by an Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, the term American was added, creating what became one of the first labels of American Indians. Similarly, European exploration of the arctic regions created the name Eskimo meaning “to eat raw meat,” to identify the Indigenous peoples of the North (Pauls, 2008). According to the Alaska Native Language Center, the word “Eskimo,” or “*ayaškimew*,” means “*netter of snowshoes*” but is less used today as a result of the colonial origin of the name. “Inuit,” meaning “people” or “real people,” is used by many, specifically in Alaska, as a more global term (Kaplan, n.d.).

Out of this period of activism, the terms Native American and Alaska Native were created. While Native Alaskan tribes collectively had ownership in the discussion of this name change, Native Americans as a whole more commonly continued to identify themselves as Indian or by their specific tribal name (Pauls, 2008). Peter D'Errico wrote that even still, the word *Native* carries with it an underlying meaning of being “primitive” that is used to continue to denote the idea of ignorance and contributes toward the Western narrative of the need to civilize the native population (2005, p. 1). He shared that it is important to note that many of these names were assigned by those who colonized the original inhabitants of this land, fitting Indigenous people into a Westernized frame of reference. However, even identifying individuals and

community members by tribe causes a similar conundrum (D'Errico, 2005). Many of the original tribal names were often given by surrounding settler communities and denote painful interpretations, such as Mohawk meaning “flesh-eaters” and Apache meaning “enemy” (D'Errico, 2005, p. 1).

Perhaps far more significant than attempts at political correctness is the idea of using terms within the context of history, specifically reckoning America's history and the impact of colonization (D'Errico, 2005). Garrett and Pichette (2000) noted the difference between in-group and out-group identification of ethnicity, with Indigenous folks referring to themselves and other natives as “Indian” but using the term “Native American” when identifying themselves to those outside the community (p. 4). Horse (2005) (Kiowat) mentioned the generational differences in descriptors and identification as those born prior to 1950 have tended to feel most comfortable with the term *American Indian* while those born later have preferred the term *Native American*. Of note, the contemporary use of *Native American* does encompass other Indigenous communities within the United States, such as American Samoa, Hawaiian, and Alaska Natives (Horse, 2005). The use and history of names is complex and points to a large number of diverse factors and variables that exist within Indigenous communities, tribes, and among individuals. The terms Native American and Alaska Native are used within this clinical research project to provide distinction to these groups. Additionally, the terms Indigenous and Native are used interchangeably as broader terms when referring to both Native Americans and Native Alaskans collectively. Terms are used in acknowledgment of the complexity, diversity of preference, and sensitivity of history as well as used in attempts to, as Peter D'Errico (2005) stated, “deconstruct the definitions which have trapped Indigenous peoples in the dreams of others” (p. 1).

## **Research Procedure**

This critical literature review includes a comprehensive review of articles and books accessed through EBSCO, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. Key terms employed in the search process included *Indigenous identity*, *Native American identity*, *Alaska Native identity*, *colonization*, *historical trauma*, *ethnic identity*, and *Indigenous healing practices*. To ensure the use of Indigenous sources, each article and book author was reviewed to assess for Indigenous heritage from sources such as university biographies, personal websites, and articles including author biographies. Sources were considered for approval by this author based on the contribution of at least one Indigenous researcher or person listed as an author and/or primary project contributor as seen in community-based research participatory programs. Sources of Indigenous authorship were utilized for aspects of the project that spoke on Indigenous perspectives, attitudes, values, and beliefs related to identity, history, and cultural values. Other non-Indigenous sources include census data, descriptive population statistics, references to sources within the field of psychology, and definitions of identity, among others.

## CHAPTER II: IMPACT OF COLONIZATION

### Historiography

In many tribal communities, tribal elders are the keepers of history. Elders are considered the “keepers of wisdom” and teachers, mentors, and instructors of the wisdom of traditional ways and values (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Their position in society is valued, and they are placed in a position of high honor due to their many years of experience and wisdom through storytelling, eye-witness accounts, poems, and songs. History and tradition are passed down from one generation to the next (“Oral traditions in native history,” n.d.) The strong value placed on a rich oral communication of history remains an area of inconsistency with Westernized definitions of “literature” and emphasis on documentation and dates. Much tribal history, rather, is centered in the context of homeland and the histories that surround sacred land. Many documented accounts of native history are from non-native Westernized observations, which were often skewed through the lens of their own cultural values, framework, history of assimilation, western expansion, and conflict with Indigenous tribes (“Oral traditions in native history,” n.d.).

Emphasis on written documentation is perhaps, then, seen as a value aligned with colonial roots. Focus on the written word is a value aligned with White supremacy culture (Okun, 2021). The “worship of the written word” remains systemically ingrained in American society and has significantly impacted the perceived value and merit of Indigenous historical accounts. Also, the emphasis on written documentation inherently places value on writing skills (Okun, 2021, p. 1) above the value on emotional and relational contexts. As a result, the histories of Native American and Alaska Native peoples often go unrecognized.

If cultural factors of narrative versus written history were the only barriers to an accurate representation of Indigenous history within the United States, the richness of our understanding

and knowledge would be unimaginably different. However, the atrocities of genocide, colonization, and the forceful erasure of Native American and Alaska Native cultures has permanently destroyed many archives of Indigenous history that will never be fully recovered. In light of these factors, this chapter utilized what resources were available to provide an account and history of Indigenous people, focusing on the significance of the impact of colonization.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, is a poet, educator, writer, and editor. Her works are dedicated to shedding light on the misrepresentations of historical accounts penned by non-Indigenous writers and from viewpoints heavily clouded by White bureaucratic perspectives. According to Cook-Lynn (1996), literary criticism is an invaluable process for the evaluation of scholarship and history related to Native American affairs. Many acclaimed Native American scholars' writings and accounts have been discredited by non-Indigenous researchers and historians in the field. Such dynamics call into question the values and standards by which non-Indigenous members perceive their ability to gain greater historically accurate accounts of Indigenous experiences than Indigenous people themselves. (Cook-Lynn, 1996). Additionally, these manuscripts contribute to the misinformation about Native American history and perpetuate oppressive and damaging narratives (Cook-Lynn, 1996). Cook-Lynn suggested the possibility that White people may write of their experiences with Native Americans as a way to process their own issues with racial identity. White people may use the learnings of perceived ethnic and cultural differences to benefit themselves at the pain and damage to their research of the native community (Cook-Lynn, 1996).

Cook-Lynn (1996) referred to the birth of America as a sacred event in American society, often portrayed in a manner that inspires "moral courage and physical endurance, a victory for all humanity" (p. 29). Conversely, she described it as accumulating wealth and possessions at the

expense of genocide. This misrepresentation of the history of the United States has long been ignored for its fallacy and continues to be taught in schools and passed down to future generations. Cook-Lynn described two common responses to the perpetuation of such narratives. First, Indigenous people may find themselves forced to remain silent about their grievances, as discussing them may often feel futile. Second, Indigenous people may make efforts to pretend to be ignorant of the causes of their grievances (Cook-Lynn, 1996), perhaps to minimize the frustration and pain by attempting to make the situation less impactful. The question remains about what emotional and psychological impacts these strategies may include.

### **First Known Civilization**

The history of Indigenous people has been documented as far back as 80,000 years ago and is commonly considered by archeologists and historians to be the earliest known civilization (Berndt & Tonkinson, 2018). There is evidence of around 500 distinct Aboriginal Australian tribal communities that engaged in hunting, gathering, and agricultural efforts. Although traditions varied by tribe, they shared common values of land stewardship and kinship among communities. Their belief in mythical creatures, reincarnation, and spirituality is referenced as “the dreaming” and encompassed a belief in the embodiment of past, present, and future (para. 5). Through attunement with their surroundings, these early aboriginal Indigenous tribes were confident in their abilities to control and anticipate their environment as a means necessary to ensure their survival (Berndt & Tonkinson, 2018). Similarly, Indigenous tribes in the present-day United States have a longstanding history. Long before European settlers docked their boats on the shores of the Americas, Native Americans and Alaska Natives had built a cultural history governed by natural law and defined by values of the sacredness of life, respect, generosity, honesty, and integrity (Rose, 2018). Generationally passing down customs and narratives, they

too fashioned their culture and identity around the intimate understanding and appreciation of ancestral lands and took pride in the cultural wisdom of subsistence living and land stewardship (Fast, 2008).

### **Native American and Alaska Native History**

The history of Native Alaskan tribes predates researchers' estimation of the land bridge connecting Asia and present-day Alaska, accessible by travel and migration from Asia to the North Americas due to the lowering of the ocean level between 35,000-40,000 years ago (Prine-Pauls, n.d.). Even prior to using the land bridge, there is evidence of Native American tribes in areas in the lower-48, known as the Paleo-Indian tribes. While much of our understanding and knowledge about prehistoric living is limited, archeologists and scholars are able to determine that Monte Verde, located in present-day Chile, was the first known site of human habitation in the Americas in 10,500 BC. Recognizing these prehistoric events in history provides a more complete picture of the longevity of Indigenous people's habitation on tribal lands and the strengths of their communities to preserve their culture, traditions, and survival for tens of thousands of years (Prine-Pauls, n.d.).

Prior to the formation of an international border between the United States and Mexico, Indigenous peoples from the South would immigrate and develop trade routes with Indigenous cultures in the North (Prine-Pauls, n.d.). Traditional ways of the Sun Dance religion and the growth of corn in eastern North America can be traced back to these Mexican trade roots and influence. Historians consider the Mayan and Aztec cultures to be highly advanced societies regarding astrology and agriculture. Indigenous communities of the North, such as the Hohokam people, also demonstrated advanced leak-proof irrigation canals, with the longest single canal reaching a 20-mile span in approximately 900-1450 AD. There are also indications of advanced

road systems/highways built during these times that were likely utilized for trade routes that reached regions spanning from Central America to the Pacific Ocean to the Great Plains of the East (Prine-Pauls, n.d.).

Another city-state of Cahokia, located in the present-day Mississippi Valley region, had a population in the tens of thousands and is estimated to have been even larger than the population of the city of London at this time in history. This culture showed advanced social structures, including architectural monuments and sculptures (Prine-Pauls, n.d.). Nations located in present-day Alaska flourished through the natural resources of the North, such as the sacred salmon, and are attributed to the invention of the potluck and the distribution of goods and resources through cultural community and giving (Prine-Pauls, n.d.).

### **Inventions and Contributions**

Complex agricultural systems were designed and used to irrigate corn more than 2000 years prior to Europe learning of the Americas (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). As a food that requires human intervention to grow and is sensitive to high temperatures, Indigenous communities required centuries of historical knowledge to develop systems of mass corn production and trade practices. As corn is not grown naturally and was only in existence in the Americas prior to the era of European settlement, it is considered one of the first and greatest developments of the original American agriculturalists. Corn was believed to be a “sacred gift” from God and was a primary element of diet along with other cultivated beans, squash, and meats (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 16).

Indigenous people’s extensive road systems and thriving agricultural land maintenance indicate their communities’ vast impact on the Americas. Roadways created by Indigenous nations were not just paths of convenience based on hunting or hiking but were complex and

strategic traveling trails that were ultimately transformed into modern-day highways and roads (Library of Congress, n.d.). Understanding the pre-colonial advancements of Indigenous peoples is essential in debunking the age-old belief that Indigenous people were primitive and unsophisticated. Providing this history demonstrates the loss of these cultures and peoples to the cause of colonization and settlement by the United States.

### **History of Settlement**

Through the centuries of colonization and settlement, many of the traditional Native American and Native Alaskan cultures was forcefully erased. Remnants of sacred traditions and history have been diluted and appropriated within modern America's shallow understanding of Native cultures. In losing many aspects of history, culture, and language, Native communities face challenges in their pursuit of accessing the full extent of their heritage. Extensive efforts have been made not only to preserve the remaining aspects of culture but also to protect against continued forces of colonization and the imposition of Westernized European values. Within the Native community, there is a large diversity of histories, customs, and cultures of varying tribes that inhabit regions worldwide. This chapter explores these events through an Indigenous perspective, highlighting the devastation caused by colonization and the historical impact of intergenerational trauma.

In seeking to gain control over land and in efforts to expand territory and gain access to the resources of the land, such as gold, White settlers would refer to the barrier of Native American habitation as the "Indian problem" (Garrett & Pitchette, 2000, p. 4). Mass exterminations and racial genocide of Native Americans were commonplace beginning in the early 1600s. As the influence of Christianity became more widespread, mass genocides of Indigenous tribes occurred with the church and government's attempts to "civilize" and

“Christianize” native communities (p. 4). Native Americans were forcefully relocated onto Indian reservations, away from the prospects of profit from the natural land resources in ancestral land areas. In 1830, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw tribes of Oklahoma were forced to migrate, resulting in the death of 3,000 travelers, which was known as the Trail of Tears (Nix, 2018).

### **Genocide and Disease**

In her book, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, Dunbar-Ortiz discussed the concept of genocide and disease as they relate to the often-untold stories of history (2014). Indigenous history does not follow the same timeline as may be identified in traditional approaches to the history surrounding wars and settlement advancements. Instead, this account of history is centered around several periods that, according to Dunbar-Ortiz, demonstrate the extent of settler colonialism through the genocide of the Native American people. These include the gold rush in Northern California, wars of the Great Plains, and the period of termination in the 1950s. In discussing the history between the United States and Indigenous people, Dunbar-Ortiz emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the occasions of extreme violence, such as in war, conquests, and genocide. The United States' objective was to terminate the existence of an entire people group, rather than just specific tribes' conquests in war or specific individuals. By its very nature, the United States' colonial efforts are considered an organized massive genocide. One of the biggest barriers to revisions of U.S. history to include an accurate account of this genocide and colonialism is the lack of willingness among scholars and historians to recognize the colonial framework and context within the series of historical events. Efforts to correct the false representation of history have mostly been unsuccessful due to the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars being labeled as biased due to their titles as “advocates”

(Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 13). Although the United Nations protections and punishments regarding the crime of genocide were not recognized between the United States and Indigenous populations until 1988, its legal definition can be observed retroactively. According to the United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (n.d.), the following acts are classified as acts of genocide if committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group:

Killing members of the group; Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life; Calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and Forcibly transferring children of the group to other group.

(Definition section)

It should be noted that this definition of genocide was scripted as a response to the devastation of the Holocaust and the unique and unprecedented focus on the annihilation of an entire ethnic group and society. However, when recounting an accurate account of the history of the United States, it is evident that each of these conditions was imposed upon Indigenous people far before historians and anthropologists provided it with a definition. Without an honest reckoning of the history of the United States and its "settler colonialism," as Dunbar-Ortiz terms it, it is impossible to fully understand the extent of the generational trauma inflicted upon Indigenous people (2014, p. 9).

Although each nation has a different history and relationship with settlement and colonization, many tribes recount components of similar history regarding the devastation of deadly diseases (Harjo, 2014a). The multiple and relenting epidemics are considered the primary cause and reason for the depopulation of the Indigenous peoples of America (Bianchine &

Russo, 1992). Infectious diseases such as smallpox, malaria, measles, typhus, and diphtheria ran rampant among Indigenous communities, wiping out substantial portions of the population and, in some cases, entire tribal nations (Bianchine & Russo, 1992). The Pawnee Nation, for example, faced several significant disadvantages when introduced to European settlers, including cultural differences in deliberation methods, reeling from the high death toll of a smallpox epidemic, and a lack of understanding regarding European's concept of territory ownership and conquest (Harjo, 2014b). Language barriers also created difficulties in consenting to the full terms of treaty agreements. Tactics of settlement included manipulation by starvation during a time when the Pawnee tribe was weak and ill due to suffering the loss of their population to the smallpox virus brought by settlers. Limiting their ability to hunt on their hunting grounds, seizure of land to European possession, and fear for survival and resources caused the Pawnee tribe to attempt negotiations with European settlers, which at other times precipitated conflict and violent attacks between the Pawnee tribe and settlers for food (Harjo, 2014b). This example sheds light on the variety of complex factors surrounding early tribal interactions with settlers and highlights the use of inhumane tactics to suppress and dominate cultural nations into submission.

### **Forced Relocations and Land**

The colonization of Indigenous peoples was legitimized by government systems and laws (Robertson, 2011). The seizure of land and resources, just by declaring a claim to it, was later determined by the United States to be justified through the "discovery doctrine," which was settled after the court dispute *Johnson v. M'Intosh* in 1823 (Robertson, 2011, p. 30). This case set a precedent as the first to address the question concerning what land may be properly owned by Europeans and what might be considered claimed by the Indigenous people who populated the lands. The ruling dictated that Indigenous people lost ownership rights to their land upon

European's claim to "discovery" and were only able to maintain an occupancy right as directed and controlled by the government. This ruling also made it impossible for Indigenous people to own, acquire, sell, or appreciate profit from their land. Restrictions were placed on the rights to obtain mortgages, impacting the long-term ability to build equity in homeownership and creating devastating long-term economic consequences. Aside from the detrimental impacts on the current Indigenous communities, this ruling acted as a precedent for future legal proceedings by the newly acclaimed America (Robertson, 2011). Such early decisions regarding the United States' interaction with Indigenous tribes and legal decision rulings unarguably had a compounding impact on Indigenous communities for generations to come. Such groundwork paved the way for constructing systemic barriers to Indigenous rights and welfare.

This ruling essentially positioned Indigenous people as tenants on land owned by the government and managed by the state (Robertson, 2011). When faced with the complication of state governance and regulation of laws in Indigenous communities residing within the designated states, President Andrew Jackson designed the Indian Removal Act in 1830 (Harjo, 2014a). This act would put pressure on Indigenous communities to relocate to designated government allotted land in exchange for the abandonment of residence on their original tribal lands.

### **Wounded Knee Massacre**

Wounded Knee was far from the first massacre of Indigenous people. The United States has authorized more attacks/raids on its Indigenous inhabitants than any other country, estimated at over 1,500 (Fixico, 2018). In combination with the deadly and rampant diseases, these massacres decreased the population of Indigenous people from estimates of 5 to 15 million to 238,000 at the end of the 19th-century period of Indian wars (Fixico, 2018). According to the

Encyclopedia Britannica, as settlers expanded into the West, they faced opposition from Indigenous tribes seeking to preserve their land, communities, and resources (Hudson, 2019). As these encounters continued to escalate, the U.S. government began attempts to mediate agreements between Indigenous tribes, notably the Sioux. Between the original Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 to the Allotment Act of 1887, the Lakota witnessed the violation of their treaty agreement with the United States in what went from an agreement of a 60-million-acre reservation land down to a remaining 12.7 million acres. Forced into the assimilation of Western traditions, dress, language, and farming lifestyles, the Lakota found themselves in danger over the loss of their collective community identity. Additionally, they did not have the proper resources for basic needs as promised in the federal government's treaty agreement. Around this period, the Lakota began to engage in a spiritual dance practice, the ghost dance, which symbolized protection and liberation from the European settlers. As this spiritual practice spread, the United States began to enforce a military presence as a response to their perceived displays of noncompliance and opposition. On December 28th, 1890, a cavalry entered the reservation to dismantle the resistance by taking their weapons. During an apparent struggle to remove a weapon, a shot was fired, leading to a massive open-fire massacre by the cavalry upon the unarmed, defenseless Lakota community. It is estimated that around 250-300 Miniconjou were killed, half of whom were believed to be women and children. These massacres, and many others throughout history, have been attempted to be classified as "battles." Many cavalrymen received awards of honor for their service and were only recently stripped of their titles in 2019 by Deb Haaland through the Remove the Stain Act (Hudson, 2019).

Although Wounded Knee was far from the first, or only, massacre of Indigenous people, it holds a unique place in Indigenous history (Awasqua, 2019). Unlike the circumstances of past

atrocities against native communities, Wounded Knee occurred at a time in which Indigenous people were becoming a more integral part of American society. As such, Indigenous activists and journalists began to testify against the circulated false narratives of events and engaged in protests. One such Poncha woman, Inshata Theumba, wrote an article titled “The Horrors of War” (as cited in Awasqua, 2019) about her firsthand experience as being a survivor of Wounded Knee on January 2, 1891:

There was a woman sitting on the floor with a wounded baby on her lap and four or five children around her, all her grandchildren. Their father and mother were killed. There was a young woman shot through both thighs, and her wrist was broken. Mr. Tibbles had to get a pair of pinchers to get her rings off. . . . There was a little boy with his throat apparently shot to pieces. He was a horrible sight, having nothing around him but a blanket, and his little bare, lean arms looked pitiful. They were all hungry. (para. 12)

Only by providing firsthand testimony were Indigenous people able to fight against the troops’ false claim of justification of threat to kill these families. This uprising among survivors led to the formation of the Wounded Knee Survivors Association in 1901, which advocated to Congress for financial restitution for survivors. It was not until 1990 that Congress made a public and official apology to the Sioux tribe, acknowledging the event as a “terrible tragedy” (S.Con.Res.153-101st Congress, 1989-1990). Despite the stark, dark, and solemn nature of this event, Cook-Lynn (2014) challenged popularly cited historical narratives of the massacre as only a mark of hatred. Instead, she framed the significance of Wounded Knee as an event that the Sioux look back on as “the basis for evidence of a long and glorious history, the focal point of survival” (p. 31).

## **Reservations**

Originally, Native reservations were established as a result of treaty agreements between Indigenous nations and the United States as a fair exchange of land boundaries for U.S. government protection from settlers (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). However, this narrative became twisted into the idea that reservation land was offered as a “gift” to Indigenous peoples based on goodwill and humanitarian efforts (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 11). Over the years, the reservation land was gradually reclaimed by the United States, breaking treaty agreements and greatly reducing the amount of original allotted land.

## **Residential Boarding Schools and Missionary Schools**

Some of the first efforts made in colonization included early Christian missionaries’ construction of mission schools and boarding for Native Americans (Reyhner & Eder, 2017). Early missionaries sought to civilize and Christianize Native Americans by forcing them to abandon their cultural practices and to assimilate into European society. According to the practice of Christianity at the time, traditional tribal practices were considered pagan and demonic, leading missionaries to escalate their conversion attempts when finding that the Native Americans were resistant to their ideology. During a time when Native Americans were suffering from massive epidemics, reeling from warfare, and suffering from famine, missionaries found their greatest success in imposing their religious beliefs (Reyhner & Eder, 2017). Native Americans were often captured, beginning with the children and women, and were forced into long hours of labor and prayer to the Christian God at missionary centers and camps (Reyhner & Eder, 2017).

The conditions in residential schools were harsh, unhealthy, and abusive. Although it has been long suspected within Indigenous communities that residential schools covered up the

deaths of children, it has only been recent that ground-penetrating radar has explored these claims. On May 28th, 2021, the unmarked graves of 215 children were discovered near the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia on May 28th, 2021 (Newton, 2021). This school was operated by the Catholic Church until the 1960s when the government took charge of its operation (Newton, 2021). A survivor of the school, Harvey McLeod, shared his suspicions and uncertainties surrounding the disappearance of some of his friends and classmates thinking that perhaps they had run away (Newton, 2021). He noted the abuses he and his classmates faced resulted in the traumatization of an entire generation of First Nations people. He shared, “The abuse that happened to me was physical, yes, was sexual, yes, and in 1966, I was a person that didn’t want to live anymore. It changed me” (Newton, 2021, Horrific Chapter in Canadian History section). McLeod shared his perspective about his parents, who had also attended the school:

Seven of us went at the same time, same school that my mum and my dad went to. There wasn’t an option. It was a requirement. It was the law. And I can only imagine what my mom and my dad how they felt when they dropped some of us there, knowing what they experienced at that school. (Horrific Chapter in Canadian History section)

On June 25, 2021, another discovery was made: 751 unmarked children’s graves were found on the former Saskatchewan residential school in Canada (Newton & Chavez, 2021). These findings have sparked renewed interest in the United States’ parallel role in subjecting Native American children to residential schools. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo nation and the first Indigenous member to hold her political position, launched an investigation into the United States’ former residential schools (Chavez, 2021). Her initiative, “Indian Boarding School Initiative,” works to investigate potential burial and

unmarked gravesites in an effort to identify potential human remains (McCarten, 2021). The initiative also has plans to work with Indigenous communities within these regions to discern the most appropriate and respectful manner to handle the human remains. The investigation is supported by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Initiative (NABS), whose CEO, Christine Diindiisi of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Nation, described it as a process that is “revealing the deep grieving and unhealed wounds of the boarding school era’s impacts on our families and relatives” (2021, para. 3). According to the NABS, the United States had 367 residential schools operating between 1870 to 1970. However, only 38% of the records from these schools have been recovered by NABS, making it impossible to estimate the number of children who attended and the number of children who died and went missing. While only recently pursued, these investigations and discoveries continue to produce an upheaval of immense grief among Indigenous communities as their relatives are identified, and they come to recognize the stories of their lineage.

### **Corona Virus (COVID-19)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Indigenous communities in nearly insurmountable ways. During a July 2020 webinar, *Invisible No More: Psychology, American Indians/Alaska Natives and COVID19*, numerous doctors expressed their concerns about the disparaging rates of the virus in Indigenous communities (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Dr. John Gonzalez, psychologist and professor of psychology at Amity University Minnesota, identified that the rural settings and limited resources for basic needs within Indigenous communities have significantly impacted health care during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these cases, access to COVID testing remains limited. Dr. Kylie Hill, a psychologist in Minnesota and clinical training director for the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis, shared that Indigenous individuals have

more than five times the hospitalization rate in comparison to non-Hispanic and Whites. Despite this, she shared the longstanding mistrust of the healthcare system, making even these estimates likely to be significantly underreported, describing it as the enduring impact of settler colonialism. She described the sensitivity of the history of epidemics for Indigenous communities as the historical trauma of blood memory and explained how disease was utilized as a tool of genocide against Indigenous people. The loss of community elders to COVID-19 has also meant the loss of oral history and the loss of teachers and healers within the communities. Additionally, there are many complications in the food industry, with many people living in food deserts. Many of these communities are far from grocery stores, and some of the only limited resources available shut down during COVID-19 or were burned during political riots. The added pressure of social isolation and social distancing is also considered a form of toxic stress in a collectivistic culture that depends on intercommunity relationships for survival and spiritual well-being. Dr. Vicky Lomay, a psychologist in the Indian River Community, Phoenix Medical Center, and Navaho Reservation Medical Center, shared that social distancing is difficult with multiple generations living in the same home, as is common in many Indigenous homes. Some places have no electricity or running water, and other basic utility resources within this community are scarce. Many may not have public transportation and find difficulty accessing food. Not being able to participate in summer ceremonies adds additional stress as members can no longer have these healing and support methods. She noted the resilience of the tribal community and spoke about the strength of grassroots efforts to maintain social connections and meet basic needs. Dr. Royleen Ross has served in Nome, Alaska, and other rural and remote Alaskan Native villages in the Bering Strait region. She shared that each village's population ranges from 80 to 750 residents, and each has its own travel restrictions and quarantine

guidelines. Most rely on paraprofessional community health aides, who face extra stress and pressure in the region. She also recounted the history of tuberculosis and the 1918 flu in these regions, infecting up to 90% of the populations at the time. These epidemics created the foundation for government-run orphanages and home removals across the state and away from their families. Dr. Ross spoke about the importance of recognizing these moments in history when discussing the cultural variables involved in how Native Alaskans are responding to the government's COVID-19 intervention. Due to the bankruptcy of some local airlines, travel to and from the villages for health care, incoming supplies, and resources have been in jeopardy, causing an increase in Native Alaskan subsistence living practices. Many school systems were unable to serve the remote areas, and many children have not received education during the pandemic, widening the educational gap even further.

### **Indigenous Self-Determination and Tribal Sovereignty**

Castellino and Gilbert explored the concept of self-determination, noting that its definition remains elusive yet is evolving (2003). Most notably, this term was used as a catalyst for the liberation of peoples subjugated to colonization during the age of European imperialism. Core components of self-determination included options of secession from dominant rule and freedom to construct a sociopolitical structure and society independent from imperial rule. In a contemporary sense, many legal arguments have sought to define and contextualize the concept of self-determination for Indigenous peoples within their current sociopolitical status. Parallels can be drawn between the historical right infringements of colonized societies and the status of Indigenous people.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007) recognizes self-determination to be a human right to “freely determine their [Indigenous peoples’] political

status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development” (Article 3, p. 4). They elaborate that self-determination includes “the right to autonomy or self-governance in matters related to their [Indigenous peoples’] internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions” (Article 4, p. 4). As a people often forced into the definitions and stereotypes of others, self-determination remains central to the identity of Indigenous communities as it provides a source of empowerment and a path to liberation.

Attempts at self-determination focus heavily on the importance of sovereignty over territory and land. A core element of Indigenous self-determination involves recognition of Indigenous people as “territorial minorities,” emphasizing the importance of stewardship of ancestral lands (Castellino & Gilbert, 2003, p. 68). The importance of self-determination as it relates to Indigenous freedoms is a core component and underlying concept that has been used in discussions of Indigenous peoples within the sociopolitical context. As such, it remains important to understand and acknowledge the distinction of Indigenous nations as separate from the greater United States and as members and representatives of their own tribes and sovereign nations. The topic of identity development among Native Americans is more than just an analysis and extraction of common identifiable processes. Indigenous people within the United States hold a much more complex space among ethnic minorities in their distinct political sovereignty (Horse, 2005).

### **Resiliency Factors**

The erasure of Indigenous people throughout history only continues to perpetuate the cultural wounds within the communities, as evident in a wide array of research indicating disparities between the community and their Indigenous, White, Black, and people of color counterparts. Although the discussion of colonization is an incredibly important topic of focus as

it relates to the discussion of identity and belonging, it can foster a narrow and limited understanding of Indigenous people, erasing the components of their culture and societies that have thrived and survived in countless ways. It is essential to provide a historical account of Indigenous people outside of the context of their oppression with acknowledgment of the historical richness of their contributions, legacy, and wisdom.

In a study evaluating protective factors for sexual behavior for a sample of Northern Plains American Indian youths, research found that family, school, and components of enculturation were correlated with greater sexual safety behaviors (Griese et al., 2016). Of note, this study included the youths as a participant pool and gathered data from Native elders in the community and school personnel, demonstrating the importance of integrating community values into research design. Specifically, the family's level of responsiveness and communication was tied to the concept of warmth among the family. With strong and open communication, youths feel more confident in asking questions and coming to their own decisions regarding their sexual health behaviors. The family is vital in the process from the standpoint of parental modeling and open conversations and the extended family unit structure that allows for children to have important conversations about their sexual health with their "aunties" or grandparents (p. 27). One elder shared, "I told her [daughter] to go talk with her aunties about becoming an adult or teenager. And I had a lot of open communication with her, talking about different things, possibilities and stuff like that" (p. 27). Many youths living on the reservation have greater access to these extended family members and the resources and support that they may be able to provide, in contrast with their non-Native counterparts. Having a "healthy fear" and respect of parents regarding discipline was also a protective factor for American Indian youths. One female American Indian youth's parent shared, "I never really wanted to do it [have sex] because it was

just like going behind their back because I knew I'd tell them about it anyway" (p. 28).

Additionally, engaging in cultural traditions was considered a component of enculturation that also served as a protective factor for sexual health behaviors. Specifically, visiting sacred lands and using traditional activities such as dancing encourages the type of spiritual growth that elders and community members believe will help teenagers navigate the challenges of their teen years.

The older female shared:

We put her on Bear Butte [a Northern Plains American Indian sacred location site] because we wanted her to have some kind of spirituality, foundation to help her. Because we knew that as she got into teenage years, there was going to be a struggle, you know? It was, and I think that's what helped her, you know, and helped her to become stronger. (p. 32)

Of note, however, only the elders and youths identified spirituality and cultural ways as protective factors. This may be due to the school personnel identifying primarily as White, suggesting room for significant growth needed in the education of school personnel on the importance of enculturation within the population of American Indian youths who they work with (Griese et al., 2016).

A study conducted on a participant pool of employees in rural southeastern Montana found that 34.5% of Native American participants and 15.1% of Caucasian participants had experienced at least four adverse childhood experiences, as measured by the ACE rating scale (Knows His Gun et al., 2014). A measure of at least four ACEs correlates with a considerably higher risk of adverse adult outcomes and difficulties. Despite the significant variability between ethnic groups, levels of resilience for both Native Americans and Caucasian participants were the same, indicating that Native Americans demonstrated a higher than expected ability to cope and

endure potential traumas and hardships. When examining potential variables of resilience that were unique to this rural population, job stability was the most significant predictor of resilience (Knows His Gun et al., 2014).

### **Protective Gender Factors**

Both male and female Native American Indian adolescents from Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, reported a similar number of life problems (e.g., personal, career, academic) as well as a similar number of help-seeking behaviors from others (Bee-Gates et al., 1996). This finding stands in contrast with other studies conducted with primarily White adolescent populations, suggesting that female adolescents experience a higher level of distress during adolescent years (Dubow et al., 1990) and demonstrate a greater tendency to reach out for support than their male counterparts (Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994). Differences in findings among these populations may reflect a difference in cultural values for Native men that emphasize interpersonal and community connectedness in contrast with a Westernized value emphasizing independence and strength, which may limit help-seeking behaviors in White males (Bee-Gates et al., 1996). Additionally, Zuni Native American Indian students with higher levels of self-esteem engaged in fewer help-seeking behaviors, likely because they had fewer life problems, indicating that self-esteem appears to be a protective factor for native adolescents (Bee-Gates et al., 1996).

## **CHAPTER III: IMPACT OF MARGINALIZATION ON ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **What is Race?**

Race-related warfare and conflict infamously overshadow the accounts of history and continue to be one of the most prominent discussions and social divides in American society today. Race is considered a “social construct based on physical appearance (skin color, hair color, and texture, facial features), ancestry, nationality, and culture” (Renn, 2012). However, differences in hair texture, skin pigment, and facial features have been used as racial markers to attribute individuals to select groups based on biological, geographical, and cultural similarities. Additionally, the concept of race also serves as a form of personal identification for individuals to connect to a shared sense of community, personal meaning, and values (Renn, 2012).

Beginning as early as the age of explorers to the Americas, Eurocentric perspectives and values have long dominated societal standards and remain deeply ingrained within political, socioeconomic, health, and employment structures and systems. People of color must navigate these complex and intersectional cultural systems rooted in a value of Whiteness as they come to discover the meaning and value of their racial identity from an individual and community perspective.

### **Racial Identity**

Among the acknowledgment of the importance of racial identity within counseling and psychology came the development of racial identity development models. Sue and Sue (2016) emphasized three important contributions of racial identity development models from a counseling perspective. First, mental health professionals often draw upon stereotypes or over-generalized research findings when selecting appropriate treatment methods for their clients with

a failure to assess individual differences. The process of identification with one's racial background is complex and unique to each race, nation, community, and individual. Second, racial identity development models are most powerfully utilized as a diagnostic tool to more accurately assess the attitudes, beliefs, and meaning surrounding the client's cultural identity. Lack of cultural responsiveness to individual and cultural differences remains a core factor of premature terminations among clients of color (Ivey et al., 2011). Last, the process of racial identity development is deeply intertwined with a recognition of the influence of racism, oppression, and marginalization (Sue & Sue, 2016), as many individuals find ways to navigate the toxicity of White supremacist culture.

### **Indigenous Identification**

Indigenous peoples have a unique relationship to citizenship within the United States. While citizens of the United States, they may also be members and shareholders of a federal and/or state-recognized tribal nation. As of March 2020, the National Conference of State Legislatures identified 574 federally recognized Indigenous tribes located within 36 states (Salazar, 2020). To be federally recognized as a tribe, communities must establish a shared lineage connection and shared components of tradition, language, and tribal blood percentages (Tribal enrollment process, 2019). Each tribal association has varying criteria for tribal membership, many of which include the requirement of blood quantum. The measurement of Indian blood percentages and tribal membership claims were introduced as a byproduct of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). In recognition of the Native Americans' contributions to the successes of World War I, greater attention was drawn to the detrimental conditions of the Indian reservations and the extent of the disbursement of tribal land to foreign settlers. This act, commonly known as the Indian Welfare Act or the Howard-Wheeler

Act, allowed allotments of resources and land to tribal governance. However, members were required to provide proof of membership through the use of blood testing to benefit from these reforms (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Through this act, the government allowed for the development of Native corporations, which empowered and stabilized their communities by recognizing them as sovereign nations (Wilkins, 2007). Additionally, the Bureau of Indian Affairs allowed for preferential employment and resources for education and training opportunities for Natives in attempts to address the inequities caused by the period of forced reservations (Wilkins, 2007).

Similarly, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 served as an agreement between some Alaskan tribes for a sum of \$962 million dollars in exchange for 44 million acres of land (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, n.d.). The funding and land were dispersed and allotted to 13 for-profit Native corporations, which function under state corporation laws and guidelines, in addition to over 200 village corporations. According to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (n.d.), Native corporations provide employment for thousands of individuals and consist of services in telecommunications, alternative energy, real estate, engineering, construction, remediation of the environment, and tourism. It proposed that any Native Alaskan with one-fourth Alaska Native blood was eligible to become a shareholder in these corporations. There remains controversy among Native Alaskan communities about the allowance of future generations of Alaska Natives having the ability to become shareholders themselves instead of waiting for the shares to be passed down from family members (Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA), 1971). As such, the Native American and Alaska Native populations are the only ethnic group within the United States required to prove and validate their racial identity. Tribal

membership is required to have access to the very resources that were provided to nations as a payment for the tribal lands and communities that were stolen from them.

Many tribes have varying rules and regulations regarding their tribal membership process. In the process of validating and authenticating their racial identity to gain membership to a tribe, Native Americans and Alaska Natives are often forced to choose which tribe they wish to identify with, despite having roots in varying tribal backgrounds and cultures (Hair, 2019). As such, members may have 100% native heritage but, due to the mixture of tribal affiliations, may not qualify for any one particular tribal enrollment certificate. Often, tribes have many different qualifications for membership and require different percentages of Indian blood, causing instances in which full-blooded members may receive the same allotment as members who claim only one-sixteenth of Indian blood (Hair, 2019). Claiming tribal membership often requires a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Division of Tribal Government Services, n.d.).

The origin of using blood percentages to determine racial membership and ethnic identity stems from the Anglo-Saxon culture of using blood to track and trace royal lineages of “pure blood” hierarchies (Meyer, 1999). Due to the deeply embedded racism of scientific “research” at the time, blood was associated with physiological characteristics such as the coarseness of the hair (Jenks, 1921), as well as the culturally different behaviors of the individual. During the period of treaty negotiations between 1817-1871, the descriptions and use of blood quantum were only vaguely operationalized by the federal government in seeking to establish and define the continually changing treaty arrangements between the government and the tribal peoples (Schmidt, 2011). The ever-present legal quantification of who is deemed an “Indian” or not appears problematic to many as it is based in the origins of the Anglo-Saxon creation of races in

terms of biological factors instead of cultural factors shared among a group of human beings (Schmidt, 2011). Additionally, others have argued that the continuing use of blood quantum to identify memberships may lead to the eventual genocide of Native American and Alaska Native people. Current estimations reveal that only 8% of the Native American and Alaska Native populations will hold a blood quantum of one-half or greater by the year 2080 (Bordewich, 1996), causing great concern for the future of a race that is the only ethnic minority to be biologically and legally quantified by the government. It remains to be determined how the federal government may respond to its treaty obligations in a future where the very people granted sovereignty and protection would be essentially legally nonexistent. These questions and concerns continue to be discussed within Indigenous communities and those advocating to protect and enforce the treaty agreements between sovereign nations and the U.S. government.

### **Descriptive Population Data**

The Native American and Alaska Native populations comprise a small portion of the general population and are considered the smallest representation of ethnic minorities. They are often overlooked and unrecognized, contributing to feelings of being “invisible” (Sue & Sue, 2016). According to the 2018 U.S. Census, those who identify as Native American or Native Alaskan alone comprise 0.9% of the population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Cities with the highest numbers of Indigenous individuals include New York, NY (111,749, 1.3% of the city’s population), Los Angeles, CA (54,236, 1.4% of the city’s population), Phoenix, AZ (43,724, 2.9% of the city’s population), Oklahoma City, OK (36,572, 6.0% of the city’s population) and Anchorage, AK (36,062, 12.0% of the city’s population; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Of the 574 federally recognized tribes (Salazar, 2020), the five largest include

Navajo (308,013 population) Cherokee (285,476 population), Sioux (131,048 population), Chippewa (115,859 population), and Choctaw (88,913 population; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

As with any data reporting, it is essential to explore contributing factors that may impact our understanding of self-reporting in U.S. Census data. Also, surges in individuals who self-identify as American Indian and Native Alaskan have increased, raising questions concerning what factors may contribute to a change in self-identification since the birth rates do not align with such an increase (Jacobs, 2019). Additionally, there is believed to be a significant number of unreported Indigenous people within the United States. Some may not feel comfortable disclosing their Indigenous heritage to a government system that has historically misrepresented and misused data from Indigenous communities. Factors such as cultural mistrust and inadequate data collection methods may have significant roles in producing these figures (Jacobs, 2019), leading this interpretation of census data to be mentioned with caution, care, and context.

### **The Impact of Intergenerational Trauma**

Despite being the smallest racial group by population, the Native population has the highest poverty rate of all ethnic groups (Macartney et al., 2013), with a 50% higher death rate than White individuals (Espey et al., 2014), and up to three times the unintentional injuries leading to death (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Native individuals have the lowest reported participation in secondary education of any minority group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) and are 2.5 times more likely to suffer from mental illness (Duran et al., 2004). Additionally, Native Americans have double the alcoholism mortality rate compared to the U.S. population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008) and have the highest alcohol consumption rate compared to any other ethnic minority group (Chartier & Caetano, 2010). These disparity outcomes result from a longstanding compounding of factors related to

the many traumas faced by the community; colonization, and cultural genocide (Duran et al., 1998). The continued promotion of sacred symbols of heritage being displayed as sports logos has been used to potentiate this community's shallow and hurtful stereotypes (Reclaiming Native truth, 2018). In the same way, the Native American and Alaskan Native communities have been able to survive the harsh climates of the arctic and the dry conditions of the deserts. They have demonstrated their resiliency in finding healing by reclaiming their cultural heritage, preserving their sacred traditions and dialects, and continue persevering in dignity and alignment with their values of respect, generosity, and spirituality (Rose, 2018). Each member may express varying perspectives of knowledge, tradition, tribal membership, cultural practice, and identification with their racial group. By evaluating such factors related to ethnic identity development, those who serve the Native American population may be better able to provide culturally competent care that is respectful of cultural values and understanding of individual and tribal differences within the Native American and Alaska Native communities.

In their account of the history of American Indian peoples, Duran et al. (1998) discussed the ties between intergenerational trauma and the current difficulties within Native communities today. The experience and history of each Native American tribe vary not only in their presenting concerns or experiences but also in their level of colonization and/or impact of White settlers. However, similarities can be seen across tribal communities regarding the impact of intergenerational trauma. Native communities continue to struggle with higher rates of alcoholism, violence, poverty, and psychological issues that impact all areas of social, psychological, and physical well-being. The concept of intergenerational trauma is grounded in research similar to studies conducted with the Jewish community of Holocaust survivors. Impacts of unhealed trauma carry forward to upcoming generations in ways that do not require a

conscious understanding of the trauma events or narratives. Symptoms within these communities are more a reflection of the unprocessed and unhealed wounds that are passed down from generation to generation. This view stands in contrast with alternative perspectives interpreting the deficits shown in research as a result of character flaws and poor choices, named by Duran et al. (1998) as “epistemic violence” that only further enforces symptoms of trauma (p. 62).

Colonization occurred in various ways: the impact of diseases that wiped out a large percentage of their populations, frequent intrusions of military force onto Native land, and eventual forced removal into reservations or urban areas. Being separated from their sacred and ancestral lands is described by Indigenous researchers as a “severe spiritual and psychological injury” to a people whose very identity, survival, and meaning were rooted in their geographical locations and ancestral lands (Duran et al., 1998, p. 63). When forced assimilation began in the 1950s, Native families were encouraged to live and function as White members of American society, further separating Native families from the reservations they had just barely grown accustomed to. The amount of government control to relocate and determine residence for Native Americans within such a short period resulted in “refugee syndrome” and distress of misplacement and disconnection (Duran et al., 1998, p. 63).

Lacking validation of the distress of these experiences, many Native people have learned to repress their grief and are left with no other options, but to suffer in unbearable silence, another form of compounding trauma (Duran et al., 1998). These experiences of traumas may also be internalized and constrained for fear of what consequences might follow the internal or externalized experience of deep-seated anger, often associated with grief and emotional pain. As these feelings may surface, the pain of unprocessed emotions presents the need for “anesthetic self-interventions” of substance use, violence, and suicide. Duran et al.’s (1998)

conceptualization of the psychological and emotional impact of trauma reveals the connection between the impact of colonization playing itself out in our statistics and communities. With consideration of these factors, research on health, alcohol, and academics are discussed.

### **Mental Health**

Studies reveal significantly higher rates of mental health problems and substance use disorders among Indigenous populations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; Chartier & Caetano, 2010; Duran et al., 2004), including depression and low self-esteem (Jackson & Lassiter, 2001; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Indigenous people are 2.5 more likely to suffer from mental health problems (Duran et al., 2004), including mood disorders and a number of other related mental health disorders such as learning difficulties, substance abuse, conduct disorders, and other dangerous behaviors such as running away and suicide attempts (Rieckmann et al., 2004).

### ***Suicide***

Suicide behaviors and completions are considered a public health crisis for the American Indian population, ranked as the third leading cause of death among children ages 10-14 and the second leading cause of death in children 15-24 years (National Center for Health Statistics, 2021.) Research also indicates that they are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide than any other ethnic group, a number that has gradually been increasing since 2003 (Leavitt et al., 2018). The act of suicide may be considered “forbidden” in some Indigenous cultures causing adolescents to experience shame and feelings of failure that decrease the likelihood of reaching out for professional help (Bee-Gates et al., 1996, p. 498). Of specific note, nearly 26% of all completed suicides occur between the ages of 18-24 (Leavitt et al., 2018), and recent data indicate significantly higher rates of suicide ranging between the ages of 15-34 (Center for Disease

Control and Prevention, 2021). A pattern of higher suicide rates in earlier life stages, with a decreased risk in later life, stands apart from the global trends within the United States of a higher suicide risk during midlife. Patterns of high suicide risk align with the early and later adolescence developmental stage described by Newman and Newman (2018) and inspired by Erik Erikson's original stages of development (Erikson, 1950, 1974). During this development period, the early and late adolescent's primary psychosocial crisis involves their development of individual identity and group identity versus alienation and identity confusion (Newman & Newman, 2018).

### ***Substance Use***

The high rates of substance use concerns within the Native American and Alaska Native communities have been well documented. Alcohol consumption among Indigenous people remains the highest of any other ethnic minority group (Chartier & Caetano, 2010), with double the alcoholism mortality rate in comparison to the U.S. population (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). Khan et al. (2013) concluded from research that fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) rates are disproportionately higher among Alaska Native and Native American infants and are one of the leading contributors to intellectual disability diagnosis and disability conditions. Cook-Lynn (1996) provided a critique of popular literary narratives in which parents who have adopted Indigenous children turn to blame and demonize the mothers of children with FAS. As rates of FAS and FAE are high among some Indigenous communities, she described that some literary works have offered allusions to the sterilization of Indigenous women and promote anger and frustration for children's learning problems toward the biological mother. Cook-Lynn shared that this tendency to blame the least powerful members of society is also observed in those who blame the gay community for their high HIV/AIDS diagnosis rates, failing to contextualize

community problems within structural causes. Culturally based therapists and contextual models must be emphasized to recognize a broader cultural context surrounding these community issues and to allow communities and relatives to share responsibility in being part of community solutions rather than pretending that young childbearing women “exist in a vacuum” (Cook-Lynn, 1996, p. 15).

With consideration of the stereotype of substance abuse issues within the Native community, it is important to recognize that research among some tribal communities indicates lower or comparable rates of substance abuse compared to the general population. A national longitudinal alcohol epistemological study demonstrated that a sample of both Southwest and Northern Plains Native Americans were less likely to use alcohol than the general U.S. population sample (Beals et al., 2003). However, Native individuals were found to drink a larger amount of alcohol. Additionally, while research shows a greater amount of drug experimentation, there was very little evidence of addiction or dependence among these groups (Mitchell, 2003). Although these studies were conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, they function to dispel common misconceptions about substance abuse within the Native community and speak to the diversity among varying Native populations.

### **Health and Socioeconomic Status**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a variety of health disparities in the Native community. Native Americans and Native Alaskans are 50% more likely to be diagnosed with coronary heart disease, 50% more likely to be cigarette smokers, and 10% more likely to have high blood pressure than their White counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Fifty percent of Native American and Alaska Native adults and 30% of Native American and Alaska Native teenagers are more likely to suffer from obesity (Centers of

Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Adults are nearly 3 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and are 2.3 times more likely to die from diabetes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Indigenous people have the highest poverty rate of all ethnic groups (Macartney et al., 2013) and 50% higher death rate than their White counterparts (Espey et al., 2014), a greater number of unintentional injuries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) and up to 3 times the unintentional injuries leading to death (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

### **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

Indigenous people face a variety of structural and societal barriers. Native American and Alaska Native men and women are statistically more likely to be killed by police officers than their White counterparts (Edwards et al., 2019). The epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls has been recently recognized at the federal level due to statistics revealing homicide as the third leading cause of death among Indigenous women (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2016); and violence rates up to 10 times the national average (Bachman et al., 2008). This rallying cry from Indigenous communities fell on deaf ears of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies as a dual data crisis emerged (Lucchesi & Echo Hawk, n.d.). The National Crime Information Center (2018) released a report that of 5,712 cases of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls reported in 2016, only 116 have been appropriately logged in the missing person's database.

### **Academic**

Indigenous people are reported to have the lowest participation in secondary education compared to any other minority group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). There are a number of continued barriers involved in providing adequate assessment and diagnostic

evaluation to Native American children (Allison & Vining, 1999). Many evaluation tools and instruments have not been properly translated or cannot be adequately translated into Native languages due to the complexity of language differences. Many interpreters have not been trained in the ability to adequately convey necessary and sensitive information in a manner that is both culturally respectful and accurately communicated. They may find difficulty translating technical jargon and medical terms into Native languages and may also face challenges in providing explanations for concepts and words that do not exist in the linguistically cultural context (Allison & Vining, 1999).

A study examining 243 self-identified Native American students in the seventh grade found that a strong sense of belonging in the school environment served as a protective factor against drug use (Napoli et al., 2003). This study was conducted in a large urban area of schools in Arizona spanning multiple districts, including some students from surrounding reservations. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in the relationship between a sense of belonging and drug use between Native American and mixed ethnicity Native American students, which may result from comparable levels of enculturation. In a sample of 153 Native American undergraduates, academic stress levels were related to how these students believed they were viewed and received as Native people (Shorty et al., 2014). Additionally, academic stress was related to the level of cultural congruence that they felt in having similar or dissimilar beliefs and values to their White counterparts (Shorty et al., 2014). Findings point to the need for culturally appropriate learning materials that may more effectively assist in the process of creating an environment of belonging for Native youths within academic environments.

Considering this wealth of factors, the need for well-informed and culturally competent research within the field of clinical psychology cannot be overstated. The exploration of racial

identity remains a vital component of discovering mechanisms of change and avenues for healing methods uniquely fitted for this population's complex history of traumatization and colonization. The use of culturally appropriate interventions appears to be increasing as some professionals are developing guidelines for treatment that encompass cultural components.

### **Indigenous Research Methods**

The tremendous focus on empirical research and quantitative data fuels and informs what policies are supported, what funding is allotted, and provides a guidepost for our understanding of Indigenous peoples (Jacobs, 2019). The quantitative data analysis reveals a number of disparities within the Indigenous community may be both valid and accurate while also misrepresenting the community by magnifying pieces of the story without proper context and emphasis (Jacobs, 2019). However, as Bette Jacobs (2019) described, "counting is about numbers filtered through choices" of inclusivity and exclusivity criteria as well as the variables being measured (p. 148). She spoke about mixed-methods research as highly recommended and utilized by Indigenous researchers to more adequately and wholly capture Indigenous identity and ways of being. The application and use of appropriate statistical measures and data collection remain an area of continued reform and revision to provide a more accurate and meaningful representation and communication of the nature, well-being, and concerns of Indigenous folks (Jacobs, 2019). Gaps in research and history of a lack of cultural awareness in research measurements, definitions, and adequate and representative sample sizes, are substantial factors contributing to the "invisibility and misrepresentation" of Indigenous people (Jacobs, 2019, p. 155). It is imperative that future research embody best practices, which include an overarching recognition and respect for Indigenous sovereignty over data collecting within communities (Jacobs, 2019). Full participation of Indigenous leaders and researchers is

necessary to ensure greater confidence in the cultural competence and verification of representativeness by tribal communities. Additionally, research on disparity outcomes should be sure to offer representative samples, thoughtful research methodology and research terms, and intentional and mindful cultural interpretation within the context and understanding of Indigenous values and lifestyle (Jacobs, 2019). According to Jacobs (2019):

Among Indigenous people, data have been misused to characterize groups in stereotypical ways or with processes that exclude participation. Also, exploitation using data obtained from or about Indigenous people for external self-interest and diminishing benefit to tribes have commonly happened. (p. 153)

Many state and federally funded programs require greater percentages of the reported use of approved evidence-based practices that have been validated and replicated using controlled studies (Cruz & Spence, 2005). However, sovereign tribes have expressed opposition to these specific mandates, as the methods and values of the recommended “research-based” approach do not align with “Indian ways” (Cruz & Spence, 2005). A task force in Oregon, including all nine tribes and multiple Indigenous researchers and organizations, collaborated on the development of the Oregon Tribal Evidenced-Based and Cultural Best Practices project, providing an example of how mental health treatment must be informed and conducted through the values of local tribes and in alignment with Indigenous values. Native Americans focus more on elements of the “unseen world” and hold to the belief that disharmony in the unseen world is projected to the outside world, rendering the interventions of changing the outside world futile as it is only a reflection of deeper internal processes (White Bison Inc., 2001). As a culture that values respect and giving to others, having the control group as needed for randomized clinical trials does not align with their values and practice (Cruz & Spence, 2005). In an initiative to explore and create

best practices from a national perspective, Dr. Dale Walker et al. (2012) from the One Sky Center in Oregon emphasized the importance of spiritual practices in any integration of treatment for Native Americans. Specifically, he acknowledged the use of talking circles and sweat lodge ceremonies may prove to be more effective than any other Westernized approach to evidenced-based treatments.

Westernized attempts at behavioral health approaches fall far below expectations of effectiveness and helpfulness within Native communities (Duran et al., 1998). Native individuals are far more likely to drop out of therapy before the third session (Duran et al., 1998). The behavioral and linear focus of Westernized treatment methods robs Native people of the greater context of their presenting concerns and encourages approaches that are contradictory to the exploration of the truth of their experiences (Duran et al., 1998). Therapy should address the high levels of acculturation within Native American clients and seek to contextualize and conceptualize their life by connecting to their traditional belief system (Duran et al., 1998).

Using community-based participatory research to evaluate substance abuse prevention curricula for American Indian youths, shifts were made to account for cultural differences (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014). These included a switch from Westernized linear, individualistic, and competition-based values in exchange for holistic experiences, cooperative frameworks, and collaborative processes among groups of people (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014). The process of restructuring the curriculum included evaluation of qualitative themes gleaned for interviews and collaboration with Native participants and community members. The themes included an emphasis on cultural values, traditions, and the importance of being connected. Community American Indian participants acknowledged that the best methods of protecting youths involve the participation in ceremonies, having an understanding and knowledge of stories within the

culture, connecting to a sense of spirituality and balance, and having the modeling of adults and elders within the community to look up to and follow. While, at first, these concepts may have seemed disconnected or unrelated to the concept of safety and well-being in youths, a group member acknowledged the role these activities play in the nurturing of belonging, stating, “People are safer when they feel like they belong” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014, p. 551). The researchers elaborated on the following group discussion stating, “Being taught to do certain things the same ways and at the same times as countless generations before, because people around you believe those things are important, secures your place in that line of generations” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014, p. 551). As this study utilized the community-based participatory research approach in evaluating multiple generations from multiple tribes, a culmination of factors emerged that were unique to some tribal experiences and reflective of the diversity within the community. Also, common characteristics were identified among all tribal groups. During the study, individuals in the American Indian adult focus group spoke about their hesitancy to create such generalizations in research, “Our own ceremonies and traditions are what define us,” and “Our tribes are distinct. You can’t generalize” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014, p. 554). Another focus group participants stated, “We have different kinship networks; matriarchal and patriarchal, in clans or bands, reservation or city dwellers” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014, p. 554). Despite various labeling of experiences and diversity within history and cultural structures, themes did emerge, leading the original participants to shift from their initial concerns, commenting, “Creating opportunities to learn about traditional cultures is a way to teach kids and heal the family as a whole” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014, p. 554). These discussions emphasized and demonstrated the desire of Indigenous people to uphold their distinction as a tribe. However,

their willingness to acknowledge common factors appeared to be motivated by a desire for healing in future generations.

## **Intersectionality of Identities**

### ***Disability***

Individuals with disabilities, through the Individuals with Disability Education Act, are required to receive governmental program assistance for special education and accommodation. However, these programs are often not easily accessible by the Native community and may require children to leave their families and communities to attend specialized educational schools. However, as in the case of Ben, his participation in attendance at the New Mexico School for the Visually Handicapped for nine months negatively impacted his connection with his culture (Allison & Vining, 1999). Upon his return home, he had lost full command of the Navajo language and experienced a disconnection from his culture, community, and family, stating, “I had a poor-self-image as a Native American: I felt strongly that my own people were ashamed of and embarrassed by me” (p. 195). Although he did relearn his Native language, this separation from his culture for the justification of experts in the field of education greatly influenced his sense of belonging, identity, and feelings of acceptance within his community (Allison & Vining, 1999).

### ***Two-Spirited People***

In the modern world, many view the LGBTQ+ community as synonymous with the Native American reference of two-spirited people (Pruden & Gorman, 2014). However, the term was traditionally viewed as an analysis of gender rather than sexual orientation. The term two-spirited began being used in 1990, succeeding previous terminology, *berdache*, which had been used from 1492 to 1990. Two-spirited community members had a variety of roles, including

mediators, social workers, name givers, matchmakers, peacemakers, and medicine people. They were considered “holy people” and were counted on for good fortune in the future. Many nations had specific names for two-spirited people that translated into a variety of different meanings, such as the Aleut *kokwi'ma*, “man transformed into a woman,” Blackfoot *siksika*, “boy-girl,” Crow *bote* “not man, not woman,” and Dine *nadle'ee'i* “one who is in constant change.” The Ojibwe nation, in particular, had a unique system of beliefs that gender did not fall into male and female categories, allowing flexibility for individuals to support their community in whatever ways were more appropriate and helpful to them. The Ojibwe nation also had a significant number of transgender warriors who were skilled in war tactics and were deeply respected among their community, comparable today to the honor and talent attributed to the Marine Corps. Such flexibility in gender expression demonstrates the complexity and sophistication of these tribal societies, breaking conceptions of their stereotypical primitive nature (Pruden & Gorman, 2014).

Christian missionaries had a significant impact on the view of two-spirited people, labeling them as “sodomites” and teaching homosexuality to be among the worst of sins (Williams, 2010). The traditional values of two-spirited people within Indigenous communities quickly declined as people were forced to comply and conform to strict gender roles or suffer the consequence of being ostracized or taking their own life (Williams, 2010). Due to the condemnation and oppression from residential schools, missionary settlements, and White government agencies, many of the traditional practices and cultures surrounding two-spirited people were lost (“Two-spirit: Health resources,” n.d.). Two-spirited people has become a blanket term for the broader transgender, androgynous, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and gender non-conforming community as a whole (“Two-spirit: Health Resources,” n.d.).

## Sports Mascots

Native American and Alaska Native people's lack of representation in modern media creates a public invisibility of the population, leaving it difficult for both Native Americans and others to picture and visualize the social expectations and roles that are often defined for other ethnic groups (Leavitt et al., 2015). When Native Americans are represented, they are often presented in a historical manner with depictions that trace back to the 1800s of horseback riding and teepee huts. Results of searching "Native American" reveal that 95.5% of Google search images and 99% of Bing search images depict historical representations of the population. This representation gives an illusion as if the Native American people have been "frozen in time" and, after a certain period of history, have almost disappeared from recognition and representation. The authors argued that these representations, or lack thereof, have a marked impact on the world's narrow and stereotypical representations of the community. The homogenization of Native American identities is also seen as a byproduct of Native Americans inadvertently and perhaps unconsciously forced to wrestle with negotiating and orienting their identity and relationship to a world of narrow and stereotypical prototypes. The authors argued that there is a deindividuation and self-stereotyping process in which members of a group cling to a structure of commonly held group characteristics to find belonging within an in-group. However, identifying and clinging to these identities limits the narrative and ability to imagine, believe in, and pursue diverse individual and personal interests unique to that individual (Leavitt et al., 2015).

At a panel event, *The Time is Now-National Native Town Hall: Mascots, Native Rights, and Justice* by NDNCollective, Native Organizers Alliance (Harjo et al., 2020), numerous Indigenous activists gathered to discuss the invisibility and erasure of Native peoples through misrepresentation of sports mascots. Susan Shown Harjo, known as the "Mother of Movement

against Mascots” and the president of Star Institute, shared, “This isn’t a lawsuit. This isn’t a movement. It’s about our ancestors.” At the time of this meeting, she shared her collective progress of eliminating over 2,000 problematic Native mascots, about two-thirds of all harmful names, with 900 remaining. Carla Fredrick, director of First People’s Worldwide, recounted that the lawsuit over the Washington NFL Football Team, “Redskins” surmounted in a 630-billion-dollar lawsuit, including the use of 1,000 signatures and petitions from 175 national and local Native organizations. Dr. Stephanie Fryberg, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, argued there were no psychological benefits to using Native mascots. Rather, the use of mascots increased the representation of stereotypes within Native communities of Natives being aggressive and primitive. During these games, fans are allowed to use face paint and use traditional songs, while rival fans may engage in using derogatory language to mock these appropriated representations (Harjo et al., 2020). A study by the *Washington Post* is often used to suggest that a large majority of the Native American population is agreeable to the use of Native mascots. Dr. Fryberg noted that this widely circulated study was based on a flawed research method and participant pool. Twenty-six tribal agencies, 60 organizations, dozens of Native leaders, and advocacy groups have banded together to support the Washington team’s change. In July of 2020, the team name was officially retired. Ray Halbritter, a representative of the Oneida Nation and organizer of the Change the Mascot campaign, shared his thoughts:

This is a good decision for the country—not just Native peoples—since it closes a painful chapter of denigration and disrespect toward Native Americans and other people of color. Future generations of Native youth will no longer be subjected to this offensive and harmful slur every Sunday during football season. . . . We have made clear from the start that this movement was never about political correctness but seeking to prevent

unnecessary harm to our youth since we know from social scientists the many harmful effects this mascot has had on Native Americans' self-image. Today marks the start of a new chapter for the NFL and the Washington franchise, beginning a new legacy that can be more inclusive for fans of all backgrounds. (Keim, 2020, para. 5)

### **Invisibility**

Nonprofits, such as IllumiNative, are dedicated to combating the erasure of Native people through research, education, advocacy, and amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives. They focus on communicating new narratives around Native people and combat the harmful stereotypes the community has faced. The organization conducted a \$3.3 million public opinion research study that collected data between 2016-2018 called, Reclaiming Native Truth (Reclaiming Native Truth, 2018). The project was spearheaded by IllumiNative's founder, Crystal Echo Hawk. The project sought to evaluate the largest barriers and opportunities surrounding the mission of changing public perception of Indigenous communities for collective healing. The study's primary findings were that invisibility of Native Americans is the biggest bias among the general American population as a whole. Yet, what they did know consisted of stereotypes and misconceptions of Native communities depending on federal government sources and benefiting from forms of gaming. Even surveyed judges and law clerks acknowledged having little information and understanding of tribal sovereignty of federal Indian law. The study found that most people knew very little about Native Americans and were unsure of how many Indigenous people currently existed. Such findings identify significant barriers to the advocacy efforts of tribal sovereignty, equity, and social justice and indicate that false narratives and stereotypes are foundational to the modern narrative of what people know about Native Americans (Reclaiming Native Truth, 2018).

Many historians and scholars refer to Indigenous peoples as a part of a culture that ended in 1890, with no relevance to the present or future (Cook-Lynn, 1996, p. 30). Famous literature, like *The Last of the Mohicans*, portrays the Indigenous community as something of the past and as if Indigenous tribes did not continue to exist. While the existence of Indigenous people has not always been a part of popular texts of American writers, the culture continues to exist “in communities all over the region, in language and myth, and in the memories of the people who know who they are and where they came from” (p. 30). Cook-Lynn (1996) referenced numerous accounts of prestigious scholars and historians who referred to the Sioux Nation as one that is dying and dead, an inaccurate representation that perpetuates the notion that it is acceptable for White scholars from a variety of disciplines to speak on behalf of the Sioux community regarding their opinions, history, and character (p. 25). Departing from mainstream opinions about Indigenous communities is considered unscholarly and unacceptable in many academic circles. This begs the question about how Native American scholars deal with trying to acknowledge and honor their existence while remaining in spaces in which they must learn and navigate misinformation and the imagination of their death (Cook-Lynn, 1996, p. 33). The experience of invisibility and extinction remains central to many Indigenous movements, marches, and activism using the slogan, “We Are Still Here,” demonstrating the necessity to recognize Indigenous survival and presence in the many spaces of modern life.

### **Reclaiming Heritage and Cultural Interventions**

Despite the detrimental attempts to erase Indigenous cultures, Indigenous communities have continued to thrive in their fight to preserve and continue their culture. The use of culturally appropriate models and methods for managing community issues have many times been addressed and researched by Indigenous community members. Gene Thin Elk promotes the use

and development of culturally based holistic therapy models through the red road approach model (Thin Elk, n.d.). His treatment methods are rooted in spirituality through prayer and depend on deeply rooted respect for the afflicted, the medicine (therapy), and the healer (facilitator). He emphasizes the value of cultural traditions and lifestyle along with a focus on the medicine wheel (Thin Elk, n.d.).

Places such as the Alaska Native Heritage Center focus on the teaching and dissemination of cultural knowledge and traditions through enacting traditional tribal dances, games, courses, and events such as a Suicide Prevention Subsistence Camp and a Riiglluk Stinkwood Tea and Salve Making Class (“Our work: Cultural programming,” n.d.). The Alaska Native Heritage Center is highly focused on cultural programming for youths in the community, including school visits consisting of village site tours, educational videos, storytelling, dancing, drumming, art projects, and native games. The center also offers a summer internship to youths interested in becoming tour guides during the tourism season. Through these experiences, student interns can build their public speaking and communication skills while also having opportunities to learn other traditional practices and crafts and participate in subsistence living activities. Grounded in the idea that any and all people around the county should have access to their cultural heritage, the Heritage Foundation created the concept of the culture box. The boxes are designed as age-specific cultural crafts that can connect individuals to their traditional customs (“Our work: Cultural programming,” n.d.). Other programs are centered around culturally derived suicide and substance use prevention among Native Alaskan and Native American youths and a space for individuals struggling with homelessness, addiction, and reincarceration where “Artists have firsthand experience with the power of healing through the creative process

of making art that is culturally relevant and draws from Native traditions” (Cultural Programming, Unguwat; Resilience and Connection section).

In the same survey, Reclaiming Native Truth, results indicated that outlining the erasure of Indigenous people as being the primary barrier to social justice advancements, the Illumination found that 78% of polled Americans are interested in learning more about Indigenous cultures and are supportive of efforts to reflect greater Indigenous representation in the entertainment industry (Reclaiming Native Truth, 2018). The study also found that 72% of polled Americans support efforts for greater accuracy around education regarding the teaching of Native history and culture.

Incorporating traditional tribal practices, such as talking circles and ceremonies, can effectively address the cycle of substance abuse within Indigenous communities (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014). Additionally, interventions should also include the focus on cultural strengths and evidenced-based strategies (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014). Kelley and Lowe (2018) conducted a study exploring the use of the culturally based intervention Keetoowah-Cherokee Talking Circle-Obesity Program (KCTO-C) related to cultural identity, perceived stress, and knowledge of obesity risks and behaviors. Participants included 50 Keetoowah-Cherokee youths ages 10-13 from Oklahoma. The study utilized a convenience sample of youths who participated in a seven-week afterschool program. Results revealed that youths showed significantly higher scores on the Cherokee Self Reliance Questionnaire measures of cultural identity post-intervention. Females showed an even higher improvement on the Cherokee Self Reliance Questionnaire measure than their male counterparts. Youths showed a significant decrease in the Perceived Stress Scale, with males having an even more pronounced decrease in stress post-intervention than females. While findings did not appear to be statistically significant regarding the increase

in general knowledge about obesity prevention, both male and female participants showed some increase in knowledge which has the potential to offer meaningful and clinical significance. This study demonstrates the importance of cultural-based interventions in the arena of health management for at-risk youths. The study also confirms the importance of cultural identity, as results found an association between higher levels of cultural identity and lower stress levels. Lower stress levels have significant implications for health outcomes related to obesity within the Native American community and can show support for using culturally tailored interventions to assist in health interventions and the presence of cultural identity factors in the treatment of Native American youths (Kelley & Lowe, 2018).

A study conducted with 242 American Indian and mixed American Indian/Caucasian adolescents from the Turtle Mountain Community in North Dakota were asked questions about their preferences for counseling related to a number of factors, including sex, age, common beliefs, and ethnicity (BigFoot-Sipes et al., 1992). Results revealed that adolescents who identified most strongly and were most committed to Indian culture, despite the strength of their commitment to Anglo culture, preferred a counselor with the same ethnicity as being their top preference. There were no significant differences found regarding whether the issue the adolescents needed help with was personal or academic. This research indicates the importance of counselors having a strong understanding of their client's beliefs and attitudes surrounding their identification with their ethnic identity and not overgeneralizing minority members as a homogenous group. Additionally, results indicated the importance of representation of Native Americans within mental health and counseling services (BigFoot-Sipes et al., 1992).

## **CHAPTER IV: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Importance of Racial Identity**

Racial and cultural identification fosters the opportunity to find meaningful commonalities, such as shared experiences and values with others. Research shows that cultural congruity, self-beliefs, and ethnic identity accounted for 23.7% of stress levels among Native youths (Shorty et al., 2014). Cultural congruity, public regard, and self-efficacy were primary contributing factors. The results indicate the students had a strong sense of their own cultural identity but reported having negative ideas of how they were perceived within their college setting, leading to low feelings of public regard. Horse described American Indian identity as “highly personal” as it encompasses attitudes and thoughts surrounding the lived experience of being an Indigenous person within one’s context and environment (2005). He felt, in part, that this process of Indigenous identity exploration and raised consciousness is influenced by the responses and reactions to the structure of White privilege. Maintaining a strong sense of Indigenous identity may prove difficult as many attempts to navigate the cultural expectations and pressures of living and navigating in a White-dominated world (Horse, 2005). Identity confusion is tied to the experience of “acculturative stress” and the anxieties surrounding the societal expectations to conform to the dominant White culture (Duran et al., 1998). The process of “reimagining the self” requires a certain internal process and space that can be achieved by focusing on “issues of internalized oppression and adoption of negative stereotypes” (Duran et al., 1998, page 71).

### **Cultural Values**

In many tribal cultures, life on the reservation assists in fostering and maintaining ties to traditional Native ways, customs, and family (Lone-Knapp, 2000). However, the Westernized

push toward education and difficulties finding employment on reservations has led many to move to urban environments. In an interview on a Haudenosaunee reservation in western New York, a young community member described the dissonance of these two values, “education is probably the most important thing as far as dealing with the outside [western culture outside of the reservation]. But you should never forget who you are . . . Ohngwehonwe ‘the [Native] people’” no matter how educated you get” (Lone-Knapp, 2000, p. 4).

The family unit is an essential component of Indigenous identity (Duran et al., 1998). Another value mentioned by this Haudenosaunee reservation tribe is the importance of role models in the community as an “auntie,” “uncle,” or “grandfather” (Lone-Knapp, 2000). The author discussed the importance of the concept of space beyond the scope of geographical territories of land, others’ views of individual identity, or a mix of individual and collectivistic identities. Instead, the concept of identity should be viewed through the lens of community with recognition and expansion of spatial boundaries that are “not bound by geography, but by territories that speak from a life of their own, from ageless stories and intergenerational depths of meaning and interpretations” (Lone-Knapp, 2000, p. 5.) She speculated several important questions: “What is the framework of ethnic identity if it is based on community relationships instead of, or in conjunction with, individual aspects?” “How does the reservation play a role in the identities of the wide variety of Indigenous nations, in the identification of urban natives?” “What are the ties to traditional homelands for those nations that have been relocated? What are the ties to homelands for those nations that are not “federally recognized?” (Lone-Knapp, 2000, p. 5).

Often, cultural identity is viewed and studied through the lens of individual attitudes and beliefs about one’s cultural and ethnic identity. However, among Indigenous people, the

exploration of identity must include an individual, as a part of a collective community, within the context of their tribe and social system (Whitesell et al., 2012.) Within the Native American community, there is a diversity of adherence to traditional values. Traditional values acknowledge the power and responsibility of a person's words, beliefs, and actions to significantly influence and impact outcomes, such as the presence of misfortunes of having a disability or developing an illness or sickness. Many individuals may also incorporate Western systems of medicine to integrate into their health care structure of beliefs, using both a biological basis of etiology along with recognition of their impact on their traditional cultural values as well (Dufort & Reed, 1995).

Michael Garrett (1996) spoke about educating children in traditional Native American ways and discussed common values and threads interwoven in many Indigenous cultures and tribes that he described as a "common core of values." In recognition of the diversity and variance of tribal groups and cultures, Garrett discussed six features of traditional values with a disclaimer statement emphasizing his writing through the lens of his Cherokee heritage. All of these values are presented with an understanding and emphasis on Native American culture's beliefs that everything is interconnected. The value of harmony and reciprocal, respectful, and interconnected relationships is demonstrated in the phrases often used by elders as the "circle of life" or the "web of life." Garrett described the value of cooperation and sharing, emphasizing interpersonal cooperation and harmony over competitiveness and fighting. Noninterference is a value in many Indigenous cultures, demonstrated by care and respect for another's rights to self-determination and personal choices. This value demonstrates the highest respect for another and allows an individual of the community to share as little or as much as they would like regarding personal difficulties, crises, or other personal decisions with an understanding that the person

will communicate if they should seek guidance from the community. It is believed that each person has the ability to “learn in their way” and discourages the giving of unsolicited advice and expectations of submission. True learning occurs when an individual is valued and accepted for their contributions to their surroundings and offered respect and acceptance for who they are (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). The third value of humility is taught with a focus on valuing relationships over the ability to dominate others. Complements and praise can be earned and are usually provided in a group setting, and the act of boasting about oneself is looked down upon. The values of patience reflect that “everything has its place” in the world. Instead of being taught to ask questions and use critical analysis, children are encouraged to be in tune with their senses in wait for understanding. The value of being is emphasized over an emphasis on doing (Sanders, 1987) and focuses on the process and lessons learned through the pursuit of doing rather than the accomplishment or final achievement. Last, the value of time is reflective of many Native Americans’ focus on the here and now and the efforts that are made to be present in the moment (Garrett, 1996).

### **Spirituality**

Within Indigenous communities, spirituality is deeply tied to a connection with living things in the universe. Garrett (1996) described:

all things are alive with spiritual energy and importance in the Circle of life, including all animals, plants, people, rocks, and minerals, the Earth, the Sky, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and all of the elements such as the Wind, Water, Fire, Thunder, Lightning, Rain, combined in an intricate system of interdependence. (p. 6)

Respect is given to every element in nature, and living in harmony and balance with the elements is considered a pathway to health and well-being. Giving thanks and acting with patience are two

common foundational practices that are attributed to finding harmony both internally and with the environment. The concept of the interdependence and harmony is demonstrated through the circle of four directions (i.e., east, south, west, and north), representing the components of life that must be balanced, including the spirit, the natural environment, the body, and the mind (Garrett, 1996).

### **Land and Water**

Central to Indigenous identity is the importance of geographical belonging, heritage, and stewardship of land (Jacobs, 2019). Similar to a shared location of heritage as the Irish or Jewish people, Indigenous people are firmly rooted and grounded in traditions and land stewardship, subsistence lifestyles, oral traditions of creation, and history telling connected to landmarks. Examples of these traditions include the burial of the placenta after childbirth by the Maori speaks to symbolize belonging and connection to the land. Ancestral burial sites are considered sacred land and serve to recognize the history and heritage of tribal lineage (Jacobs, 2019). The concept of land sovereignty and stewardship is echoed in movements and political initiatives such as the Land Back movement and the works of Indigenous leaders toward the establishment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971. When multiple lawsuits were brought against the state for the possession of Indigenous land, the state negotiated an agreement with Alaska Native tribes to allot 44 million acres of land and \$962 million dollars. This settlement act remains somewhat controversial among Native Alaskans, as some feel the agreement was insufficient and used as a form of coercion, while other tribes were wholly excluded from the land settlement act and were provided no reparation or payment for their ancestral lands. The funds allotted from the government in the form of payment for the land were distributed to 12 Native corporations and around 200 villages/corporations, allowing for the corporations to fund

medical, educational, and cultural resources to their communities in the manner that they saw fit. By registration with these Native corporations, Indigenous peoples became “shareholders” in the for-profit organizations and, therefore, could benefit from the resources and benefits.

Phillis Fast described pre-colonial elements of Native Alaskan identity factors, including a sense of agency and empowerment through the mastery of the land and a subsistence lifestyle used to provide for the community (Fast, 2008). Perhaps most salient to the concept of post-colonial Native Alaskan identity is the implications of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The act allowed Native Alaskan people born on or before December 18th, 1971 to become shareholders of tribal lands, resources, and allotted funding, with the idea that shares would be passed down among families. Large families and extended lifespans among the population have impeded this process, leaving current generations of adults with no allotted shares. While some attempted to address the issue of these descendants, or “afterborns,” many tribal corporations face difficulties with having enough shares and allotment of money to distribute (Fast, 2008). Not having access as a shareholder limits current and upcoming generations of Natives from participating and having stewardship of resources and leadership.

The allotment of land is particularly important as it relates to the ability of Native people to freely hunt, fish, whale, and gather from the land as means of lifestyle and survival, referred to as “subsistence” (Federal Indian Law for Alaskan Tribes: Tribal Hunting and Subsistence section). In 1978, the state of Alaska passed the first subsistence law, which prioritized the use of gathering fish and game in rural subsistence communities rather than commercial or sports use. However, the ruling allowed any and all Alaskans to be considered subsistence gatherers, allowing urban residents to hunt and gather in rural areas and creating friction over resources. In response to the lack of protections for Indigenous gatherers by the state, Congress passed the

Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. ANILCA allowed rural Alaskans priority over subsistence gathering on federal lands and allocated 104 million acres of land and water designated as preserves, national parks, and wilderness. Other legal protections, such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act, reserve the right of Native Alaskans to hunt and gather marine animals such as whales, dolphins, seals, walrus, otters, and polar bears. These animals are utilized as a primary source of diet and survival for rural communities as their geographical distance from other food sources is significant and unpredictable, and extreme weather events can interrupt the delivery of goods and materials (Federal Indian Law for Alaskan Tribes: Tribal Hunting and Subsistence).

Land rights remain a central feature of relations between the United States and Indigenous communities. In attempts to make a settlement for the Black Hills region, or what was renamed Mount Rushmore, the United States offered the Lakota tribe a \$100 million-dollar settlement. Despite being one of the most impoverished geographical tribal regions, the Lakota people denied the settlement, valuing the sacred and unsettled areas of the Black Hills to be of greater worth than what now would be a billion-dollar value (Jacobs, 2019).

Reflecting on her history of racial identity development, Dawn Quigley embodied the process of self-determination as she went beyond narratives of Indigenous identity related to the connection with land (2019). Rather, her revelations of Indigenous beings sparked from the wisdom of her elders, as she created an alternative perspective of “identity as seen in water.” Seeking to reconcile the concepts of internal and external influences and determination of identity, she resolved that, rather, “the conception of identity as the chemical make-up of water (inner identity) must work with, and in communion with, the sky’s hues (exterior identity) to

create, what we know as, a daily quest of molecular fusion of a total and unifying identity” (Quigley, 2019, p. 701).

## **Language**

Central to Indigenous identity is the use of tribal languages (Duran et al., 1998; Horse, 2005, 2012). Phyllis Fast, a member of the Athabascan tribe and anthropologist at the University of Anchorage, described Native Alaskan identity developing through various components (2008). Specifically, for many Native Alaskan tribes, the importance of tribal language is a central component of Indigenous identity. There are estimated to be approximately 20 tribal languages within Alaskan tribes alone, not to mention multiple dialects within each language. Tribal languages were legally prohibited from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. Many modern Native Alaskans were deprived of access to learning their Native language and benefiting from the wisdom within the richness of Indigenous languages. Fast points out that tribal languages have a value far beyond the scope of access to Native elders and participation in culture. Language “shape[s] thought and epistemological modes of learning,” granting access to wisdom and tradition that often cannot be properly translated (Fast, 2008, p. 5). Many tribal languages are polysynthetic, meaning that they are structured in an economical manner to allow for one word to convey an entire sentence or concept. For example, the Inupiaq term *aavzuuk* is in and of itself an entire sentence that translates to mean a “constellation consisting of two stars which appear above the horizon in late December, an indication that the solstice is past and that days will soon grow longer again” (Fortescue et al., 1994, p. 1). The term also conveys the importance of geographical location and the underlying wisdom and instruction so that as Native Alaskan people grow in language, they may grow in the “Inupiaq sense of a maturing self” (Fast, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, the use of tribal languages is also deeply rooted in the

participation of religious traditions that offer wisdom beyond aspects of spirituality into an understanding of interpersonal, physical, and political knowledge (Fast, 2008).

### **Biculturalism**

Indigenous people may identify themselves along a continuum of traditional living and integration of other cultures, values, and lifestyles. Some of the impacting variables include living on or off a reservation, participation, adherence to spiritual values and practices, and the use of Native language within the family home. As individuals and families move to urban areas, it may prove difficult to fully connect with their culture as they attempt to balance and preserve their family and community ways of living in a White-dominated society (Allison & Vining, 1999).

Whitesell et al. (2006) suggested that cultural identification among Native Americans was positively correlated to higher levels of self-esteem, although the results were small to moderate in this study. However, results indicated that high self-esteem was also associated with respondents' identification with European culture, raising questions about the relationship between biculturalism as it relates to positive mental health outcomes. As a person of color operating in environments that may be culturally inconsistent with their beliefs and values, the process of the integration of cultures becomes an area of interest. The question remains as to the cost and benefits of identifying with components of White culture and its impact on mental health. Considering the negative impact of forced assimilation and cultural genocide, it may be easily hypothesized that any integration or identification with White culture may prove to be harmful. Generational differences and variety of community living (i.e., reservations vs urban) may also prove to be dynamic factors of interest in the discussion of biculturalism, specifically as it applies to individuals' integration of their Native heritage with that of the predominant White

culture. Albright and LaFromboise (2010) examined the relationship between ethnic identity and hopelessness among middle school American Indians on a North Plains reservation. Results revealed a significant negative correlation between White identification and hopelessness. In contrast, measures of biculturalism and Indian identification were not significantly associated with hopelessness, contrary to the hypothesis.

One possible reason for this finding could be that the deeper exploration and identification with ethnic identity may not yet be fully developed due to the developmental age and psychosocial tasks of middle-school-age children (Albright & LaFromboise, 2010). Other possible explanations include the unique diversity of the community sample regarding socioeconomic factors and other community culture factors that may influence the children's attitudes and feelings regarding their cultural identification. These researchers postulated that adolescent participants may choose to identify with White culture and de-identify with their Indigenous culture based on dominant social norms of success contextualized in White cultural values (Albright & LaFromboise, 2010).

Albright and LaFromboise (2010) spoke to the importance of examining diversity among Native American populations and recommended future research to examine the unique factors that interplay with the concept of ethnic identity within each Indigenous community. These factors may include social class, economic disparities, social justice, and the impact these factors may have on the cognitions of children. The examination of intra-community dynamics, social context, and unique variability among nations and tribal groups must be better understood and considered (Albright & LaFromboise, 2010).

LaFromboise et al. (2010) also examined the relationship between hopelessness and levels of acculturation and residence among native youths with a sample consisting of 67

different tribes. Results indicated that bicultural youths, those who had endorsed high levels of both Indian and White cultural factors, had the least amount of hopelessness compared to those who primarily identified primarily with native culture, White culture, or neither. Implications of results suggest that the identification with multiple cultures is protective. Additionally, results revealed a pattern indicating that youths living on the reservation experienced the least hopelessness, while those living in urban areas experienced greater levels of hopelessness.

The Lumbee American Indian tribe faces a unique situation in its relationship with the United States and with its history and identity. The Lumbee tribe is not officially registered as a federally recognized tribe and faces many questions regarding their history and ancestry. Bryant and LaFromboise conducted a study with a sample of 102 adolescents, seeking to evaluate the relationship between cultural and racial identity, bicultural competence, and school environment (2005). Results indicated that participants remained connected to their cultural heritage, evident by ties to traditional spiritual and religious practices, connection with the earth, and the passing along of oral history and traditions through community elders. However, their high level of historical and current contact with White society has appeared to result in an increased process of assimilation in contrast with the same age Indian peers residing on reservations. Other differences among this sample compared to other adolescent samples included the lesser use of tribal language and their lack of federal recognition status. Using the People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms, 1995), researchers discovered that the Lumbee participants aligned most with the internalization stage of racial identity, the most progressed developmental stage of identity development encompassing integration of both good and bad components of both cultural identities in a healthy way. Bryant and LaFromboise speculated that this stage of development most aligns with a bicultural perspective of racial identity development, although

overall scoring higher on their identification with American Indian culture as opposed to White culture. These individuals were less likely to exhibit some of the confusion and distress accompanied by lower levels of identity development and integration, such as in the dissonance of conformity stages. Despite their lack of ancestral knowledge about their history, members of the Lumbee tribe strongly identified with their American Indian heritage, supporting the notion that racial identity and ancestry may not be interdependent (Mihesuah, 1999).

### **Enculturation and Acculturation**

A number of enculturation, acculturation, and cultural orientation models have been created to encompass the process and development of cultural and ethnic identity among Indigenous peoples. Acculturation can be defined as:

the cultural change that occurs when two or more cultures are in persistent contact. In this process, change may occur in each culture in varying degrees. A particular kind of acculturation is assimilation, in which one culture changes significantly more than the other culture and, as a result, comes to resemble it. This process is often established deliberately through force to maintain control over conquered peoples, but it can occur voluntarily as well. (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 24)

Enculturation, in contrast, is defined as “the process by which individuals learn their home culture” (Soldier, 1985, p. 185).

Garrett and Pichette spoke to the cultural mistrust fostered by the history of cultural extermination and forced assimilation. They proposed an acculturation model suggested for use in counseling as a means of assessment for assessing cultural identity through formal and informal methods. The measure includes a 20-item formal assessment Likert questionnaire and 10 informational questions, which are open-ended and serve as methods and tools for counselors

to utilize to avoid making assumptions or engaging in stereotyping when working with Native clients. Garrett and Pichette also developed a cultural model with five distinct levels of cultural orientation (2000). The first *traditional* stage is defined by a predominant use of Native language, thinking in their Native language, and holding and participating in traditional customs and values. Motivations may include a desire to develop varying skills to discover and utilize resources in the dominant society. The second *marginal* stage is defined by bilingual abilities and a conflict of self-identity in the face of losing some contact with heritage. Individuals may feel they are “trapped between their birthright and the dominant society, losing touch with the former, but not feeling comfortable in the latter . . . [contributing to] conflicts and resulting in a serious identity crisis” (Soldier, 1985, p. 187). Conflicts may present themselves as a lack of pride in Native heritage, pressures of forming dominant cultural values, guilt regarding lack of knowledge or participation in traditional events and customs, negative beliefs about the native community, and a lack of extended support. The third *bicultural* stage is defined as the process of familiarity with more Native and dominant cultural values with the ability to successfully communicate in both contexts and settings. They may be generally accepted by both cultures and will engage in both traditional and non-traditional practices and customs as well as be impacted by varying beliefs from both sides. The fourth *assimilated* stage is defined as the process of fully embracing only the dominant culture and identifying with mainstream values and belief systems. The fifth and final stage, called *pantraditional*, is a stage in which previously assimilated individuals seek to return to the “old ways.” This stage is constructed as an accumulation of several works and authors (Herring, 1996; LaFromboise et al., 1990, p. 638). They seek to rediscover lost components of their heritage, culture, traditions, and language and remain generally accepted within the dominant culture.

## **Indigenous Consciousness**

While there is no formally recognized or agreed upon stage model of Indigenous identity development as within other ethnic groups, the topic and exploration of Indigenous identity processes has long been an area of exploration by Indigenous writers and researchers. Perry Horse (2001), a member of the Kiowa tribe, developed a list of five primary factors of influence on the American Indian consciousness.

1. How well one is grounded in the Native language and culture;
2. Whether one's genealogical heritage as an Indian is valid;
3. Whether one embraces a general philosophy or worldview that derives from distinctly Indian ways, that is, old traditions;
4. The degree to which one thinks of oneself in a certain way, that is, one's own idea of self as an Indian person, and
5. Whether one is officially recognized as a member of an Indian tribe by the government of that tribe. (p. 109)

In an updated edition to his work in 2012, Horse elaborated on these concepts by recognizing that the idea of Indigenous identity and consciousness may shift over time by the influence of events and history. He described the current state of Indian affairs as transitioning from the old eras run by systems perpetuating racism and maintaining economic oppression to an era of healing and independence. One's understanding of their own "Indianness" and levels of comfortability in navigating the world is an ever-changing and evolving process yet, "rooted in the past" (p. 109). With the ever-changing definitions and shifts in the awareness and consciousness of racial relationships, he indicated several key orientations of consciousness:

Indian consciousness, race consciousness, political consciousness, linguistic consciousness, and cultural consciousness (Horse, 2012).

Indigenous people view themselves more as members of their tribe and community rather than members of a particular race (Horse, 2012). As many Indigenous communities have significant commonalities among other non-White cultures and the terms and definitions of race continue to evolve and change defined by a variety of other variables, it begs the question about the importance of categorizing race at all. If race, as a construct, is a significant factor, the manner in which it is discussed will continue to evolve and change over time as future generations will continue to reinvent their relationship and identification with it (Horse, 2012).

There continues to be a constant evolution of the definitions of racial groups, titles, inclusions, organizations, and affiliations related to race relations (Horse, 2012). The term *postracial* may be a tempting reimagining of a world in which a person's race may not be primarily defined by physical characteristics and cues. Political consciousness regarding the legal status of Indian people is vital and necessary to the topic of Indian identity. During the period of the 1900s alone, the federal government's legal intention toward Indigenous people ranged from systematized efforts to destroy Native languages and cultures to the distinction of self-determination as a legally defined right. Although the right to self-govern may be clear and well-established in federal Indian law, other areas regarding jurisdiction of land rights and natural resources remain, requiring highly specialized advocacy (Horse, 2012).

According to Horse, linguistic consciousness "is perhaps the most potent aspect of one's tribal identity" and "cannot be overstated" (2012, p. 114). With 25 languages dying every year, it is imperative to recognize the speed at which language can be lost forever, even in the span of one generation. With the number of fluent speakers constantly dwindling, some tribes have

attempted to capture as much of the language as possible. With only about one hundred speakers remaining, the Wichita tribe of southwestern Oklahoma tried to preserve the tribal language through the use of a linguist specialist. However, the efforts were somewhat late; only one Native speaker remained in 2008 (Stewart, 2008). He shared his account of growing up in a bilingual environment and experiencing the “power of words in the prayers and song of my kinfolk [Kiowa] (p. 114). I noticed a certain healing quality in our language that I took for granted.” After leaving home and being in environments where there was little opportunity to find other speakers of the Kiowa language, he lost some proficiency. Although he did not feel a shift in primary language impacted his identity, he described a reflected awareness in adulthood of the cultural contradictions of speaking both Kiowa and English as a result of colonialist regulations. He added, “I am not resentful, though, because I feel that my experiences in two worlds has made me a stronger person” (Horse, 2012, p. 114).

Horse described the differing views on cultural consciousness as many elders view the old traditional ways as better than the new. Yet, even the elders let go of certain traditions and practices during the 1900s as a result of the changing environments and society around them as significantly unrelatable to the ancient cultures of the past. However, with the changes in culture, it is keenly acknowledged how quickly and easily a culture can essentially be lost in its entirety. As a culture “rooted in the past” (p. 109), cultural consciousness is uniquely tied to each individual’s efforts to learn and participate not only in the older traditional ways but also in renewed methods and practice. Horse describes the “profound feeling of pride that emanates from the dance of ceremonies or religious worship. The emotion that comes out at such times is virtually indescribable” (p. 117). Participating in these shared experiences creates a space of safety and comfort for Indigenous people and provides a sense of shared belonging that

superseded any Westernized definitions or descriptions. “Meaningfulness,” Horse (2012, p. 117) concluded, is what every Indian person seeks as they explore and connect to their culture and seek to understand and connect with their Indigenous identity.

While Indian culture and identity may be grounded in its history and past, it remains defined by present generations and is a dynamic and fluid construct, making it possible to recreate and reimagine a culture that blends both older and newer practices. He offered a perspective of future generations stating, “New leaders, those yet to be born, will be from generations that have no firsthand knowledge of oppressive federal government policies endured by their twentieth-century counterparts. They will indeed have a new perspective” (p. 117). Future generations will have the opportunity to continue discovering and defining what it means to be an Indigenous person within the context of the ever-changing environments and contexts. “That idea,” he shared, “in terms of defining ourselves, is the touchstone for Indian identity now and for generations to come” (p. 119). Horse’s elaboration on his original stages of Indigenous consciousness offers significant value to the discussion of Indigenous identity, specifically the aspect of its dynamic nature in an ever-changing environmental, legal, and political context.

Horse spoke to the relevance of the concept of White privilege and White supremacy cultures as it the systematic oppression of any non-White and less powerful or dominant group, such as Native Americans (2005). Acknowledging this oppression and impact throughout history is to acknowledge the Native American people as ones who were dependent and subordinate to the dominant culture. Whether as a matter of survival or, as some may believe, as a natural progression of cultural change, the dominant White society’s values, practices, and beliefs become somewhat ingrained. This may be through conscious or unconscious processes. Horse provided the example of his mother and her expressed sentiments of concern that he remembered

as a child, “Someday we’re all going to be like White people,” citing changes in diet from traditional eating to the use of pre-packaged foods (Horse, 2005, p. 61). Yet, Horse differentiated the idea of an assimilative lifestyle from that of Indigenous identity. He concluded:

Identity, our sense of who we really are, lies in the self-image inherited from our ancestors and passed down along a tribal memory chain. So long as that memory chain remains unbroken, we can stay connected to what our elders called the tribal spirit force. May it be so! (2005, p. 67)

### **Factors of Identity**

A study conducted with a group of urban American Indian youths in Arizona evaluated variables of ethnic identity through qualitative and quantitative measures (Kulis et al., 2013). Using previously developed models and scales of Indigenous identity, quantitative findings suggested that having a Native father, having a stronger identification with spirituality, and engaging in tribal practices accounted for more than a third of the variance of ethnic identity. Individuals with a non-Native father most often endorsed having a father of Latino heritage. The reason for this significant difference remains outside the scope of the study and must incorporate a careful examination of cultural variables and historical underpinnings between the Latino and Native people. Engaging in traditional tribal practices and having a greater connection to spirituality signifies that youths who internalize their cultural values and practices often have a stronger American Indian racial identity. Additionally, results indicated that the strength of Native Indian identity weakened as the adolescents grew older. This finding may indicate a stronger presence of externally motivated participation in Native traditions at the direction of parents from younger ages. As teenagers grow older and are provided with greater independence, these influences and factors may fluctuate, leaving an overall impact on the strength of American

Indian identity. Qualitative results were in response to researchers asking participants to “list three things about yourself that make you an American Indian.” The majority of responses (72%) fell among three coded categories’: family/blood/ancestry, tribes/clans, and association with Native peers, dress, and/or customs. A strong proportion of the Native activities mentioned included powwows and traditional Native dance (Kulis et al., 2013).

## CHAPTER V: THEMES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### Homogeneity and Overgeneralization

The purpose of these themes is to guide future research endeavors in developing methods of further examining and exploring Indigenous identity through qualitative and collaborative research interviews. Themes were developed to recognize the limitations to current research and the need for further exploratory studies involving Indigenous leaders, elders, and community members from diverse and varied tribal backgrounds and affiliations. Using these data to construct identity themes serves to highlight the way in which systemic barriers of colonization create response patterns and survival procedures unique to the process of racial identity development for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Additionally, and most importantly, these themes may serve to contribute toward the understanding of the ways in which Native Americans and Alaska Natives continue to thrive in the embodiment of the power, beauty, and pride of their heritage. Implications for clinical and counseling psychology are provided, along with a discussion of suggested actions for future research and social and racial justice.

Studies involving multiple tribal groups indicate differences in attitudes and responses related to cultural identity and depression, indicating the complexity and diversity of tribal factors that make it difficult to extract accurate generalizations. Whitesell et al. (2006) acknowledged that making generalizations about the Alaska Native and Native American populations is likely to produce significant errors as the diversity among tribes regarding differences in customs, culture, language, and traditions is often vastly under-recognized. According to Horse (2005), “There is no such thing as a monolithic American Indian entity. Tribes and American Indian nations are bewildering in their diversity” (p. 67), making the generalization or quantification of a model inappropriate for this spectrum of research.

Alternatively, perhaps such a stage-like process is inadequate to accurately convey a culture that may not value or see the world in such a linear structure of development. It may be that having no stage model at all is protective for Indigenous communities in that it limits the opportunity for others to feel that they have accurately gauged one's identity formation. This may lead to oversimplification, creating an updated form of stereotyping among providers that limits the full breadth of Indigenous experience.

### **Themes**

In view of these considerations and cautiousness, this project provides a broad approach to thematic content related to elements of identity that appear to be more universally ascribed.

#### ***Invisibility, Representation, and Belonging***

Invisibility remains one of the greatest barriers to the advancement of social equity and inclusion of Indigenous communities. Beginning with a skewed representation of history, Indigenous people continue to fight against narratives of erasure within history books and commonly accepted narratives of the foundation of the United States through "exploration." The true history of the United States and the extent of intentional efforts of genocide, including cultural genocide, are a dark part of the heritage of the European conquest. History in and of itself contributes to the invisibility of Indigenous stories, narratives, and truth-telling, making the consequences of the atrocities even more difficult to process within an environment that provides no recognition of the harm that was done. Anthropologists, researchers, historians, and colonial authors have perpetuated the idea that Indigenous people no longer exist. Such references trap narratives of Indigenous people in harmful stereotypes of "cowboys and Indians" and through sports mascots. Lack of representation and recognition of Indigenous people in all forms of society (e.g., public figures, politicians, celebrities, actors, writers, investors, among many

others) remains a great barrier to connecting with a sense of permanence and with the ability to view oneself in the future. This cry for visibility is demonstrated in movements phrased, “We are still here” and seen in efforts of Indigenous people to bring awareness to their existence, presence, needs, griefs, hopes, and dreams. Systemic issues of violence and discrimination toward native communities also go unnoticed, as demonstrated by the missing and murdered Indigenous women and children awareness competent and the accompanying data crisis demonstrating a lack of recognition, documentation, and follow-through from government and police agencies to bring justice to these communities. In contrast with the concept of invisibility, the importance of belonging emerged. Participation in traditional costumes, dances, medicine, art, and ceremonies appears to have a strong connection to belonging. These activities create a shared sense of togetherness within the tribal community as well as to a unique experience of feeling connected and grounded in following in the paths of their ancestors. These concepts of invisibility and belonging appear to be essential components to the understanding of and identification with what it means to be an Indigenous person in the modern world. These elements appear to be a more universally expressed concept across tribes and may facilitate the process of one’s identification with their Indigenous heritage, how connected they feel to their heritage, and the meaning that they make from their identification with indigeneity.

### ***Intergenerational Trauma, Grief, and Loss***

Not all tribal communities identify with the concept of colonization due to a variation in the histories of certain tribes’ relationships with the United States and with colonial settlers. Some tribes may feel a greater sense of preservation of their culture, while others connect with a significant history of grief and loss related to their language, customs, and histories. However, as a whole, by the very nature of their invisibility through history and in the modern age,

Indigenous communities have experienced significant losses. The loss of tribal languages, especially, appears to be a significant focus of preservation efforts as well as loss. Histories of genocide, cultural genocide, and significant abuses perpetrated by the United States and the church continue to impact generations of Indigenous families and communities. The intergenerational impact of these atrocities is more recent in the history of the United States than some may be aware. Interviews with the Indian boarding school survivors point to the family impact of the loss of family members and the erasure of culture and heritage by the one who had survived. The narrative of Indigenous loss, grief, and intergenerational trauma cannot be ignored related to identity, attitudes, and behaviors.

### *Land and Water*

Indigenous people are firmly grounded in traditions and land stewardship, subsistence lifestyles, oral traditions of creation, and history telling connected to landmarks. The connection to the earth and the importance of ancestral lands is an integral part of Indigenous identity. In Indigenous cultures, the land, the elements, the animals are all a part of, and one with, Indigenous people. Culture and traditions are often intertwined with land markers, mountain ranges, and plains and often hold sacred stories, histories, and values. Water is also an element of identity and holds unique value as a symbol of the process of integrating both internal and external identities, just as the water reflects the sky. The concept of land and water stewardship has a value far greater than the mere economic and wealth-building concepts as often seen in colonial frameworks. Land and water are central to the Indigenous sense of self, of identity, of history, and community. Although partially efforts to reclaim land lost by broken government treaties, the “Land Back” and “Water Back” initiatives and movements are also a healing cry for the restoration of Indigenous identity.

### ***Language***

Some consider indigenous language one of the most important aspects of Indigenous identity (Horse, 2012). Language contains components of culture that demonstrate orientation to traditional tribal lands and communicate tribal wisdom that otherwise cannot be properly translated (Fast, 2008). The richness of cultural tradition, wisdom, and ways of being are deeply embedded in each unique tribal language. With a significant number of languages dying each year, language revitalization, preservation, and education for future generations are central in Indigenous communities and have a strong connection to one's unique tribal identity and heritage.

### ***Tribal Sovereignty and Self-Determination***

Indigenous nations are separate from the greater United States and are members and representatives of their own tribes and sovereign nations. As such, Indigenous people within the United States hold a much more complex space among ethnic minorities in their distinct political sovereignty. Despite being an independent nation, Indigenous tribes continue to face threats to tribal sovereignty and self-determination, as evidenced by an extensive history of broken treaties and violations of tribal sovereignty rights. Also, Indigenous people hold a unique position as the only ethnic group required to produce documentation of blood quantum to receive tribal membership and designated tribal funds that are owed by the government to Indigenous people as a result of treaty agreements. The fight for political independence and tribal sovereignty remains central to the concept of Indigenous identity and the ways in which tribes continue to fight for their ability to fully define and determine the ways and methods that they wish to continue to thrive. Indigenous identity, both personally and in the context of society, will

continue to change and evolve. As Horse (2012) shared, “defining ourselves is the touchstone for Indian identity now and for generations to come” (p. 119).

### **Clinical Implications and Future Research**

Results of this exploratory project suggest several clinical implications for mental health practice and social justice advocacy. First, the lack of education and awareness about Indigenous populations is a significant barrier. It is imperative for mental health providers to make special efforts to seek out knowledge, resources, and education about Indigenous populations from Indigenous sources of knowledge. Second, broadening awareness of stereotypical beliefs about Indigenous populations may be best corrected through the experiential unlearning process involved in immersive cultural experiences. Third, when conducting any type of research with Indigenous communities, it is essential to collaborate with Indigenous researchers and to utilize Indigenous sources of scholarship to limit implicit research bias and to demonstrate a value for accurate and culturally sensitive representation. Fourth, acknowledge Indigenous existence by including Native American and Alaska Native demographic variables in research whenever possible. Fifth, utilize current photos and narratives of Indigenous people to counteract stereotypes limited to historical existence and bring recognition to how native communities are active, present, and thriving in modern-day society. Sixth, provide either verbal or written acknowledgment of the tribal land on which you reside to bring awareness and attention to continuing sociopolitical and advocacy efforts to reclaim traditional tribal land within the United States. Last, and perhaps most importantly, remember that Indigenous identity is deeply personal and unique to each individual, community, and tribe. Although gaining knowledge about Indigenous communities is necessary, it is also equally vital for clinicians to be aware of the incredibly vast spectrum of experience, values, traditions, and cultural identification among this

population. The direct use of these themes for clinical interview, assessment, and intervention is cautioned against, as the question of culturally responsive intervention for Indigenous populations falls beyond the scope of this current project. Many Indigenous communities continue to work toward constructing and developing culturally relevant mental health interventions that demonstrate efficacy and specificity to the unique cultures and tribes in certain geographical and tribal regions. Clinicians' treatment of Indigenous individuals may choose to consult with Indigenous mental health providers to satisfy ethical and legal standards of practicing within the limits and bounds of cultural competency.

Future research must focus on the continued exploration of Indigenous identity as it is defined and determined by Indigenous people. The use of community-based participatory research is recommended to collaborate with community members and elders about the unique experience and process of identity development within specific nations. Collaborating with primary Indigenous sources is essential and necessary. Common community-based participatory research projects utilize interview data and focus groups and are a highly recommended method of research recommended for studies involving American Indian tribes (Griese et al., 2016). Themes of Indigenous identity may be utilized in collaboration with community elders to develop specific interview questions, which may be used to gather more information regarding the process of identity development. Future research would benefit from further exploring the concepts of acculturation and biculturalism, as well as a more comprehensive analysis of previously developed acculturation, and biculturalism models specific to the Indigenous experience. Although the creation of interview questions is beyond the scope of this work, some questions posed by Indigenous researchers are included here as examples of potential phrasings and suggestions to support the use of future exploration.

## Questions to Contemplate

The following questions were compiled from Indigenous authored texts and are provided to provoke continued thought and exploration into the topic of Indigenous identity. These may be utilized or adapted as future interview questions for continued research with the collaboration of Indigenous sources and community elders: “What aspect of your culture makes you strong and resilient?” (Jumper-Reeves et al., 2014). Garrett and Pichette (2005) ask the following questions, “Is it okay for an Indian person to live and work in the city during the week and ‘go home’ to the reservation during the weekend to be with family and friends?” “Is it okay for a person who was not raised in the traditional way to follow a life path that leads him or her back to the ‘old ways’?” “Is it okay for a person raised traditionally to forego the old ways in favor of a modern lifestyle?” “Is it okay for an Indian person to disregard the old ways completely and to be offended at the suggestion that he or she should know or practice this way of life purely because of their racial/ethnic heritage?” (p. 7). Lone-Knapp (2000) asked the following questions, “What is the framework of ethnic identity if it is based on community relationships instead of, or in conjunction with, individual aspects?” “How does the reservation play a role in the identities of the wide variety of Indigenous nations, in the identification of urban Natives?” “What are the ties to traditional homelands for those nations that have been relocated?” “What are the ties to homelands for those nations that are not ‘federally recognized?’” (p. 5).

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