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Voices of Indianness: The lived world of Native American women

Brayboy, Mary Elizabeth Jones, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1990

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VOICES OF INDIANNESS: THE LIVED WORLD OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

by

Mary Elizabeth Jones Brayboy

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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1990

Approved by

Mary G. Morgan
Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

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Cultural and social genocide is believed to be the most important issue confronting contemporary Native American women. The purpose of this research was to provide greater understanding of the life experiences of four Native American women and the process whereby contemporary Native American women are socialized into a non-Indian environment and maintain multiple identities.

Utilizing interpretive inquiry, which draws from the theoretical perspective of Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher explored the processes that constitute the Native American women's ability to interconnect among cultures: culture/identity, educational experiences, employment experiences, mother-daughter relationships, and spirituality. The interpretive paradigm, used for the study because it encourages dialogue as a method for gaining understanding, invited the Native American women to speak about their experiences, to explain, to interpret, and to become partners with the researcher as they cooperatively searched for mutual understanding of their lived experiences. The researcher first examined her lived experiences and found her own unique themes to be connection and disconnection, connection and reciprocity, and connection and spirituality. This reflective process allowed the researcher

to expose her own preconceptions. Second, the researcher listened to the stories of four Native American women from selected tribes. Four one-to-two hour conversations, with each woman, were tape-recorded and served as texts for analysis and interpretations. The texts illuminated the relationships between the women's innermost sense of identity and the cultural alienation of their environment. Third, the search for themes embedded in the women's narratives of their experiences enabled the researcher to identify the unique themes which were prized, harmony, vigilance, and struggle. Further analysis and interpretations of the data revealed the women's common themes to be spirituality, Indianness, bonding, racial discrimination, and reciprocity/inclusiveness.

Finally, a Translation Model was developed from the interpretations. The schematic model visually demonstrated how the women's lived experiences and their themes were connected to other populations of women. These research findings provided a greater understanding of the consciousness of Native American women and furnished another lens through which to view the complexity of surviving in an undefined world from a Native American woman's perspective.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

significant women of my life:

* To My First Mother: Rose Bell McMillian Jones

  She died before I had a chance to learn that disconnection leads to connection;

* To My Second Mother: Zelma Sampson Jones

  She died before I had a chance to begin the journey that would lead to my understanding of connection and disconnection;

* To My Sister: Margaret Jones

  She died before I could finish this story;

* To My Grandmothers: Rittie Bullard McMillian
  Emma Dial Jones

  They died before I could learn about their stories;

* To Past Mothers, Grandmothers, and Other Women: All women

  Those who died before the world could hear and record their stories.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

> Forerunner of civilization, great leader of men, patient and motherly woman, we bow our hearts to do you honor! . . . May we the daughters of an alien race . . . learn the lessons of calm endurance, of patient persistence and unfaltering courage exemplified in your life, in our efforts to lead men through the Pass of justice, which goes over the mountains of prejudice and conservatism to the broad land of the perfect freedom of a true republic; one in which men and women together shall in perfect equality solve the problems of a nation that knows no caste, no race, no sex in opportunity, in responsibility or in justice! May 'the eternal womanly' ever lead us on!
>
> [Anna Howard Shaw's 1905* perception of Sacagawea]

Introduction

Although Anna Howard Shaw considered at least one Native American woman capable of being a leader of men, it is not part of the consciousness of contemporary America that other Native American women are so endowed. Native American women have long endured the conflicting expectations of our multicultural society. It has become commonplace to observe the struggles that Native Americans, especially the women, confront in a rapidly changing world.

* Quoted in Allen, P.G. (1986), p. 220.

Irrefutably, the pace of change in the social framework of America has increased over the past few decades. Transformation is experienced in every aspect of culture, education, employment, relationships, and spirituality. This study grew out of the belief that Native American women, the contemporary Sacagawea's, uniquely fuse these five major concepts as they become empowered individuals who live in a dual world.

Justification for the Study

The research community needs scholarly research to dispel the myths found in the literature and the consciousness of contemporary America about Native Americans. Support for this inquiry comes from Rayna Green (1983), who solicits research that will be useful to Native Americans as well as scholars. Green asserts that:

> It is now time for scholars to ask Native peoples what their agendas are and how they might lend themselves to the task. Scholars may find that Native questions might give us all better answers, and Native women deserve better questions and better answers, if they are to survive and prosper as individuals and as parts of a collective community. (p. 17)

Belenky and her coauthors in Women's Ways of Knowing (1986) argue that women are alienated and "voiceless" within a society dominated by men. Native American women are part of this silent society. I have chosen to offer this population a portrayal of Native American women's overt consciousness. As part of the process I have fused critical educational theory and feminist theory. As Kathleen Weiler demonstrates in her 1988

book, Women Teaching for Change, ". . . a synthesis of two perspectives--critical educational theory and feminist theory--is needed. Neither is adequate on its own" (p. 4). Critical educational theory is important because of its premises that society is both "exploitative and oppressive" toward women, however, such an oppressive mindset can be changed. Feminist theory brings clarification of the relationship between gender and schooling. A third perspective deserves inclusion--the contemporary Native American perspective, a perspective that is wrapped in the context of the Native American's culture and literature about that culture. Paula Gunn Allen (1986), who explores this concept in The Sacred Hoop, writes "the significance of a literature can be best understood in terms of the culture from which it springs . . ." (p. 54). Integrating critical educational theory, feminist theory, and the Native American culture is an illuminating way to understand the contemporary Native American's life story.

The eminent observation made by Allen (1986) was that the central issue confronting Native American women is survival, both on a cultural and a physical level. Allen further remarks that Native American women are busy rebuilding their native traditions while adjusting to the pressures of a dominant society. From a cultural perspective, customs and traditions distinguish Native Americans from other people. Honored older members pass tribal customs and values to younger members to ensure their preservation. From a physical perspective, Indian women are experiencing

multiple hardships. In all likelihood, Native American women are among the most oppressed people in American society (Rothenburg, 1988). They are the least educated, hold the lowest paying jobs in the labor market, experience the highest unemployment, comprise the largest number of single parents per population, and encounter the greatest poverty.

One motive for focusing on Native American women's lived experiences is to begin to build a theoretical articulation of the Native American system. Although there exists a strong need for further work on the history and systems of women, there is a greater need for research on Native American women's history and systems, as well as other minority women, since few exist. Marilyn Englander (1985), in her dissertation Through Their Words: Tradition and the Urban Indian Woman's Experience, examines the urban Indian woman's experiences within a framework of women's history. She implies that research "centered primarily on Native American men is misrepresentative of women's lives" (p. 15-16). In Interpreting Women's Lives (1989), the Personal Narrative Group emphasizes that knowledge, reality, and truth have been constructed as if the experiences of men are the standard. Such a perspective must be replaced with a more inclusive conception of reality.

As a Native American woman and educator, I strive to understand the life experiences of my contemporary Native American sisters amid an array of complex entities. It is an obligation, according to Simonson and

Walker (1988), "to examine society and try to change it and to fight it--no matter what risk" (p. 4). It is part of my own professional agenda to engage in a "problem-posing" educational philosophy as Freire (1970) has illustrated, to eliminate the "culture of silence" found in the Native American population, specifically Native American women.

One of the most appropriate ways to add voice to a population and achieve understanding is to engage in dialogical interactions, especially in an educational atmosphere. Freire writes:

> Through dialogue, the teacher of the students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new team emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [herself] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach [sic]. . . The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the doxa is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the logos. (Freire, 1970, p. 67,68)

Utilizing such an "unveiling of reality" or "emergence of consciousness" as Freire notes, the educator becomes the educated and the educated become the educators.

It is for these reasons that I am interested in capturing the life experiences of other Native American women. As I listened to their voices, so much of what they tell--their cultural experiences, educational experiences, work experiences, familial experiences, and spiritual experiences--has meaning for my own life and for the lives of other Native

American women and for women of other populations. For the previously mentioned reasons and varying justifications, there is an urgent need to authenticate the lives of contemporary Native American women--a voiceless population.

Society of Systems

Ann Wilson Schaef (1981) points out that we live in a society of systems dominated by a "White Male Society." Two major systems, specifically the "White Male System" and the "Female System" have been clarified and examined by Schaef. She explains there are also "other systems within our culture. The Black System, the Chicano System, the Asian-American System, and the Native American System are completely enveloped in and frequently overshadowed by the White Male System" (pp. 2-3). Schaef suggests that most Native Americans have generally refused to have anything at all to do with the "White Male System:"

> When one looks at how Native Americans have fared within this culture, one sees graphic evidence of what happens to those who try to escape or ignore the White Male System. They are either exterminated outright or have to fight every step of the way. Economic and physical survival have been directly related to accepting and incorporating the White Male System. (pp.5-6)

While this may in part be true, it is the Native American Female System that this research strives to formulate as an outgrowth of a greater understanding of Native American women's stories. The feminist character

of the Native American system needs to be unveiled. Understanding is needed of the ethnic system which is embedded in specific feminist life experiences of Native American women.

Bell Hooks in her book, Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center (1984) criticizes the limited perspective that most feminist theory has embraced. She supports her arguments with the fact that the experience of women of color have been excluded from feminist theory analysis. When Hooks, who studies feminist theory and the position of black women, refers to "living on the edge," it is not in the minority society sense but rather as living in the margin of our dominant society. Living in this mode, she further emphasizes, helps with viewing "the whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center" (p. i). Her work on black women calls for a revamping of the present ideology by creating a "counter-hegemony" movement against women's continued oppression. Such a movement would encompass theory that addresses women of all populations.

Native American women have been participants of women's society for centuries. Anne Cameron in Daughters of Copper Woman (1981) claims that:

> the early Society of Women was strong, inter-tribal, open to all women, regardless of age, social status, political status, or wealth...Each member of the society had been chosen by the society itself, and invited to join and become one of the sisters. (p. 60)

Many contemporary Native women are part of the system of society but within the main body. They, unlike black women, do not perceive themselves to be necessarily on the margin of society. Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen M. Sands (1984) refute the marginality theory Bell (1984) described of black women. They describe the narratives of Native American women as:

> stories of adaptability. . . They revealed themselves rather quietly but with growing recognition of the strengths of their positions in a world that has demanded adaptability. They have seen themselves, not as women on the margins of two cultures, but as women who take pride in their ability to draw effectively on traditional resources as they assert themselves in the plural society of contemporary North America. (pp. 130-131)

Thus, contemporary Native American women consider themselves to be living within the complexities of a dual society, a Native American society and a dominant society.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is threefold. First, the inquiry will search for a greater understanding of the life experiences of four Native American women. Second, it will analyze the processes whereby these contemporary American Indian women are socialized into a non-Indian environment and achieve autonomy in an alien environment. Thirdly, the inquiry will begin articulating a theoretical base for a Native American female system. To achieve the objectives of this research, I will use an

interpretive inquiry methodology to engage in extended conversations with four middle-class Native American women to illuminate the multicultures from which they emerged. Such an approach is especially appropriate because it utilizes a narrative form that begins with the individual and her life experiences.

Projection of the Interpretation

To develop my thesis, I will show how the life of an American Indian woman is one of duality, possibly triadic. Secondly, I will explore five life processes that Native American women utilize to survive in their various environments. Then I will demonstrate how these five major concepts of the life process are intertwined to help Native American woman achieve autonomy in a non-Indian society. Next I will demonstrate how these four women's life experiences advocate a greater human understanding of all women. Finally, this analysis can add to the existing body of scholarly literature on Native American women.

My exploration requires that I plot a theoretical perspective by unifying a hermeneutic and phenomenology framework in the following chapters. Chapter II provides supporting literature of the five major issues: culture/identity, education, employment, relationships, and spirituality that have influenced the strategies Native American women use to exist successfully in multiple societies. Details of the methodology and clarifying

the role of the participants are presented in Chapter III. Reflections of my own lived experiences is the thrust of Chapter IV. Specific attention is given to how understanding the researcher helps understand the researched. Contextual interpretations of the lived experiences of the Native American women are analyzed in Chapter V. The stories provide a narrative form that allowed me to search for uniqueness and common themes embedded within the women's lived experiences. Finally in Chapter VI, I reflect and summarize the findings that have emerged as a result of examining my story and analyzing the enduring experiences of the four Native American women who are a part of this research. They are offered to provide a greater understanding of the conscious experiences of Native American women. Furthermore, the reflections, the findings, and the implications provide another lens through which to view and authenticate the complexity and importance of not only Native American women but all women.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

During the last 15 years research on women has taken on new meaning. Feminist scholars have been creative in the development of research on the white female population. However, feminist scholarship has excluded personal definitions, individual agendas, and research that recognized the covert and overt consciousness of Native American women. As I analyzed the literature for issues affecting Native American women, one of the most important themes that kept surfacing was survival. My review revealed that the cultural and physical perspectives of survival (Beuf, 1988; Thornton, 1987; Allen, 1986) were the central issues confronting Native American women.

My efforts to address cultural and physical survival led me to develop a suitable definition of Native American women; to explore the complexity of the dual culture theory; and to clarify personal identity, educational successes, employment experiences, bonding relationships, and spirituality of Native American women. In order to address the issues of survival, the specific processes which had to be related provide the direction of this chapter.

Definition of Native American/American Indian

Throughout this dissertation I have chosen to use the term Native American to identify the ethnic population who are a part of this research. Legally defining Native Americans has a long and complex history. Thornton (1987) notes that prior to the arrival of Europeans, "defining who American Indians were was not an issue" (p. 186), noticing that "what" rather than "who" was used in the definition process. He writes that in 1892, "Indians were defined as those who lived in tribal relations with other Indians" (p. 189). More recently the terms Native American or American Indian, according to the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, DC (1983), is a "person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through community recognition or tribal affiliation" (FPM Supplement 292-1).

Who/what is an American Indian and how do Native Americans know they are Indian? N. Scott Momaday answers that question by noting that, "an Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. And that idea, in order to be realized completely, has to be expressed" (Dial & Elidaes, 1975, pp. 173-174).

For the purpose of this study the two latter definitions will be conjoined. Native American women will be viewed as persons who are decedents of the original Americans, who maintain cultural identification

with an Indian community, and persons who nurture the "Indian" idea within the larger world.

Understanding Duality

A major, persistent, and tacit theme that keeps surfacing in the literature on Native Americans is the dual world theory. The concept is complex yet simple. Dual cultures are different in their roots. One is an invisible web that offers one a sense of belonging, customs, and traditions. The other provides avenues for survival in the world of a dominant culture. The two cultures are superimposed into a third distinct world. Such a phenomenon brings into existence the one world in which the Native American woman's life experiences are embedded; a phenomenon that has evolved from multiple worlds.

Englander (1985) formulates a "bicultural model which describes the actualities of life in the city for Indian women" (p. 85). Englander examines the persistence of "tradition" in broad terms, then focuses on tradition in light of her study as "anything that is handed down from generation to generation . . . as 'Indian ways'" (p. 87-88). Englander's clarification of tradition and examples of reintroduction of tradition are based on an extensive review of the literature. She "looks solely to the individual's self-identification of ethnicity" (p. 238) to centralize support for the dimensions of her bicultural model. Interpretations of traditional practices are spiced

with older cultural ways, memories from childhood, a reworking of traditional materials from outsiders, and systematic codifying techniques within the original group.

The dualistic concept I wished to illuminate and authenticate is supported by Moses and Wilson (1985) who suggest that, "instead of using the image of the American Indian peoples living in two worlds, it is better to suggest that American Indians live in a complex world of multiple loyalties" (p. 3). I propose that as Native Americans we do live in a dual world, however, we have combined these worlds creating a third world that is multidimensional.

In the foreword of her autobiography No Turning Back, Polingaysi Qoyawayma [Elizabeth Q. White] (1964) describes her "long struggle to span the great and terrifying chasm between my Hopi world and the world of the white man." Throughout this work, the reader almost lives the experiences of an Indian woman who has been uprooted, forced, and finally has even desired to become a part of a strange way of life. This strange world becomes a world she knows and appreciates, but her native world is the one she most honors and reflects upon.

Witt (1979) finds that Native American people typically learn two sets of ways:

> There is no native person in North America who is untouched by the Anglo world, the white man's world, the American way. Nor are any of us immune to its infectiousness. Yet, few self-

> identifying American Indians live exclusively in the non-Indian world. To be 'Indian' carries for many a sense of homeland (reservation, tribe, community) and duty to one's people, no matter where one currently resides . . . or whether one ever returns . . . or whether those duties are ever discharged. Thus, native people are aware of, and practice to varying degrees, two often widely contrasting life styles. To move between these two worlds can be a feast of appreciation for human ingenuity, or it can be the bitterest trap. (p. 8)

Witt's discussion of the dual world concept explains that an Indian woman's success depends on learning "how to take the best of two worlds" (p. 13).

There are several questions that need clarification about such complex life experiences. Specifically, what is it that makes living in a dual cultural modality unique? What sustains one through the years of living in a dual world? What is it like, and how do Indian women successfully negotiate two cultures?

Identity

Searching for the reality of a life was a major aim of this research. The lived experiences are not just examples of Indian women as individuals within their cultures, but are also representative of Native American women of different lifestyles among Indian people. The women are not alike, but there are some central themes which are conspicuous to the identity of all four Indian women. The Indian woman, according to Bataille and Sands (1984), are "women looking for, searching for herself, her roots--that deep source from where she emerged--for answers to the genocide and

maiming of her people, for a bit of reality she can anchor herself to" (p. 140). Facts are not the issue, as Bataille and Sands indicate, but the search for "truth" of a life is. It is this same search that I kept uppermost in mind as I queried into the life experiences of these four Indian women.

The concept of "culture" has its origin in the German term "Kultur" (Thompson, 1950; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), yet the definitions of culture are many and varied. The working definition of culture that this research employed comes closest to the culture that Laura Thompson identifies in her book Culture in Crisis (1950): "A human culture is conceived as an historic, multidimensional structure of related human events which tends in the course of time to be integrated with the total environment by its human component" (pp. 15-16). Thompson concludes in The Secret of Culture (1969) that "culture is the supreme creation of a human community--the product of its deep-seated urge to fulfill and perpetuate itself" (p. 6). She further notes the secret of culture to be "primarily a group problem-solving device instituted by a human community to cope with its basic practical problems" (p. 6).

An inquiry into the culture of the Native American woman yields understanding of their lives and the lives of other women. Culture does not just happen to people, instead it is part of the internal evolutionary process of an individual's lived experiences. That's What She Said, (Green, 1984), is a book of 'uninterpreted' (p. xiii) works of contemporary Native American

women writers. Many of the writers describe the Indian women they write about as:

> . . . looking for something Indians call 'Indian-ness'--what sociologists call 'identity' and Bicentennial patriots call 'heritage.' Because most of them--with few exceptions--are 'breeds,' mixed-bloods,' not reserve-raised, they aren't 'traditional,' whatever that might mean now. Some might say that writing is just their role. That's what breeds do. They stand in the middle and interpret for everyone else, and maybe that's so. That's what they are. But 'identity' is never simply a matter of genetic make-up of natural birthright. Perhaps once, long ago, it was both. But not now. For people out on the edge, out on the road, identity is a matter of will, a matter of choice, a face to be shaped in a ceremonial act. (p. 7)

The realization of such a search for truth, identity, and culture is like the cross section of a tree. When a tree is felled, the rings of the trunk are exposed. Each ring represents a year in the life of the tree, and a tree expert can tell some of the tree's history by studying the rings. An analyst might say, "This year, there was a drought. That year, there was too much rain. This year, there was a fire. The tree was struck by lightning that year." This is the way it is with the lived experiences of Native American women. Embedded in their consciousness--their deep inner recesses--are their history, their identity, their culture, and their spirituality. The happiness and hurt, the experiences of alienation and rejection, the experiences of expansion and growth, the resistance and the conforming, the caretaking and nurturant experiences embedded in their roles, the searching for self and ways of knowing, the embodiment of a dual character,

and the search for an individual identity are all a part of the identity chronicle recorded there. With time, all of these records, the rings, are covered with a tough protective kind of bark that becomes the being--their identity.

In A Guide to American Indians (1974), Arnold Marquis notes that, "Indians are not one people, they are many peoples . . . and are ethnically different" (p. vii). Witt (1979) implies that no person perfectly comprehends his/her own culture, but what one culture has created is learnable by members of another and is limited only by an individual's intelligence and opportunity to learn.

Donna Hart (1977) collaborates the coexistent world concept and the cultural roles of Native American women. She writes that American Indian women can choose from three subcultural roles:

> The traditionalist, stressing adherence to the tribal religion and cultural patterns; the moderate that retains elements of the traditional Indian heritage and customs while adjusting to the dominant white societal patterns; and the progressive, which replaces the traditional culture with the modern white beliefs and values. (p. 33)

In Teacher as Stranger (1973), Maxine Greene says that each culture has its recognizable identity and each is ordered by particular constructs--myths, fictions, patterns of belief. Culture, for Green:

> is a function of the way its members think about reality, symbolize it, describe it; and people exist within and by means of the codifications that develop over time. (pp. 9-10)

The identities of the Native American women in this study are strong because they grew up where other Indians were abundant. Therefore, understanding the cultural perspective of Native women is part of the process of understanding women who are not part of the dominant society. What should one be asking about Native American women? How do Native American women describe themselves? What does it mean to be a woman, and are there important differences between men and women? The theories that emerge from the women's voices help erase some of the myths and unlock some of the secrets about the culture of Native American women and other Native Americans.

Educational Experience

Native American women's educational attainment, although a necessity for a career, sometimes can threaten their credibility in their native environment. As I sought to understand the educational experiences of Native American women, I thought of several questions that needed answers. What experiences have stayed with the Native American women from those college years? Which were most helpful to the women while attending college? Does college change the way Native American women think about themselves and the world? These questions are important because Indian students arrive at non-Indian campuses with a foreign culture:different values, different habits, and different kinds and sources of

knowledge from those of other students. Many Native Americans have different physical appearances and, at least for a while, feel different. Deborah LaCounte (1987), in her study of American Indian students in college suggests the cultural diversity of the Native American is quite evident, especially since

> enrollment in college is frequently the first long-term exposure to a non-Indian environment for Indian students . . . and only a tremendous desire for learning and personal growth propels the student into so foreign and uncomfortable an environment; only great effort by both student and institution makes retention possible. (p. 66-67)

Indian women are faced with a number of constraints endemic to their continuation in an educational program. Survival in the educational arena not only demands a physical feat but also commands the stamina to withstand discouraging messages about entering a society that expects social conformity and academic competitiveness. Thus, the unwillingness to compromise generations of native traditions to become members of the dominant society are refuted. In addition, continuous family pressures to be responsive to the needs of extended family members are ever present (La Fromboise, September 1984).

Between 1960 and 1970, the proportion of rural Indian women high school graduates increased from 13 to 23 percent. Among urban Indians, the number increased from 28 to 42 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 1983). The United Nations Decade of Women: 1976-1985 (U.S. Department

of Labor, 1985) reports that 54 percent of Indian women were high school graduates. Of all minority women, this is the lowest proportion of women with high school diplomas.

During the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Education noted an increased number of Indian women in college programs. Statistics from the Digest of Educational Statistics published by the Department of Education for 1976-77 reveal that Native American women receiving Bachelor's Degrees conferred by institutions of higher education was 1522 which is 0.4 percent of the total population of students receiving degrees. In 1986-87 that number had increased to 2152 but this increase did not change the percentage represented.

In recent years, the number of Indian women seeking education, especially advanced degrees, has increased. When statistics were reviewed for Native American women who had received Master's Degrees, in 1976-77 there were 446 women graduates and in 1986-87 there were 587, which represented 0.4 percent of the population of Native American students. During 1976-77, 28 doctoral degrees were conferred to female Native Americans; in 1986-87 there were 46. Again this number represented 0.4 percent of the population of Native Americans. These statistics reflect an increase in numbers; however, the percentage of Native Americans receiving graduate degrees has not been affected. Further investigation reveals that

Indian women who are enrolled in college graduate programs are older than most graduate students (Kidwell, 1976; La Fromboise, 1984).

Employment Experiences

The consequences of educational attainment of Native American women are reflected in the employment arena. It is not practical to separate Native American women's educational attainment and employment accomplishments; they are intertwined. To obtain even modest employment in the greater society, Indian women must graduate from high school. What meaning does employment have for the American Indian woman? How are Indian women responding to the demands of emplcyment in our dominant society? What is the Native American woman's perception of success? Does the ancestry of the Native American woman affect her professionally?

Joseph Hraba (1979) attributes an increased number of Indians in the labor force to more Indians living in the nation's cities. Over the past 40 years, there has been a steady increase of American Indians in blue-collar and even white-collar labor. Hraba points out that, even though the numbers are small, the evolution of Indians in the labor market since 1940 has been consistent with the trends of the larger society. Whatever this trend, Indian women, in relation to other minority groups, remain at the bottom of other occupational groups. Census data for 1980 documents the

American Indian population at 11,418,195, of which 717,188 were women (U.S. Department of Labor, 1983). During this same period, statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor (1985) reveal there were a quarter of a million Indian women in the labor force. This number represented nearly half of all American Indian women ages 16 and over. Just as for women in general, more than 50 percent of all Indian mothers were in the labor force. Approximately 56 percent of these mothers had school-aged children and 44 percent had preschoolers. But unlike women in general, of the 18,000 households maintained by Indian women, the incomes were below official poverty levels of 1979. Even in those families in which Indian women were employed, one-third did not earn sufficient income to rise above the poverty level. Native American women experience the highest incidence of poverty of any group in this country. Even steady employment is no guarantee of adequate income for Indian women due to the very low pay (U.S. Department of Labor, 1985).

Relationship with Mother

An inquiry into the lived experiences of Native American women would have little significance if the relationship of the women with their mothers is overlooked. Historically, Indian women have had a central place in Native American cultures (Kidwell, 1979; Bataille & Sands, 1984). Possibly one of the most valued questions of this inquiry was: As an Indian

woman what did your mother teach you? Paula Gunn Allen responds to that question in Survival This Way (Bruchac, 1987):

> Mother taught me several things. One is that reality is all important and reality meant paying attention to what was going on--the sunset, the birds. There's a bull snake that lives under the house and that's my snake and we don't kill her. You take care of people and you take care of creatures because that's what you do and you don't do anything else. You don't lie because, if you lie, you'll get lost. You treat people as though they are real, even little tiny people. You don't trivialize them and act like they're idiots. Instead, you treat them as though they are perfectly intelligent beings. You remember that your mind is inviolably yours, that no one can have it, ever. (p. 5)

Bea Medicine (Katz, 1977) writes that mothers are the transmitters of culture. Mothers teach "attitudes, beliefs, behavioral patterns, etc . . . " (p. 123). Vinson Brown (1974) notes that there is a "special magic and holiness about the girl and woman. They are the bringers of life to the people, and the teachers of the little children" (p. 86). The role of woman and the role of mother in most tribes is essentially one of maintaining "stability in community life" (Katz, 1977, p.xvii), as in Nancy Lurie's (1961) autobiography of Mountain Wolf Woman, who provided stability for the family.

Historically, according to Paula Allen (1986):

> Indian women valued their role as vitalizers because they understood that bearing, like bleeding, was a transformative ritual act. Through their own bodies they could bring vital beings into the world. They were mothers and that implied the highest degree of status in ritual cultures. The status of mother was so high, in fact, that in some cultures Mother or its

> analogue, Matron, was the highest office to which a man or woman could aspire. (p. 28)

She further notes that today's Native American women's roles are as:

> diverse as tribal culture in the Americas. In some she is devalued, in others she wields considerable power. In some she is a familial/clan adjunct, in some she is as close to autonomous as her economic circumstances and psychological traits permit. But in no tribal definitions is she perceived in the same way as are women in western industrial and post industrial cultures . . . My ideas of womanhood, passed on largely by my mother and grandmothers, are about practicality, strength, reasonableness, intelligence, wit, and competence. (p. 43-44)

The message that Native American women have received from their grandmothers and their mothers is that they are Indian women. Today's Indian mothers are passing the same "Indian message," what "Grandma calls 'Indian-ness'," (Green, 1984, p. 5) onto their children.

Spirituality

Spirituality is more deeply rooted than organized religion. In Joseph Brown's (1986) study of the Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian, he notes that Native American religion is not a "separate category of activity or experience that is divorced from culture or society" (p. x). Instead, "religion is pervasively present and is in complex interrelationships with all aspects of the peoples' lifeways" (p. x).

Studying spirituality is another means of searching for what is unique and universal to Native American women. What does spirituality mean to the Native American woman? How has spirituality contributed to

the survival of Indian women? What is the basis of the Native American woman's philosophy? It is commonly believed that the Native American philosophy encompasses "humankind in a co-partnership with the cosmos" (Lombardi and Lombardi, 1982, p.viii). Such a philosophical belief demands examination.

Frances and Gerald Lombardi (1982) in their book Circle Without End describe the human experience as a

> never-ending spectacle of the people's attempt to cope with their society, ideas, emotions and environment; it is most interesting when presented in the words of those who lived it. The people's reactions to events that shaped their destiny often disclose a comprehension of enduring values and practical wisdom which, in both their consciousness and unconscious aspects, formed the principles that governed their lives. (p. viii)

In 1911, Charles Eastman writes in The Soul of the Indian,

> I have attempted to paint the religious life of the typical Native American as it was before he [she] knew the white man . . . The religion of the Indian is the last thing about him that the man of another race will ever understand. (p. ix-x)

Eastman reveals through his analysis of Native American religion that:

> "every act of his [her] life is, in a very real sense, a religious act. He recognizes the spirit in all creation, and believes that he [she] draws from it spiritual power. (p. 47)

John Castillo (1982) explored the spiritual foundations of Indian success. His research determined that both the physical and spiritual needs of Native Americans must be recognized and satisfied. Significant findings indicated that many Indians successful adapted to the dominant urban

society when their spiritual identity had been retained. Contrary to popular belief, the physical appearance of "Indianness" was not the major factor in successfully adaptation within the dominant society. He found that physical identification did not influence one's spirituality, rather it rested upon the maintenance of one's values. Specifically he argues:

> the spiritual side includes cultural values and morals. The spirituality of the individual depends on internalized values. A functioning, well-adjusted person has fulfilled both his [her] biological and spiritual needs. (p. 33)

Castillo's research empirically substantiated that adjustment in the dominant society is successful when both physical and spiritual needs are nurtured.

Summary of Literature Analysis

Over the past decade research on Native American women has increased. According to Lyle Koehler (1982) more than "1,000 books, articles, and manuscripts have been written about Native American women from the mid-sixteenth century to the present, yet the "mujer indigena" remains a rather shadowy figure" (p. 73). In spite of this research interest "much remains to be discovered," (p. 73) and the references to the lived experiences of contemporary Native American women is less abundant.

As I reviewed the direction of documented research on the Native American population, I realized that a study focused on Native American women's lived experiences could begin to unravel some of the complex issues

these women were struggling with while living in multiple worlds. It is within the examination of the processes of these women's lived experiences encompassing identity, education, profession, relationships, and spiritual development that successful survival of Native American women living in a non-Indian society is determined. Accentuating the processes that Native women employ to address their concerns within the dominant world can help Native American women "leave the shadows and enter the sunlight" (Koehler, 1982, p. 75).

CHAPTER III

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY AS A PARADIGM

Theoretical Perspective

The purpose of this research was to search for meaning concealed in the lived experiences of four Native American women. It was the quest for mutual understanding of the complex nature of the lives of Native American women. For this research project the interpretive mode of inquiry was chosen because it respects "human existence, a means toward awareness and self-reflection . . . thoroughly embedded in the practices of everyday life" (1987, Rabinow & Sullivan, p. 10).

Hedigger (1962) and others (Merleau-Ponty, 1973; Gadamer, 1975; Spiegelberg, 1975; Silvers, 1984; van Manen, 1984; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987; & Tesch, 1987) have shown how interpretive inquiry is a particularly appropriate research approach to use in the search for conceptual issues involving human understanding. The aim in this research was not to claim that any interpretation of lived experiences comes closer to reality than any other. Instead, my intention was to focus on the women's lived experiences in an effort to examine critically the phenomenon being studied and to mutually understand how these women experience the world as women.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive framework that provides a lens through which to view life experiences. An explanation of hermeneutics and phenomenology is helpful in understanding this mode of inquiry. My intent in this chapter was to present this methodology and epistemology as the most appropriate for understanding Native American women's lived experiences as the are immediately experienced, not as the experiences are conceptualized, categorized, or theorized (van Manen (1984).

Hermeneutic Understanding

Hermeneutic understanding is essentially dialogical (Jardine, 1988) and focuses on the "accomplishment, development, and risk of intersubjective understanding" (p. 27). The Greek word hermeneutics has three basic directions to its meaning: to express, to interpret, and to translate. The meaning of hermeneutical inquiry, according to Gadamer (1987) is to "disclose the miracle of understanding texts or utterances" (p. 127). The texts or utterances provide the expression. Critical to interpretation is the hermeneutical circle which is a process of sifting bits of information through the interpreter's experiences so that the bits form a unity. In other words, the process of uncovering the relationship between the language of the participants (their story) and the language of the interpreter (the researcher) is the interpretation. Without the multivocal interpretive language (Jardine, 1988), mutual understanding cannot be

gained. In this way a hermeneutic circulation between the text and the interpreter is constituted. The interpreter becomes "a mediator between the text and all that the text implies" (Gadamer, 1987, p. 128). The translation begins at the point when textual interpretations expose understandable themes and the researcher begins the process of diagraming the significance of the "whole text." Finally the researcher translates the themes into a final description of the phenomenon being studied.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, according to van Manen (1984), is the study of "lived experiences." The historical roots of phenomenology were grounded in the 19th Century German philosophy of Edmund Husserl (Farber, 1966) and further developed during the 20th Century by Martin Heidegger, a contemporary German philosopher and student of Husserl; and Hans-Georg Gadamer, who further developed the modes of understanding. The concepts "phenomenon" and "logos" are two factors that frame phenomenology. Phenomenon signifies "that which shows itself in itself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 29) and becomes visible in itself. Further clarified, "only when the meaning of something is such that it makes a pretension of showing itself--that is, of being a phenomenon--can it show itself as something which it is not; only then can it merely look like so-and-so" (p. 29). On the other hand, "logos" is a form of permitting something to be seen and may take on the form of

discourse. The aim of this discourse is to open up what is said in the text for interpretation. It is a "definite mode of letting something be seen," not in its separateness but in its "togetherness with something--letting it be seen as something" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 57). It becomes a process of investigating the unthematic in an effort to uncover the thematic.

Heidegger (1962) explains that phenomenology is not only "the science of phenomena" (p. 28) but also a "method of investigation" (p. 27). Phenomenology "expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'to the things themselves'" (p. 28)! Heidegger's formal conception of phenomenon is deformalized into phenomenology as:

> something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground. Yet that which remains hidden in an egregious sense, or which relapses and gets covered up again, or which shows itself only 'in disguise,' is not just this entity or that, but rather the Being of entities. This Being can be covered up so extensively that it becomes forgotten and no question arises about it or about its meaning. Thus that which demands that it become a phenomenon, and which demands this in a distinctive sense and in terms of its own most content as a thing, is what phenomenology has taken into its grasp thematically as its object. (p. 59)

In this sense phenomenology is ontological. However, it is not only the ontological character that is necessary, the phenomenology of hermeneutic is also significant. Without interpretation the phenomenon being sought would have no distinctive grounding.

Phenomenology has many faces, and the faces have periscopic components. These qualities offer the researcher certain reflecting elements. Such a system of lenses become mirrors and prisms to permit investigation, observation, reflection, and study from a multitude of angles.

Herbert Spiegelberg (1975) explains phenomenology as a "philosophical movement" which is the "direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions" (p. 3). He summarizes the varieties of phenomenology that have emerged from the phenomenological movement in terms of phases or steps.

The six phenomenology steps he identifies are as follows:

1. Descriptive phenomenology: Direct exploration, analysis, and description of particular phenomena, as free as possible from unexamined presuppositions, aiming at maximum intuitive presentations. Such a usage stimulates our perceptiveness for the richness of our experience in breadth and in depth.

2. Phenomenology of essence: Probing of these phenomena for typical structures or essences and for essential relations within and among them. Essence develops imaginativeness and the sense for both what is essential and what is accidental.

3. Phenomenology of appearances: Giving attention to the ways in which such phenomena appear, e.g., in different perspectives or modes of clarity. Utilizing this step can heighten the sense for inexhaustibility of the perspectives through which our world is given.

4. Constitutive phenomenology: Studying the processes in which such phenomena become established in our consciousness. In addition, in its study of its constitution in consciousness, it can develop the sense for dynamic adventure in our relationship with the world.

5. Reductive phenomenology: Suspending belief in the reality or validity of the phenomena, a process which may be considered as implicitly in the preceding phases. This phase can make us more aware of the precariousness of our trans-subjective claims to knowledge, a ground for epistemological humility. Husserl maintains that such an explicit performance is basic for phenomenology.

6. Hermeneutic phenomenology: Introduced by Heidegger as a special kind of phenomenological interpretation designed to keep us open and unveil otherwise concealed meanings in the phenomena. (p. 57)

Although these phenomenology phases are independent, they can be unified to achieve greater understanding of a phenomena. It was not my intention to argue that one phenomenological approach is better than another. Instead, as a researcher I recognized there are fundamental connections among them. What I sought was to adopt a framework that combines the multiple "human uses" of phenomenology, as Spiegelberg described. I chose the hermeneutic phenomenology orientation because it was the most appropriate means of focusing on the lived experiences of Native American women. For this study, it was an effort "to gain insightful descriptions" of the way Native American women experience their world. Following van Manen's example, "phenomenological research is a search for the fullness of living, for the way a woman possibly can experience the

world as woman, for what it is to be a woman" (p. 38-39). The best way to understand the lived experiences of American Indian women, then, was to investigate all the aspects and modalities of those lived experiences. It was only then that others could begin to grasp the meaning of the Native woman's life experiences.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: A Mode of Inquiry

A Hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm is designed to unveil concealed meanings within the phenomena being studied. Francene Hultgren (1988), who has done extensive research using the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm, describes hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches to inquiry as supplementing each other in two major ways:

> The first focuses on linguistic and non-linguistic actions in order to penetrate the meaning of the events or experiences. The second focuses beneath the surface of individual events and experiences in order to describe patterns or themes. (p. 3)

The practical interest in understanding the lived experiences of Native American women, in agreement with Hultgren (1988), was interpretive rather than explanatory or speculative.

Heidegger, according to Spiegelberg (1975), designs hermeneutic phenomenology "to interpret the ontological meanings of such human conditions as being-in-the-world" (p. 7). In Spiegelberg's opinion, such hermeneutic ontology is limiting. He further believes that hermeneutic phenomenology may give us greater insights not directly perceived. It could

"change not only our outlook upon life but our actual living. . . it could give us a sense of direction which a merely descriptive account may not be able to supply" (1975, p. 69). By unifying Hultgren's coadjunate quality, Heidegger's perspective and Spiegelberg's assumption, I believed the hermeneutic phenomenology approach provided the lens that refracts the women's lived experiences from multiple angles.

Research Design

Theory is important in a research design using the interpretive mode of inquiry. Theorizing and writing occurred uninterrupted throughout the process of interaction with the participants and analysis of the data. In the Introduction of Women's Reality, Anne Schaef (1981) contends that:

> theory is most useful when it affords us the opportunity to see what we otherwise might miss and follow that up in our work and personal lives. Ideally, theory remains in the unconscious or preconscious until triggered by a real event. It emerges to serve its function--that of helping one to explain and understand.

If Schaef's position on theory is true, then by balancing theory and data a dialectical tension is created. Such an effort connects theoretical concerns and the data through the chosen research methodology (interpretive/ phenomenological paradigm). The role of theory in hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry does not attempt to explain or control the world, instead it offers the possibility of plausible insight which brings us in more direct contact with the world (Hultgren, p. 6).

Patti Lather (1986) speaks of "praxis-oriented research" (p. 258) as a style of research that advances practical knowledge and advocates the relationship between data and theory. Therefore, the possibility of understanding the lived experiences of Native American women flows from those experiences and theory. In a study of Native American women's lives, the interaction between theory and their lived experiences provided the foundation for the chosen research design.

Participants

The selected participants were four middle-class Native American Indian women who resided in the Washington, D.C. area and were employed by the federal government. The participants were highly educated, professional women at the management level. Every effort was made to treat them as "partners" in this research project.

The four women were chosen for their tribal variability and their status as role models in the Indian community. One woman is a member of the Lumbee Nation from North Carolina, the second woman is Narragansett from Rhode Island, the third woman is a Seneca from New York. The fourth woman, from Idaho, comes from two Indian cultures, Laguna and Nez Perce, which adds an additional perspective to the variability of participants.

The participants were selected through references offered by friends

or acquaintances within and outside the Indian community. Two of the participants were acquaintances of mine, two were not. Participants were initially contacted either by telephone or in person with further communication through letters, telephone conversations, and face-to-face dialogues. The age range of the women was 39 to 51 years.

The women and the researcher were the main participants in this research project. We all identified ourselves as Native American and are recognized by the Indian community and non-Indian community as being Indian. Each woman brought to the study a different Indian culture. This diversity served to enrich the phenomenon being studied.

Three criteria were important in the selection process of the participants: the women must have lived their formative years in a predominantly Indian environment; their college or professional schooling years must have been spent in a non-Indian environment; and they were to have been involved in a professional environment for more than 5 years.

The format of this research reflects the assiduity of engaging in in-depth conversations with four Native American women conducted over an 11-month period. The number of participants were limited in an effort to gain deeper insights into their lived experiences. A limited number of participants and lengthy conversations allowed me, as a researcher, to know and develop mutual understanding of the women's invisible as well as obvious lived experiences more fully.

Methodology and Data Collection

Before the collection of data began, a pilot study of five Native American college students prepared me for the possibility of participant involvement and offered me interview training. During this experience I realized that being a Native American women placed me 'inside the culture' of both the college women in the pilot study and the Native American women I would interview for this research project. Again, Oakley related that "a feminist interviewing women is by definition both 'inside' the culture and participating in that which she is observing" (p. 57). As researcher, I was 'inside' and became part of the nexus between interviewing practice and theory.

"What is it like to be a Native American woman living in a dual world?" was the phenomenon that this inquiry was seeking to understand. More specifically, the research sought insight into how cultural, educational, employment, relational, and spiritual experiences impacted upon the lives of four Native American women. This study was designed to answer five major questions about the lived experiences of Native American women. The questions were:

1. In what way do Native American women describe themselves?

2. How have educational experiences in a non-Indian environment influenced the lives of contemporary Native American women?

3. What are the relationships between employment experiences of Native American women and their native culture?

4. What role does the traditional mother play in the life of the contemporary Native American woman?

5. How have the roots of spirituality affected contemporary Native American women's lives?

[For a more detailed listing of questions refer to Appendix A.]

Using these questions as a framework, data were collected from a series of four tape-recorded conversations with each woman. Formal structure and traditional interviewing strategies were avoided to allow the women's subjective experiences to surface. Oakley (1981) cites methodological difficulties in the paradigms of traditional interviewing practices when interviewing women. She suggests that the primary orientation for feminist interviewers is "towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people" (p. 30). Oakley determines that "finding out about people is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41).

The human dialogue within the interview was more "evocative of lived experience" according to Weber (1986). His idea of an interview was "extending an invitation to conversation" . . . with a "participant as one human being to another" (p. 65). Notably, Weber points out:

> In conversation, the words almost seem to choose their speaker, offering a direct access to experience, revealing a complexity of reactions, feelings and thoughts. The rapid outpouring of our words escapes the track we set it, revealing ambiguities, confusion, variety, and paradox, offering an authentic mosaic of perceptions and thoughts, and providing a sort of window to consciousness . . . The spoken word can be more evocative, more suggestive of the lived experience to which we wish to remain close. (pp. 70-71)

Gadamer (1975) explains that "a conversation is a process of two people understanding each other" (p. 347). Conversation, he notes, "has a spirit of its own and the language used bears its own truth within it" (p. 345). Engaging in conversation in this atmosphere gave credence to what was understood and what was pre-understood.

Before the conversations began, an atmosphere of trust and rapport between the participants and the researcher was established. This was accomplished by engaging in conversation about the study and its importance to the research community, as well as mutually sharing experiences. All four women willingly gave of their time to participate in the study.

Collecting the data included a series of four conversations. The first and second conversations lasted one and a half to two hours each, and in three instances, took place in the familiar environment of their offices. The first and second conversations with the fourth woman were held in my hotel room--her choice of site. The third conversation was a combined analysis of the women's text and discourse. The fourth conversation, a walk-and-talk

session, took place away from the formal environment in a setting [a restaurant, a patio, a back yard] chosen by the individual woman. The initial conversations allowed for predetermined questions, probing questions and spontaneous questions, and statements to be explored in greater depth.

The conversations were transcribed into hard copy for analysis. A contextual analysis of the women's lived experiences was devised so that the women's own meaning and experiences could be honored. Analyzing the phenomenological descriptions was the foundation of this undertaking.

Analysis of Data

Merleau-Ponty (1962) determines that the only way to fully understand phenomenology is to uncover the secret of the phenomenon by becoming immersed in it. Attaining understanding was done through a process of interpretation. Understanding and insight were gained from what Heidegger (1962) asserted in his explanation of "understanding and interpretation" (p. 148). He explains:

> understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding (p 148).

The procedure used to gain understanding of the Native American women's lived experiences was multi-dimensional. Conversations with the women provided the phenomenon that needed explanation; listening to the

taped conversations was an opportunity to capture perplexing themes in the stories of the women; hard copy of the conversations (the data) provided the means for a closer examination of the tacit assumptions immersed within the context of the women's lived experiences; participants' examination of their spontaneous and tentative oral discourse helped develop trust and mutual understanding; reflection, openness, readiness, and immersion allowed the researcher to translate the phenomenon into understandable context. It is this gathering and analysis of the phenomena that became the data base of this research.

After the text was transcribed into hard copy, it was sent by certified mail to each woman. After a period of one month to 2 months, an appointment was made with each woman to discuss, clarify, and make additions to previous conversations. This process allowed new meanings, insightful reflection, and participant confirmation of the data to evolve.

Renata Tesch's (1987) thematic analysis strategy which calls forth three basic human faculties was the basic foundation for analysis. The first was a "sense-making ability or holistic perception" (p. 237). The massive text, tone of voice, and observation created by the participants and researcher were viewed in a holistic manner. The second involved an "order-making ability or capacity for intellectual organizing" (p. 237) the conversations that had been recorded. At this point my task was to begin breaking the entire data into organized parts. The third was a "recognition-

producing ability--intuition" (p. 237) of the women's oral language. Coming from a pre-reflective familiarity or tacit knowing of the lived experience, I was prepared to uncovered the hidden themes from the stories of the women's lived experiences. With these faculties activated, the openness, the reflection, and immersion with the data began.

Utilizing Loren Barritt's (1984) analysis model, I looked for language that captured the common themes noted in the participants' conversations. My search for themes was a process of immersion with the data. Such a process involved reading, rereading, marking, note-making, listening to the women's words, listening to the words and reading simultaneously, then rereading the data before focusing on specific dimensions. A working model was used to identify shared central themes/common forms, theme statements, and variation themes or unique themes. Barritt states that these "variations help to enrich an understanding of the themes" (p. 10).

My own pre-understandings provided direction for my interpretations of the women's emerging themes. This required that I peel away the experiences of my own life in an effort to identify themes which inform my preconceptions. Each interpretation permitted diverse analysis and observation so that the text could manifest itself, first within my biases and later as insights that extended beyond my own preconceptions. The important thing, according to Gadamer (1975), is to be "aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able

to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (p. 238). The hermeneutical circle pulled the researcher, the data, and the participants into a spiral process which contributed to the development of a concrete theoretical framework.

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was to elicit data by mutually conversing and listening to the life experiences as described by the Native American women who were part of the study, and to balance that data with an open-ended theoretical base. Another role was to morally accept the trust participants had displayed by "not misinterpreting, misrepresenting, or distorting the participant's meaning and intentions, and not revealing publicly that which by its very nature should remain private" (Weber, 1986, p 67). A third role was to be able to generalize to other women. To generalize was valued, not as it provides a model intended to fit all Native American women's lives, but as it connects these women with other women. The ability to generalize in interpretive studies, is reinforced by McCutcheon (1981) who believes that one's readers can generalize to respective situations rather than generalizing to larger populations.

Elliot Eisner (1981) also supported generalization. He notes that making generalizations are possible because of the "belief that the general resides in the particular and what one learns from a particular one applies

to other situations encountered" (p. 7). Therefore, the need to generalize was expected and wanted.

My research study was based on an approach designed to illuminate and understand lived experiences of Native American women thereby generating new knowledge. My research effort was an engagement in reflection, and it was an engagement in a hermeneutic phenomenological process. Such a reflective process allowed the essence of the women's experiences, as well as my own, to be revealed. Understanding and insight were my goals.

The stories of my life experiences are explored in Chapter IV. The forces that have guided my life are disclosed. The themes of my lived experiences are revealed and discussed.

CHAPTER IV

REFLECTION: A RESEARCH PROCESS

The Mode of Approach

Much of what is known about Native Americans shows a major quality of their life philosophy to be unity. Life is viewed as being interrelated, as a circle, and everything has a place within that circle (Allen, 1986; Ywahoo, 1987; Cameron, 1981). All of our lived experience has a place within the vast circle of life.

In the process of examining my own experiences, would it be possible to open myself to life experiences freshly, naively? I needed to know how my biases prevented me from seeing what was hidden within my experiences and the experiences of other Native American women. The objective of the search is to learn about the processes by which I, as a contemporary Native American woman, experience life.

During the past months, I have spent many hours writing my life story, visiting my Native American environment, talking with family members and school teachers, and recording, with the help of my adviser, events of my own life. During this process, I have found Carl Rogers' (1961) methods most helpful, and have borrowed heavily from them. Rogers' approach was to "listen as naively as possible. . . to soak up all the clues I

could capture as to the process, as to what elements are significant" (p. 128). Further, he notes, "if past experience is any guide, then I may rest assured . . . a great deal of research will be stimulated" (p. 129). Following Rogers technique, I exposed myself to themes embedded within those experiences. These themes I wish to explore. Before I do, I want to share the reasoning for my quest, elucidate some aspects of self-reflection and perspectives of my identity in a Native American world, and demonstrate how uniting these past experiences into my present world is necessary for this research.

Rationale

By communicating and interpreting my lived experiences, I can unravel my understanding and shed light on the understanding of others. Merleau-Ponty (1973) describes this notion best with his analogy of a book's author and reader:

> I start to read a book idly, giving it hardly any thought; and suddenly, a few words move me, the fire catches, my thoughts are ablaze, there is nothing in the book which I can overlook, and the fire feeds off everything I have ever read. I am receiving and giving in the same gesture. I have given my knowledge of the language; I have brought along what I already know about the meaning of the words, the phrases, and the syntax. I have also contributed my whole experience of others and everyday events, with all the questions it left in me--the situations left open and unsettled, as well as those with whose ordinary resolution I am all too familiar. (p. 11)

So it is with my lived experiences and the lived experiences of Native American women, who have been a part of this research. We speak the same language. We are partners who dwell in the same dual world. The lived experiences of other Native American women become reflections of my own lived experiences, and the reflections of my experiences are reflections for them. "We encroach upon one another borrowing from each other," as written in Merleau-Ponty's The Prose of the World (1973); our lives interweave in a presence which merges the subjective with the intersubjective. Merleau-Ponty poignantly clarifies this fusion as:

> When I speak or understand, I experience that presence of others in myself or of myself in others. . . To the extent that what I say has meaning, I am a different 'other' for myself when I am speaking; and to the extent that I understand, I no longer know who is speaking and who is listening. (p. xxxiv)

The fusion of our lived experiences become the reflections of our objective and subjective self. Our objectivity embraces generalizations, explanations, prediction, and control. Our subjectivity embraces understanding the world of individuals in the cultural setting. Subjectivity becomes known to others through the language spoken and written about their lived experiences and their understanding of their world. In this case, theory is continually transformed to help clarify and conceptualize the life experiences of the Native American women. Theory and practice are connected and interrelated; they become the bridge to understanding.

Self-Reflection

Reflecting on one's experience provides a lens to see one's self more clearly and gain understanding of others. Reflection is a prerequisite for understanding. Before I can understand the lived experiences of others, I must first understand my own. In an effort to fulfill this understanding, I have been recalling past

experiences in an effort to become known to myself. Robert N. Bellah (1979) describes the quest for understanding self as:

> a quest for autonomy, for leaving the past and the social structures that have previously enveloped us, for stripping off the obligations and constraints imposed by others, until at last we find our true self which is unique and individual. (p. 369-370)

Djohariah Toor (1987) describes the quest for understanding self as a journey that "leads to the vision of who we really are" (p. 2). Toor writes:

> when we embark upon the journey we begin a walk into ourselves; into both flesh and spirit, into the leaves and rocks of our being. We make a foray into that within us which is not only denied and unseen, but undiscovered: into the self we do not yet know. When we journey . . . to the deep self, we touch not only what is wounded and incomplete, but we tap into that which is also potentially a treasure. The journey is a vision quest in which we might learn to walk in beauty . . . with ourselves and with others around us . . . [It] is a journey toward wholeness. (p. 2)

If my journey to reveal my lived experiences is to become fruitful, according to Maxine Greene (1973), then as a researcher I must make those experiences feed into "future experiences." Aligning this concept with "what

the known demands" can only be achieved when the actual experiences are "gradually intellectualized and understood" (p. 160). Achieving such an endeavor is an act of reflecting on what I consciously understand about my own struggles as a woman, as a Native American woman. It is necessary for me, the researcher, to understand the concepts, definitions, and generalizations of my lived experiences before the experiences of other Native American women can be understood and the formation of the Native American female system can be identified and expanded. I realize such a feat will remain incomplete. However, this research will add to what is already known.

"Self-reflection and a clearer self-understanding," according to Hoy (1978), "are critical if the interpretive process is to realize its essential possibilities" (p. viii). It is only when the researcher becomes the researched that lived experiences can become understood. I have been wrestling with the reflective process in an effort to illuminate the reality of the Native American women's lived experiences. It is a liberating process; it is a profound adventure.

Forthrightly I ask myself: What are my life experiences? Do I have lived experiences that are analogous to the lived experiences of other Native American women? If the experiences are parallel, what will this intellectual perception mean to other cultures and to other women? What will it mean to other Native American women? If the experiences are not parallel, what

implications will this intellectual inquiry have on other Native American women and on other women? Will it "seek and reveal their visions for the future," as remarked by Green (1983, p. 17)? Answers to such questions can only be realized when the analysis of the researcher and the researched has been undertaken. Even then, the answers require critical review.

Reflections of My Identity

Every person has a different way of describing the walk he or she takes in life. My confessions and descriptions reveal no more than a ghostly image of the life I reflect upon because the being I once was has long since been replaced with a new image, a new being. For me, it is like creating two versions of a life in one; on the one hand, a tale that is a confession and on the other hand, a creation that is developed in complete freedom and under the protection of a hidden identity. Reflecting on my inner privacy not only as I was and am but also as I believe and wish myself to be and to have been is critical in the effort to better understand other Native American women. Such an analysis is a look to an essence beyond what is consciously known; it is a never-ending dialogue, a wrestle with my past and a risk of revealing my personal formulation. Recapitulation of such a life reveals only a glimmer of the individual who lived that past and who is part of the present.

My identity is rooted in my culture. My lived experiences are the story of the Lumbee culture and its people. These experiences give the

reader a glimpse of the essence from whence I emerged. My concepts of ethnicity are bound by the tri-racial environment that define my culture, a community comprised of Native Americans, Blacks, and Whites. The struggle to prove my identity is always caught between a continuous ambiguous theoretical debate of the Lumbee Nation's origination. Historians (Dial & Eliades, 1975) theorize the Lumbees to be the descendants of the "Lost Colony." While there is no proof of the Lost Colony theory, circumstantial evidence "supports the Lumbee tradition that there was a real and lasting connection with the Raleigh Settlement" (p. 13). The task of proving identity is overwhelming because of my Native American group's invisibility in the historical and ethnographic record. The Lumbee Nation is recognized by the state but not by the federal government. The predicament of the unrecognized tribes, although more abased, resembles the plight of the recognized tribes; it is a tale of tenacity and survival. Both groups are engaged in battles against cultural, physical, and social genocide.

I was born Mary Elizabeth Jones in Robeson County, North Carolina. The names Mary and Elizabeth were given to me by my mother and father to continue the legacy of my great-grandmothers. I am the fourteenth and last child of William McKinley Jones and Rosa Bell McMillian. Only six of the Jones children, four females and two males, lived to reach adulthood. I am also the daughter of Zelma Sampson Jones, my second mother. My second family added two siblings, one female and one male, to the fourteen.

Only the female reached adulthood.

Recently, I took a walk through the weathered house--now a building used for storage where I was born in 1940. The remains of this house are a part of my history, my being. My roots are here. A part of me was alive in that old house. Even though no memories surfaced, I knew I had been there before. A fireplace separated the kitchen from the bedrooms. As I reminisced about my young life, I could almost hear the voices of my family as I felt the wood, stood before the fireplace, and viewed the remains of the kitchen shelves. I wondered how so many people could crowd into such a small space. There had been happy times and sad times for my family. Some of those happy times were the births of new family members, and sad times when the Spirit claimed the lives of younger members. The tenaciousness of this first home and those infant memories buried in my subconscious, somehow connect my early life to my present life. I suspect many of my experiences have been camouflaged by the death of one mother and the appearance of another, and they have followed me as a shadow throughout my years of development. Feelings of connection and disconnection form a continuous theme within my lived experiences. It is this collective theme that I wish to examine from my current perspective.

Theme One: Connection and Disconnection

I found myself caught between the dilemma of my culture's

expectation of the connection process to others and the dominant society's expectation of the disconnection process into individuation. Connecting and disconnecting are experienced throughout the circle of life. Within my circle, connection and disconnection are the stories of life and survival in multiple cultures. Carol Gilligan (1982) agrees that "attachment and separation anchor the cycle of human life" (p. 151). Her research of psychological theory and women's development is based on the central assumption "that the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act" (p. 2).

Family. At the time of biological formation, human cells connect and disconnect creating new cells. Eventually the unified mass attaches itself as a parasite to subsist. Thus, a major connection of human life occurs. During the birthing process, a major human disconnection is experienced. For me the birthing separation of my own babies, was one of trauma and excitement. Acceptance of this separation was softened when, as a mother, I nurtured these babies. Individual disconnection continued as my children began to walk alone and connection remained as my children realized the choice to return to my waiting arms at will. Connection and disconnection were chosen.

After my children were born, I began to recognize, to feel, and to fully

understand the deep sense of "attachment and separation" which Carol Gilligan (1982) talks about. While cradling my babies, my own longing to be cradled surfaced. Could I be feeling a moment that fuses "identity and intimacy" which Gilligan described? At the time it was a feeling that was right for my baby and right for the child hiding within me. In this case, identity and intimacy of myself were being unconsciously fused. Yet, I realized such separation and fusion were inherently more complex.

The realization of connection is experienced in other areas of my life. My first memory of connection is recalled in my oldest brother's return home from World War II. As we traveled to the army base to meet my brother, each family member determined she/he would be the one to recognize him among the crowd. Within myself, I was sure I would be the lucky one. An older sister saw his face in the crowd of other soldiers. What is clearly etched in my mind is seeing the two of them running to each other, with arms reaching and embracing. It was a moment frozen in time and in my memory. It was a connection of love. My 5-year-old arms could not reach so high. It was a happy feeling to see their exchange, yet a sad feeling to be so small.

Early in life I experienced the trauma of disconnection--at birth, and shortly thereafter with the death of my mother. I do not consciously remember my mother's presence or her departure, because her death came when I was 15 months old. During my own personal metamorphosis a

sense of disconnection, that a part of me was missing, has lingered.

My two older sisters, 10 and 13 years older, have shared an ironic tale that happened shortly after my mother's death. I was crying constantly, possibly for my mother, after we had gone to bed for the evening. After their repeated attempts to console me, a strange, yet familiar pair of hands appeared at the end of the bed. My sisters recognized the hands as belonging to my mother. She was reaching for me an effort to connect what had been disconnected. Quickly my sisters held me closely within their arms. At that moment, I became quiet and slept through the night. The choice to return to her arms was not mine.

John Bowlby (1980) describes the grief of a child, for a missing mother, between the ages of 12 months and 3 years as one of:

> protest and of urgent effort to recover his [her] lost mother . . . crying loudly . . . looking eagerly towards any sight or sound which might prove to be his [her] missing mother. (p. 9)

"Grief in childhood" he reports is not short-lived as some researchers indicate, instead, "yearning for mother's return lingers" (p. 10). Bowlby's study concludes that:

> intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves, not only when he [she] is an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout his [her] adolescence and his [her] years of maturity as well. (p. 442)

Yet, another connection and disconnection that is part of my repertoire of experiences is a new mother who was always shadowed by an

unforgotten mother. When I was 26 months old, my father took a second wife, Zelma Sampson. My father's new wife, and my new mother, became the mother who took over the task of showing me how to grasp the desire, the thought, and the action to develop a road map that would help me negotiate the terrain of life. My 33 year-old mother instilled in me an early determination that has been a guiding force in my search for life's truths, life's wisdom, and life's knowledge--for my own reality. She was approving and encouraging of my ability and accomplishments. Mother's approval was so important that I could not take a chance of disapproval. "If I hurt her, would she stay?" was always in my subconscious. So, being a "good girl" was in competition for my own sense of self-expression and self-worth.

Lois M. Greenwood-Audant (1984) notes that women rely on their mothers for identification. She states:

> a girl continues to rely on and identify with her mother--her original source of nurturance--for affirmation of her being, she develops a dependence on that relationship for affirmation of her worth, approval and love. As she grows, she extends this reliance to significant others . . . (p. 269-270)

Consequently the importance of approval showed up in my marriage. Rather than show strong disagreement, I often gave in to maintain peace and harmony in my marriage. In time, when I was able to gain a sense of independence and greater self-identity, I found myself confronted with marital disconnection.

In 1985 when my step-mother died, disconnection became a serious reality. I was ill-prepared for her death. The feeling of not having given enough of myself to the woman who had taught me so much about being a person was haunting. She was gone; she left no successor. My mothers were only a memory. My emptiness and loss could not be put into words. Feelings of disconnection were no longer an illusion. The grief I felt was devastating. Finally, I was grieving multiple deaths, my mother had died, my father had died, and my step-mother had died. I was overwhelmed with grief I did not understand.

During the past 2 months of writing this part of my dissertation, I found myself unable to contextually express my feelings. In a conversation with my adviser I was better able to extricate feelings of disconnection, especially those associated with my mother:

> MM: You said, " I don't remember. Not I don't remember going to her, but "I don't remember feeling like I could."
>
> MB: I did say that. Maybe I had not been nurtured enough, because there was a part of me that longed for such closeness. I know my new mother freely gave of her love and did hug me. However, it felt like a part of me had been severed. It was a feeling that was ever present. I felt it was there because my first mother died, and it's a part that can't be recaptured.
>
> MM: Is it loss?
>
> MB: I'm not sure. It's as if something is missing, and I'm looking for it and I can't find it.
>
> MM: You mean like you lost an arm?

MB: You know it's there. It's there, but it doesn't feel tangible, that you can put your hand on it.

MM: And you want it to be tangible?

MB: I suppose a part of me does. What is it called when you have surgery, when an individual's leg has been amputated? I believe it is a "phantom limb." You feel the leg is there, yet the leg is forever gone.

MM: It hurts.

MB: It hurts but it's not there; it's a phantom. I think that is what I felt when my mother died. She wasn't there and it hurt that she was not there, yet there was a part of me that felt she was there. It was not physically tangible that I could feel her, that she was there, it was only a spiritual connection. She became my "phantom mother." My second mother never had a chance to share unconditional love, because I could not let the "phantom mother" go. That's what the disconnection is all about.

There were reminders of my "phantom mother." At times my brother and I would talk, secretly, about our mother. Her picture was always present. As long as I can remember, that picture hung over my step-mother and father's bed. I never questioned or quite understood how my new mother could allow this to happen. Now, I think I understand. Our step-mother was not interested in replacing our biological mother. She desired to be accepted in the mother-role she had assumed. Mom had proved she was a mother, and more importantly, she was comfortable being our mother.

The lives of my two mothers hold secrets of my development. One mother gave me life, the other mother taught me how to live that life. At

each moment their deaths left me with a sense of disconnection and loss. However, when I reflect on this special gift of mothers and their gifts to me, and the events of my life, I am reminded that life is made up of experiences of connection and disconnection. Naturally, I have preferred connection to disconnection. Much of my fear of disconnection, of loss, has evaporated because now I am empowered to accept and choose connections, or to accept and choose disconnection. I understand the "phantom theory" which shadowed my life.

Community and Societal. Other experiences of connection and disconnection are within my memory relative to community and societal associations. From the time I was a little girl, there were not only emotional reminders but physical and social reminders that Indians were not part of the dominant society. In the county where I lived, clearly there were three races: Blacks, Native Americans, and Whites. In our community there were three schools, three rest rooms, three churches, three races, and everybody knew their school, their rest room, their church, their race, and their place in our tri-cultural society. Such an ideology was taken for granted. It was part of the roots of our very existence in Robeson County. (Much of that ideology remains today.) One might say, Robeson County has the largest population of Native Americans in North Carolina. In one sense, it is the "Indian County" of North Carolina.

My father was a farmer. Our small farm was situated between two larger farms, a farm owned by white farmers who had Native American sharecroppers on one side and black sharecroppers on the other. The children I knew as my neighbors were Native American and black. Our family did not establish a relationship with our white landowner neighbors. Such a connection was not looked upon with favor in my community. This was the first of many times when I was reminded that the color of skin separates people.

Girt, the black lady who lived on the farm joining ours and helped our family once or twice a week with household chores, was my first connection to the Black culture. To my family, Girt was more like a neighbor than a maid. In our perception, she worked with us rather than for us. She ate from our garden and our table. To me, Girt was a friend that a little girl could go to with her troubles. She was there to help when my brother, Mack, threw dirt in my eyes. I was convinced I would never see again. Girt held me tenderly, cleaning away the dirt, assuring me that I was going to see. I loved Girt; her race was irrelevant. Girt was a part of my education; she opened the door for me to have a greater worldview of humanity. The seeds of compassion for another culture were planted by Girt in my very being. Girt helped celebrate my wedding, and she mourned the loss of my father. Years later I grieved her death; another disconnection in my life had taken place.

Since my new mother was a teacher, she valued the need to introduce her children to other cultures, environments, and experiences. I was taken to Cherokee, NC to see how another Indian tribe lived and attended the drama Unto These Hills. I can remember crying during that drama and feeling we were more fortunate than the Cherokee tribe had been. As a tribe, we had been allowed to stay in our homeland. Even though it was a land filled with conflict and injustice, we could choose to stay. Unto These Hills depicted for me an example of another people's disconnection.

My mother taught me acceptable social etiquette needed in the dominant society. Mother said, "I never want you to be embarrassed because you don't know the prescribed forms of social conduct expected in our society." These teachings were carried on at home. I realize this training was somewhat European and somewhat Indian; it was a blending of multiple worlds. Over the years, I have been able to draw from each. Reflecting upon these teachings, I appreciate that the culture of my Lumbee Indian tribe is different from the culture of Anglo America, and different from the traditional reservation culture. Acknowledging that difference helps me put assumptions of life in a mulicultural world in proper perspective. The combination of home teaching and formal teaching prepared me for the life I was seeking within a contemporary multiculture society. Yet, in spite of her efforts, I was not prepared to handle racial injustice.

During my senior year in college, 1960, I got a glimpse of the local white community's perception of a Native American. It was my first major encounter with racial disconnection, an encounter with Indian people's oppression. I had been sick for several days and made an appointment with our local Indian doctor. With prescription in hand, I went to a drug store to purchase my medication. Feeling weak and thirsty, I purchased a Coke at the drug store fountain. I sat down at one of the tables to take my medication and drink the Coke. The lady behind the fountain told me that she was sorry, but "You are not allowed to sit in the store to drink your Coke." There was not enough fight in me to tackle this injustice. I didn't know how. Unfortunately, I had not developed the courage (Rosa Parks had not yet shown me how) and the toughness to protect myself against such inequity. The drug store where I could buy medicine and a Coke, but could not drink that Coke was an example. I could spend my money but not my time. After I contributed to the town's economy, I was supposed to move on. There was no place for Indians or Blacks to enjoy a Coke. This experience was reason enough for me to decide that someday I would not live where I could not be accepted like other people, like white people. I somehow thought White people must be better than Indian people and Black people because they were treated better. It took many years for me to learn differently, to remember all persons have a place in life's circle. Now, I had been exposed to an even greater world view of humanity. Separation and a

sense of disconnection from society appeared to be everywhere.

Education and Profession. Connection and disconnection have not been exempt from my educational and professional life. Connection of my early educational experiences was rooted in an Indian environment. Growing up and attending school in my Indian community gave me a sense of belonging and a sense of security, even though my first year of school occupies no place in my memory. Education and the processes of learning are more vivid after that first year in school.

Educational disconnection was experienced after I completed my college degree. I lived in an Indian community and had been educated in Indian schools. Pembroke State University was known as an "Indian University." My first lengthy educational experience away from my secure Indian environment came when I attended a 6-week summer school program in another part of the state. Fears of being ridiculed were haunting. I was not sure if I would be accepted by other people, if I would be allowed to patronize local eating establishments, or if I would be a welcomed part of school life. I had already experienced rejection by the non-Indian people in my own community. There was nothing to make me believe this place, these people, would be different. It was a frightening thought.

How I missed home! I wanted to run away, and I did. I made

several trips back to Robeson County, but always returned to school. It was a way of keeping in touch with my roots. It was a renewing process. The return was a means of being with my Indian people--people who did not question my identity. At the time, I felt like I was hooded with a mask. When at school, I was a part of the dominant society, a membership that was foreign to me. In Robeson County, I was part of my Indian community. When I returned home, I could remove the mask that was part of my armor during the week. What a relief it was to be me, to breathe normally without a cover--clearly a sign that I was suppressing my authentic being. Even though I was not yet prepared to break the security ties of my community, the experience was the beginning of a long and enduring process of establishing a dual culture and social role.

John Castillo (1982) explains that Native Americans become "compartmentalized . . . so as to establish an identity in both the Indian and non-Indian milieus" (p. 17). Compartmentalization permits the individual to function without internalizing the values of the non-Indian society. The traditional Indian values remain the same. I found myself becoming a part of Castillo's compartmentalized theory.

An intense experience of connection and disconnection was realized while I was employed with Baltimore City School's Indian Education Program. This job offered me a sense of connection with the opportunity to work with an urban Indian population. My cultural sensitivity was exactly

what my clientele sought. The educational needs of the students and their parents were almost overwhelming. Each day I struggled, frustrated with their needs and at times my inability, to carry out designs for the betterment of my Indian people living in Baltimore. I visited families living in such impoverished conditions that I cried. "How do I help my Indian brothers and sisters?" was an everyday question. The determination to make a difference in the lives of a neglected, oppressed people was part of my vision. It was in the midst of this struggle that my husband accepted a job in another state. How could I leave them behind? How could I give up my vision? These people needed me as much as my family needed me, so I thought. Subconsciously, I was grief-stricken. I had experienced yet another agonizing disconnection. The realization that disconnection leads to connection had not been internalized.

Theme Two: Connection and Reciprocity

Just as connection and disconnection are thematic in my lived experiences, I find connection and reciprocity equally prominent. "Reciprocity is an important principle to understand," writes Ywahoo in Voices of Our Ancestors (1987). "When we give, we receive. As we recognize the cycle of reciprocity we are able to free ourselves from attachment . . . " (p. 247). Susanne Page wrote in A Celebration of Being (1989) that reciprocity begins at a very early age. She describes:

> I knew a Navajo girl, a pre-schooler, who was solely responsible in her family's camp for nursing her bedridden grandmother. Fetching food, changing diapers--already a part of the endless byre of give-and-take in a world where a fine-tuned reciprocity is the bedrock of life and where a smile is taken to be sacred. (p. 21)

Robert Redford observes this unique sharing among the Hopi and Navajo people. In the foreword of A Celebration of Being he says:

> In a period when the dominant cultures of the world find themselves wittingly and unwittingly engaged in savaging nature and are under the gun to find new philosophies of restraint, there is much we can learn from the people [Hopi and Navajo] presented here. It boils down to an old idea many of us have forgotten: we are not observers or overlords of nature we are part of nature as truly as an eagle is, or a windstorm. In these Indian lands, I am always refreshed, and recharged with the notion that our lives and spirit are the gifts of nature and that we are obliged to reciprocate. (p. ix)

This is not to say that all Indian tribes hold the same eminent reciprocity values. Such values predate colonization and will vary because of tribal diversity, making it almost impossible to depict clearly the extent of historical or present reciprocity. However, some form of reciprocity remains alive within the Indian community. I, for one, cannot remember when such reciprocity was not taken for granted. Within my own experiences, I observed my father's give-and-take values. My father was a fisherman. When he went fishing, we ate the fish he caught. He did not fish without purpose. He took no more than his family could use or needed. Fish, if they were not going to be used for food, were put back into the stream, river, or pond. I experienced reciprocity in my home. I do not

recall playing very much as a child, but I remember being part of the family--doing the things women do in a house, having responsibility. When I was 7 or 8 years old, I was preparing meals and was driving a tractor and the car by the age of 12. So, I had a lot of responsibility, and I accepted that responsibility. It was an opportunity for me to demonstrate my accomplishment of successfully completing individual tasks.

There was a desire for reciprocity with my mother. Even though our relationship was close, she gave me more than I ever gave to her. My not sharing was so unfair. She celebrated my individuality. I can not remember her saying, "you can't do that, or you aren't capable of doing that." I always had encouragement. "You can do anything, if you want to do it" were her favorite words to me. I was given the freedom to do many things. These accomplishments were not enough for me. What I wanted was to feel a sense of connection and be able to accept the disconnection, a way of being with her and of freely being with myself. Even though reciprocity was viewed as an expression of equity, my awareness of inequality was present. I suspect my ability to reciprocate emotionally was not possible.

There was a give-and-take in the community. Families shared gathering tobacco, barn raisings, hog-killings, and exchanging day-for-day work among neighbors. These were times when neighbors generously helped with tasks requiring many hands. Dial and Eliades (1975) called

this reciprocity "cooperative community activities." These activities were not only a time for sharing work projects, they were also a time to socialize with neighbors. Sharing or reciprocity was and remains an expected behavior pattern in my Native American culture.

Reciprocity is also enjoyed when tending the soil. We give to the land and it gives to us. As Americans, this respect for the land has been misplaced. There is evidence of our taking but not giving back. Destruction of our environment has become a critical issue for all persons. The land feeds, clothes, gives beauty, and provides a healthy environment for all who will accept and protect it. Native Americans believe we are under an obligation to respect those land gifts by nurturing, caring, and having respect for the land and all other aspects of our environment. Reciprocity is giving and taking, a union that cannot be separated. The reciprocal relationship is a theme that joins spirituality--a connection.

Theme Three: Connection and Spirituality

Describing and reflecting on one's spiritual self is a very private endeavor. It is an unleashing of the spiritual consciousness which explores one's belief in life as a precious gift. My spiritual self is like a web that holds me together. It is a web that is strange yet familiar, and is woven from my very being. Spirituality is my connection to all other aspects of life. It is part of my application of life, no separation of life's theories and

life's practices.

Castillo (1982) studies the spiritual foundation of the Native American in the urban environment. He proposes that "practiced cultural values" of the Native American "are directly linked with the spiritual identity (p. 19). Castillo further notes "to be Indian is to recognize one's spiritual self" (p. 21).

Dhyani Ywahoo (1987), a member of the Cherokee Nation, communicates the importance of spirituality to a society and as a medium for eliminating confusion. She writes:

> Without spiritual foundation there can be no society. Without spiritual practice confusion reigns. Even the softest prayer sends vibrations of prayer moving through the air, just as the guitar strings stir the piano's song. To call forth the voice and to sing in joy and harmony, to let the beauty flow in our hearts, is something all of our elders have talked about, saying to us, 'Let us pray together, let us do things together.' People come together to pray not only for social reasons; there is real power in joined voices. It is the power of human nature reweaving the sacred web of light, acknowledging the whole community. All that we see is a reflection of consciousness, and to see requires pulling the veils from the eyes, pulling away the illusions that limit us in time and space, the illusions that say we are separate. We are not separate. We are all together. When we join our hearts in prayer, in singing, in sacred dancing, in planting things together, we are re-turning to the Earth, planting seeds of good cause. (p. 73)

Anne Carr (1986) also asserts that spirituality is "all-encompassing and pervasive . . . spirituality reaches into our unconscious or half-conscious depths" (p. 49). She further points out that "spirituality is individually patterned yet culturally shaped" (p. 50).

Such ideology reinforces my own personal story of spirituality. As thoughts of spirituality surface, I am reminded of the ripples that occur when a stone is thrown into the water. The greater the impact of the stone in the water the greater the effects of each ripple from the center. So it is with the ripples of spirituality, it flows through all of the processes of life.

Spirituality and Christianity were part of my early existence. My parents had a deep and well-developed Christian faith. They believed in God and His connection with creation. I was taught the importance of devotion, daily prayer, and attended church regularly. Missionaries did not bring this message, my parents had adopted this belief from their parents. Dial and Eliades (1975) states that missionaries were not popular in Lumbee country. "This," they write, "signifies the people were already practicing a form of Christianity and were, in the eyes of the white man, 'more civilized' than most other Native Americans" (p. 106). Whatever the reason, spirituality, for me, has greater complexity and individualization than organized religion. It is part of the creation, the planting of the crops, the rising and setting of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the changing of the seasons, the harmony of humankind with creation and fellow human beings, an honoring of ancestors, a search for our visions, and examining our stories--a legacy from one's ancestors.

My connection with the earth and the land and my respect for the cycles of creation were part of my early education to life. It was part of my

very being. Farming was an important basis of our life as a family. The reasons were twofold. My parents had an uncompromising virtue, "Puritan ethic" of hard work. More important, I believe, the farm gave us direct connection with the earth. We tilled the soil and planted by the moon and the number of days within a carefully calculated period of time. My father kept a record of his planting plans each season. We also had specific ways to plant certain crops. For example, when we planted potatoes, the "potato eyes" had to be dropped into the soil with the "eyes" up so that "Mother Nature" did not have to do any extra work. The routine was always the same. After many years, mother exerted her influence, and we planted the potatoes without consideration of how the "eyes" landed in the soil. We still had plentiful potato crops. Yet, my father's respect for the mystery and secrets of the land were ceaseless.

Barbara B. Locklear (1989), a Native American from Robeson County, North Carolina, describes her relationship to the land in The home of the Lumbee as:

> the land we live on and everything related to it. The land has become our school, and we listen to it for it teaches us well.
>
> To the Indian, land is sacred. He [she] understands the vital interdependence between man and his natural environment. (p. 1)

William H. Ittelson and his colleagues (1976) suggest the individual is never "passive in his experience to the environment; he acts within and is

part of the situation as he tries to achieve his particular goals" (201). These researchers determined that, as individuals, we experience the environment in a variety of modes. One of those modes is experiencing the environment as self. When the individual experiences the environment as an integral component of self-identity, any change that occurs within that environment is:

> experienced as a change in the self . . . This identification with the total environment in which one is living can be so deep and sustaining that separation from it brings severe grief and self-doubt . . . and may lead to changes in one's self-identity. (p. 202, 203)

Locklear (1989) lends support to Ittelson, et. al. when she describes her feelings of despair when separated from the place she called home--the land:

> I felt there was no quiet place in the white man's city, no place to hear the leaves of spring and birds singing. His city offered a pace too hurried to lend me a vision of the eternal reach of time. Life there lacked the calmness of the everlasting fields of my native land . . . I prayed to the Great Spirit to break the tension of my nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the singing black river that lived in my memory. I could not bear to live in a part of a country where I could not feel a part of. (p. 2)

Locklear further relates her spiritual connection to the land:

> I see the old trees, and for my people the woods, the river and the open fields are all alive. I live with them and in their spirit. I know how to speak to the land and listen to what it tells me. I take no more than what I need from it and keep its secrets to myself, because I know it will never betray the heart that loves it. (p. 5)

Another aspect of my spirituality is vision based. My own vision occurred when I was 7or 8 years old. The setting of my dream was the ending of time. My family had advanced to the stage of becoming angels. As they appeared in the sky before me, I was given a message. "You cannot go with the family because you are not prepared." My remark was, "I'm prepared." After much confusion, my major concern was "How do I become prepared?" I was left alone on earth to prepare myself for the spiritual trip I would take to be with my family. Reflecting on my visionary dream helps put my own educational preparation into proper prospective. It is a spiritual preparation to gain greater understanding and better share a life vision, my own "sacred hoop," with humankind. In Neihardt's Black Elk Speaks (1959), Black Elk describes the sacred hoop of life as being in the center of the world where all good of life is experienced. Paula Gunn Allen (1986) describes the sacred hoop as a concept that is "dynamic and encompassing, including all that is contained in its most essential aspect, that of life" (p. 56). My own sacred hoop is my own life experiences woven by my thought and action and developed into the unity of my being. It is theory and practice dancing back and forth.

Another part of my spirituality is keeping the memory of my ancestors alive. To allow my mothers' sacrifices to die without acknowledgment would be to dishonor them and their gifts to my life, their gifts to humanity. A large photograph of my second mother hangs in my

bedroom so that our conversations may be continued on a regular basis. Respect is also given to my biological mother. Every time I make a major decision in my life, I visit her burial ground so that I might engage in conversation with her. To have both mothers' approval of my choice is of great spiritual importance. I believe spirituality to be the dominant force in the processes that connect life with our relations with the cosmos. My spiritual web is woven through and captured in the beauty of living--the freedom to be one's self.

Summary of Themes

Throughout this process I have been unable to completely separate connection and disconnection, connection and reciprocity, and connection and spirituality. Each theme flows into the other creating a spiral formation which narrate my own lived experiences. In the midst of my connections, I encountered disconnections. In the center of my disconnections, I began to make connections. My views of disconnection were frightening and caused within me a lingered sense of grief. Understanding the connections help heal my wounded spirit and set my soul free. They are viewed as natural and inevitable in the circle of life. Reciprocity places before me the opportunity to return, unconditionally, what I have been given, to forever share with others. Spirituality comes from within the individual; it is so much a part of who we are that

separation assumes coalescing qualities. Within these themes certain aspects of my lived experiences become the carriers that connect those lived experiences of other Native American women, which in turn link the experiences and life themes of other women. It is important to note that this analysis of themes in my life experiences is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it has been an attempt to unravel themes that require the greatest examination. The hope is that not only are my connections revealed, but that they will serve as a basis for examining and interpreting the kinds of connections which will advance other women's development.

Authenticating the narrative form of four Native American women's life experiences also gives my life validity. The interplay of context and life experiences, as the Personal Narrative Group (1989) contends, is the most appropriate way to establish a relationship between the researcher and the researched. The interpretations of the lived experiences of four Native American women are analyzed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

THE WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCES: AN INTERPRETATION

"I'm a nurse.
I'm a tribal traditionalist person.
I'm a Seneca.
I grew up with a sense of being a prized person.
I always had a sense of being a prized value,
a woman, a feminine person."
[Adela]

"I am a successful professional.
I see myself as being a very true friend to my friends.
I work toward a betterment of all persons.
I see myself as strong, and very courageous, and very beautiful.
As women we hold the future in ourselves."
[Ember]

"I am an intelligent, caring, Indian person,
who will do whatever it takes to help
Indian people progress.
By progress I mean, being able to live and survive and interact
with the rest of society as well as anyone else does.
I'm ever-vigilant as to what's happening with Indian people.
The one word I hope would describe me is facilitator."
[Jena]

"There's nobody like me, because there's only me.
I would speak to my tribe or any other member
of another Indian tribe the
same as if they were my family, and I can do that because I
feel very comfortable about myself and what I do.
I love people."
[Lander]

These are the words that four Native American women used to describe who they are. The descriptions are these women's self-perceptions, a portion of their stories, the "truths" of their lived experiences. The editors of Interpreting Women's Lives (1989) describes such stories as "truths" . . . as truths of experiences. They point out:

> we come to understand them only through interpretations, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and the world views that inform them . . . Our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them . . . Shared stories provide significant ways of understanding the world . . . To understand one's own life in light of these stories is to be a full participant in a particular culture. (p. 261)

I am the interpreter of the women's "truths." My interpretations are from a Native American woman's perspective, because that is the vista I know best. In this process of interpretation, I wanted the women's truths to inform my realities and other women's realities; I wanted to learn and understand from their experiences. These women were my teachers; they were the source of my understanding of their "truths."

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the experiences of four Native American women for their "truths." The goal was to extract the shared and unique themes within the experiences of the women and find the language which captures these themes. My intent was to search the women's experiences and ascertain the critical meanings of these four women's stories as a pathway to understanding the experiences they have

lived through. I asked four Native American women to engage in personal reflection and share their stories, their thoughts, and their experiences on culture/identity, education, employment, mother-daughter relationships, and spirituality with me. Our dialogue was not seen simply as a "matter of passing information objectively between total strangers, but it was a form of close relational intercourse in and of itself" (Toelken, 1989, pp. 61-62). I was trying to stimulate the women to think about present experiences and rethink former experiences. Such interaction can, according to Paulo Freire (1987)

> change ourselves in the very moment of the dialogue. . . Dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as being of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimensions. (pp. 3-4)

We were sharing our experiences in a moment that would last forever. The dialogue was a living connection to the reality of what they were and had experienced. Although our Indian values and customs differ, we shared a common cultural bond. We shared experiences; we shared stories that direct and give meaning to our lives. These shared experiences, shared stories may be equated with Black Elk's (1959) story of his life. He spoke:

> My friend, I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; and if it were only the story of my life I think I would not tell it; . . . So many other men have lived and shall live that story . . .It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-legged sharing in it with the four-legged and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one Spirit. (p. 1)

Black Elk was saying his story does not belong to him alone but to all persons. The stories these four Native American women shared also, belong to all persons; they were stories that give understanding to Native life. Above all we were educational, professional, and spiritual explorers seeking insights into the significance of the experiences, the stories that have shaped our lives.

This chapter will distinguish the uniquenesses and commonalities found among the four women of this study. Those distinctions appear to be symbolic of their early cultural grounding, where oneness and separateness are emblematic of their nucleus family and extended family.

Explanation of Emerging Themes: The Process of Analysis

Conversations with four Native American women provided the text for the analysis process. Once the reflective discourse was completed, the process of analysis and interpretation began. Through repeated review and reflection salient understanding about the women's lived experiences began to emerge. The movement toward understanding was an assiduous procedure. This laboring process according to Silvers (1984) is "to learn about the nature of what we have been and are becoming" (p. 26). It is a process plagued by paradoxes in which:

> the researcher has to be informed and naive, experienced and fresh, engaged and distanced, focused and open, pushy and patient, all at the same time. She must activate her powers

> sometimes to the point of exhaustion, while she also needs to be playful and relaxed. (Tesch, 1987, p. 240)

A Subjective Framework

Mary Lou Randour (1987) reminds me that "no one group of women can speak for all women" (p. 27). The women whose experiences are shared represent a diversity of Native American backgrounds, ages, and perspectives.

As researcher, participant, and interpreter, I have not attempted to interfere or interpret their stories outside the individual experiences. Instead, I have tried to believe in the aim of the experiences and present the experiences as unique and common among Native American women. This subjective perspective protects the women's cultural integrity.

My most difficult moments have been to trust the process of where the data will lead me, to allow it to "speak for itself." Tesch (1987) calls this human faculty "intuition"--a source of knowing that comes from deep inside. At times my positivism training attempts to control, predict, and manipulate what the participants say--what the data will tell me. Without a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective one could obscure understanding the interpretations the women themselves make of their own lived experiences. As Francine Hultgren (1982) argues:

> human ideas, meanings, and intentions are not like objective things . . . A phenomenological approach is one that fixes on conscious experience and . . . tries to understand how it

> happens and what it means. It is impossible to be anything but subjective in this endeavor. (p. 74)

When viewed within this subjective context, I realized the women's experiences alone would reveal the reality of their lives and help me understand that reality. The shared life experiences were presenting the facts and meanings of these four women's lives. My job as researcher and translator was to have the confidence that understanding would be divulge in the data, that individual description would "speak for itself of the event" (Barritt, 1984, p. 6). Thus, understanding was possible only by cooperating with the direction and movement of the data and the theory that emerges.

I did not want meanings of the women's experiences altered in any way; therefore, efforts to preserve the original conversations has been a major aim. It should be noted that, at times, portions of the dialogue have been excerpted from longer segments of the conversations. When it has been necessary to make deletions in the women's conversations, I have utilized the ellipsis mark (. . .).

Importantly, I have tried to honor the meaning of the women's lived experiences. According to the Personal Narratives Group (1989), the:

> very act of giving form to a whole life--or a considerable portion of it--requires, at least implicitly, considering the meaning of the individual and social dynamics which seem to have been most significant in shaping the life. (p. 4)

In the end, the consequences of the laboring process rendered an interpretation of another's lived experiences, as well as a sense of

gratification and understanding. Most of all, it became an encounter with another's world. It was an encounter filled with anticipation and excitement.

Uniqueness and Commonality: A Unifying Connection

In the analysis process each layer of the women's experiences was pulled apart to uncover the unique and common thematic expressions. The text was searched, individually and collectively, for common and unique themes concealed within the women's lived experiences. The search was for the intersubjective experiences of the women. Once the shared themes were determined, I looked for and identified profound differences within the women's experiences. This allowed for variations that arose from the context.

Uniqueness is part of each woman's self-perception. The need to view "oneself as unique is a potent and continuous force in our society" explains Snyder and Fromkin (1980, p. 3). A guiding principle of the uniqueness theory is:

> individuals want to perceive themselves as having some differences and are constantly struggling with cultural and social forces that inhibit the expression and self-perception of uniqueness. It is the cultural and social forces that seek to deprive us of our uniqueness and the resulting overt and covert attempts to reestablish our self-perceptions of uniqueness . . . (1980, p. 198)

Snyder and Fromkin's (1980) analysis of the human quest for uniqueness offers some insights into understanding the need for individuality. These researchers explored the possibility that specific environments foster a sense of uniqueness. The family, the neighborhood, education, psychotherapy, and the political context are conceptualized as "potential arena for the pursuit of differences" (p. 199) write Synder and Fromkin. However, they carefully point out that these same environments are capable of decreasing uniqueness. Similar findings are echoed by John Red Horse (1983). Indian family values and experiences, he explains, "contribute to a sense of selfhood" (p. 270). It was the experiences that drew these diverse cultures together, and the cultures have given them their common identity and their diversity.

Identification of uniquenesses offered insights and expanded the understanding of the shared experiences among the four women. It is only when the variations are realized that one more fully defines the commonalities. Johnnetta Cole (1986) succinctly responds to the commonalities and differences between women. She asserts, "to address our commonalities without dealing with our differences is to misunderstand and distort that which separates as well as that which binds us as women" (p. 1). Therefore, both the common themes and the unique themes become the phenomenon of interpretation.

The interplay of common themes, although unique to this research endeavor, unite the Native American women to other populations of women and their collectively shared life themes. The unique themes are presented in order to efface the harm that "can be done by sweeping away differences in the interest of an imposed homogeneity" (Cole, 1986, p. 3). A visual presentation of the interpretation process has been captured in a model which I have developed. Connecting these themes to other women's lives, demonstrated within the Translation Model which is explained in the concluding section of this chapter, reveal how other women's lived experiences unify and inform in significant ways.

Concerns of Interpretation

Differentiating unique themes hidden among the common themes was a complex process. I found myself caught in a maze of intellectual struggles as I attempted to gain insight into the variations of the women's lived experiences. Two main issues preoccupied me during the course of my analysis. First, the correctness of the interpretive frames given to the women's experiences was a concern. Will the interpretations add insight or confusion to their experiences? Clearly the context of these conversations are not the only source of information. Rather, my own life experiences, my world, my habitat, the "materialization" of my subjectivity prepared me for the task of interpreter (van Manen, 1984). My experiences as a Native

American woman strongly supported the interpretations that have facilitated deeper levels of comprehension.

My second concern was naturally part of the first. The method of interpretation and the style of presentation were unique and vulnerable to review. The descriptive expressions of the experiences were elements of the phenomenon being explored. A "filebox metaphor" (Tesch, 1987) was avoided to allow for theme overlapping and meshing. Such freedom sanctions a harmony of reflective lived experiences which in turn bring about a hermeneutic understanding of the unique and common experiences under investigation, yet difficult to attain. This interpretive strategy was used in focusing upon the women's lived experiences in order to identify their unique and common experiences.

The Women and Their Unique Lived Experiences

The four women hold membership in four different Native American cultures. They are representative of federally recognized and non-federally recognized Native American women. These four women have willingly shared what it is like to be a contemporary Native American woman experiencing life in an Indian world and in a non-Indian world. In an effort to protect the women and their life experiences, each woman was given an innominate name and identified alphabetically.

Dialogue between the four women and myself was the beginning of words, of language which becames transformed into a living entity. As Anne Cameron (1981) describes in her poem "The Face of the Old Woman,"

> . . . There are women everywhere with fragments
> gather fragments
> weave and mend
> When we learn to come together we are whole. . . (p. 149).

Individually the words of the women, the experiences the women share are only fragments, together they form a contextual whole. Although the search for shared themes was the commencement of the analysis, interpreting unique themes of the individual women was where the written interpretation began. I approached the analysis using the women's stories as the context and a supporting framework of scholarly literature.

Methods that endeavor to restrain uniqueness have been rejected. Instead, the hermeneutic endeavor I engaged in was to dialogically present the unique themes of each woman's lived experiences so that others can willingly choose to make interpretations as a result of the research. Silvers (1984) reveals to us that a hermeneutic study of what we are permits us to see what we might become. It is this being and becoming of the four women and their uniqueness which are now shared.

Adela: A Prized Woman

Adela is a member of the Seneca Tribe from New York. The Seneca tribe, one of the six tribes (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca,

Tuscarora) of the Iroquoian Indian Confederacy located in the northeastern United States, is of matrilineal ancestral descent. Historically, women of the Seneca tribe are not only the controllers of land but are the possessors of great influence. Women give children their name and guide their training. The matriarch is the elder woman who governs the clan, chooses the chief, and holds the power to depose them. It is from the lineage of her mother's matriarch position that Adela received her Seneca training. Such matriarchal domination places Adela in a cultural position of high honor and status. The significance of this cultural lineage, this position of honor, is captured by Adela in this statement:

> "In my family, I grew up with a sense of being a prized person. My parents always said that I was, and my grandparents made me keenly aware of that, too, that being a woman was a very prized thing. So I'm not real sure that I ever had a sense of ever being any different. I always had a sense of being a prized value, a woman, a feminine person."

Such a "prized" perspective of women, as described by Adela, is in conflict with the non-Indian, patrilineal view of women. The subordinate status of women is the norm in our dominant society. On the contrary, the place of the woman in Native American cultures is important and essential, argues Bataille and Sands (1984); women are "responsible for holding the family together, getting jobs, and raising the next generation" (p. 134). It is to Adela's cultural life, family, education, profession, and philosophy that I

turn for the basic constructual aspects of the theme that governs Adela's lived experiences.

Persistent probing into Adela's narrative descriptions of her lived experiences convinced me that the emerging unique theme guiding her life experiences as a "prized person" was self-actualization. During my analysis, I vacillated between Adela's self-description of a "prized person" and the tacit theme that kept surfacing, "self-actualization." Prized woman for Adela was shown to be characterized by achievement, self-confidence, humility, a sense of well-being, and care and concern for others. My intent in this section of the analysis and interpretation was to lay open what is hidden and bring into view the prized woman theme of Adela.

Adela's description of herself as a Seneca woman, as an Indian woman, as a woman, as a feminist, as a prized person, and as one who attained gratification in her profession reminds me of Abraham Maslow's (1973) fulfilled need for self-actualization. Such a need extends beyond the physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs to "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 163). In other words the individual becomes what s/he is "fitted for." "What a [person] can be, [they] must be" (p. 162).

The self-actualized person (Maslow, 1973) has much in common with others, yet at the same time, they are uniquely individual. Maslow described the self-actualized subjects in his research as "more completely

'individual' than any group that has ever been described and yet are also more completely socialized, more identified with humanity, than any other group yet described" (p. 200).

Conversations with Adela authenticated a history of being a prized person. She was not bound by low self-esteem or feeling of incapability. Instead, Adela's motivation toward becoming a prized person was nurtured in the family, in which the women of each generation were made to feel they possessed the power and capability of controlling their own destiny. According to Cross and Cross (1983), "If the person is continually trying to defend him or herself, one cannot concentrate on higher needs" (p. 111). The roots of Adela's prized characterization developed in an environment where positive regard was unconditional.

Her Native American family system offered teachings and protection, and fostered individual achievement, support and pride in achieving a measure of success.

> "My mother was a traditionalist Indian, a Seneca Indian woman. Like myself, Seneca was her first language and she taught me, transmitted on to me, their kind of cultural patterning and the kind of traditions that we have that are part and parcel of my life. It's tied up with who I am, what belief I am, and how I express myself. I believe when you learn your culture and you value your cultural traditions, that makes you who you are. Part of the expression of yourself is based on your cultural values and your cultural patterning."

Adela believed the distinctive roles of her mother provided the foundation for her own personification.

> ". . . my role as a good Indian person, strong Indian woman, my role as a professional person, I think have all been patterned and based on her [mother] view of herself and how I saw her in the family and the role that she played in terms of being a strong, central figure in our family."

Adela spoke of family support and family pride as major contributing factors when she experienced difficult moments, such as her first educational experience away from home. The world Adela knew was the Native American world. Such a world comprised the only culture she knew. The requirement to be absorbed into another world and cope within a social context where complexity, competition, and a caste-like status existed was foreign to her. This new world, an alien world, the educational experience in a non-Indian world was an unpracticed lifeway for Adela. She talked about family support during this time:

> "I think probably the two things that were most helpful to me was my family support and their pride in my success. I had three aunts who were nurses, and they were instrumental in helping me get through [school]. . . there was a time when I remember calling my aunt in New Jersey and telling her that I thought I wanted to quit. I was so homesick and I wanted to go home. She came . . . 'you're staying here,' she said, 'Thompson women don't quit school.' Again she said, 'you are staying here.' She stayed with me for two days. To this day, I know that why I stayed in school was because of her. I just needed that support of close family, so my family support was an extremely important one."

Self-actualization, explains Cross and Cross (1983), takes place in a "supportive, caring environment of positive regard in which experiences are clearly perceived . . . " (p. 112). Thus, the self-actualizer has "a sense of

belonging and rootedness" (p. 110). Adela's sense of grounding was secure.

Adela's desire to be in her safe home environment was very powerful. She wanted and needed someone there who could share and understand what it was like to be an American Indian. The feelings of being one of the last "Mohicans" was ever present. During this crucial educational experience Adela was at a low point. She talked about some of the supporting need that would have helped her through this stressful process.

> "It would have been helpful to have somebody there who was mindful that I came from a different environment . . . just somebody there to say, "It's really different here, people do different things and their style of communication is different and what they value is different from what [you] grew up with". . . But to them it wasn't different, because that was their world, that was all they knew."

Carol Lee Sanchez's (1989) explanation of "empathic" tribal connections may help clarify Adela's desire to return home as well as her internal motivation to remain at school.

> Empathic imprinting of Tribal values and attitudes affect us in both adverse and beneficial ways. When confronted with the alien, antithetical set of values, attitudes, and beliefs held by Euro-Americans on a daily basis, most Tribal Indians were/are unable to compete or succeed in dominant culture institutions and social structures for any length of time. This explained why 'traditional' Indians (our definition of those raised in Tribal traditions on reservations or within interdependent nonreservation Indian communities) frequently dropped out of school, left jobs and extended social activities among non-Indians, and just disappeared for an indefinite period of time. (p. 349)

Ultimately, Adela described the new lifeway she experienced as:

> "the biggest 'enculturating' experience that I had, so it came to very much affect my view of a greater world than the reservation world that I had previously known."

Adela went on to describe her family's pride in her achievements as a major factor in her life:

> "I think, their pride in my success, my immediate family, my mother and father, their pride in my success was the other important part. They not only supported me but they were real proud of me. This was at a time, and still is, when Indian people didn't go off the reservation to go to school; and if they did, they weren't successful. So the support of my family and their pride in my success were . . . important factors."

Adela's Indian education and cultural position of female power became a source of strength when she ventured into the non-Indian world of professional academic education. She remarked:

> ". . . in the academic community, you became keenly, keenly aware of females and women in an all male- dominated environment, and I think my experiences as an Indian woman helped to strengthen my view, my comfort, self-comfort, and my strength of self-esteem as a woman."

Adela's prized characteristic theme is further portrayed in her employment. She attained the highest professional level in academia in a university setting and within her agency of the federal government. She explained that fulfillment and security are important qualities.

> "I guess fulfillment is the most overriding of the two of them. It helps affirm who you are, and for me, employment is an enjoyable aspect of one's life. . . I think I'm the luckiest person . . . I'm exactly where I want to be, doing exactly what I want

> to be doing at this particular point in my life, so it's a very fulfilling thing for me to be doing what I'm doing."

Adela further portrayed her professional fulfillment as:

> "a growth experience. I'm feeling the greatest personal and professional expansion in my whole career right now than I ever have in all the previous thirty years of my employment in nursing. I've always enjoyed being a nurse, truly enjoyed being a nurse, but right now this is a very enjoyable, fulfilling part of my employment, my career. . . I really look forward to coming to work everyday."

Adela's successes in her Native American role, in her professional role prompted me to further affirm her prized nature. During our third conversation, I asked Adela if she had ever perceived herself as less capable than non-Indian persons. She addressed this remark emphatically:

> "Never! I've never felt myself less capable than anybody. I've always been imbued by my family that I'm the equal of anybody."

I inquired further into this inflexible self-confidence. She commented:

> "I think that people make you feel that, [incapableness] outside of yourself. I never felt that way, but I think people would attempt through a lot of their nonverbal sort of attitude that they had, and it had to do with several things. I think it certainly has to do with the fact that you're a woman. And if you're competing, even though I was in nursing, when I was in graduate school, particularly in anthropology, I was the only woman, I was the only American Indian, and I was the only nurse. It was sort of like, three strikes against you. So it was never anything that I personally felt. You're always having to prove yourself, that feeling comes, not from, that never came from me, that came from people who imparted that feeling to you."

Adela's prized qualities would not be complete without sharing some of her caring qualities. These qualities are the textural facets of her role as a nurse and her role as an Indian woman. She told me:

> "I'm a nurse and I'm an Indian woman and I care about coalescing the two of them in being like an embodiment or representation here in headquarters of those two things together, being an Indian woman and representing nursing together. I care about both. They are very much part of what's my very being. That's who I am, that's like a representation of the core of myself, and I care about our obligation and our charge to give nursing care, to provide nursing service to the American Indian people."

Adela's sense of caring is not a separate aspect of her own prized characterization. As Milton Mayeroff (1971) states, "to care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself" (p. 1). Adela's care and concern for her staff to become actualized individuals can be seen in this statement about her commitment to their professional development.

> "I care very much about our staff nurses. . . I care about their development, I care about them being in an environment where they can be happy and productive staff."

Her care and concern for her own prized characterization illustrates the point of unity.

> "I care about representing myself as an Indian woman, not only to the nursing staff, but particularly to the American Indian nurses. . . I want them to know that I view myself here as representing them, and that I'm here to help them go in the direction in the future that I think is important for them to go. I view myself as a facilitator to help them realize their goals.

I'm not here to set the goals for them, I'm here to help them formulate those goals, and we'll do that together."

Adela's administrative style conjoins caring and role-modeling. She has the capacity to attend to her staff's needs and feel related to them in a participative role. Additionally, she integrates her own prized character into that of her staff and finds pleasure in helping them to develop and reach their goals.

Adela's self-perception and the perception she felt others held were not always the same. At times she experienced set-backs in her journey toward self-actualization, however, they were momentary. She did not experience lasting restraint. Although modern life has altered traditional Native American Indian life ways, her tribal family's influence was greater than the non-tribal influence. Adela is a member of the Heron Clan who taught nourishment, thus she was sustained in her prized expansion. Evolving from my encounter with Adela I discovered, in general, she was raised in the warmth of cultural affirmation; her behavior, her role, her very being was validated by her nucleus family, her extended family, and her tribal family. So sacrosanct is her womanhood that no challenge of the dominant society's perception could threaten her sense of who or what she is. Throughout her formative years she was groomed to be the adult woman she became: a self-confident, high-achieving woman who is at peace with herself and others.

What was most illuminating in the narratives of Adela were her lived experiences as an Indian woman, her family support, her education and employment within an Indian world and the non-Indian world, and her caring role. She revealed in the way she speaks and lives that she is a prized Native American woman. She has not ceded her culture to the forces exerted from without, instead she has become capacious enough to blend both worlds.

Ember: A Harmonious Woman

Ember is a Nez Perce and Laguna from Idaho. Her mother is Nez Perce fron Idaho and her father Laguna from New Mexico. The primal cultural foundation for Ember is Nez Perce. The history and the culture of the Nez Perce people is deep and complex, and it encompasses peace and harmony. The reciprocal relationship with the land, with the environment in which they survive, are the noted strengths of their culture. Merrill D. Beal (1963) describes the traditional Nez Perce as "considerable people . . . well endowed with natural resources . . . who found joy and inspiration in the environment . . . and in their bearing and spirit . . . " (p. 13). He found them to have close family ties, extended family members living together, and individuals who engaged in "teaching and counseling one another" (pp. 7-8). Unfortunately, Beal's failure to relate women's tribal contribution in the Nez Perce culture makes for an unbalanced narrative in this tribe's

history. It was from this untold traditional and contemporary cultural perspective that Ember shared her lived experiences, and I learned of her silent, harmonious nature.

It is doubtful that many women of any population feel comfortable describing who they are or what aspects make them a unique human being. Even fewer Native American women are willing to externally describe their internal being. Ember had no problem articulating her harmonious nature; the mystery was mine. As I analyzed the stories of her life, the tacit disposition in her lived experiences continued to elude me. I returned again and again to the sources from which she was speaking. My astucious mind was struggling with her story, her experiences, in search of her theme. At first the theme was surfacing as transformation, then as spirituality but always with feelings of uncertainty, because the tacit theme remained concealed. Intuitively, I knew these two themes contained missing elements to make Ember's experiences reveal a clearer, more complete theme of her experiences. Decisively, I realized the story Ember was sharing was one of harmony encircled by her transformative and spiritual character. It was this interrelatedness of the previous dyad that shaped the theme of harmony in Ember's lived experiences.

Harmony brings to mind pleasing sounds appropriately combined into a beautiful melody. During my conversations with Ember, I observed a silent and heard a spiritual song that was very profound. I was also

observing a "silence" that was obviously cultivated in her younger years. Mary Jose Hobday (1981) expresses that "silence is part of the traditional way of living for the Native American. It is an easy way, for it gives the soft distance between spoken words, body signals, and action choices" (p. 318). For Ember, silence, harmony had become the umbilical cord which supplied balance and vibrations for her essence. Dhyani Ywahoo (1987) believes, "to see the essence of what is, to perceive the harmony and live it, is to accomplish the 'good life.'" I asked myself, "Is this harmonious life that Ember was sharing in her experiences, in her presence, her journey toward the "good life?"

As I engaged in dialogue with Ember, I discovered she was describing the calm, soothing nature that was present when she interacts with other persons. Ember's remarks illustrated the point:

> "I've always thought that I am a very unique person . . . wherever I go I can relate to people and get along with people. And no matter which age, whether the older people, or people my own age, or whether it's children, I'm completely comfortable with everybody."

Ember readily admitted that she is not only unique, but recognized the essence within herself to be uniquely harmonious with persons at all ages.

The notion that there are hierarchical levels is "antithetical to tribal thought" (Allen, 1986, p. 59). During another conversation Ember expressed concern that domination obstructs her human balance and professional responsiveness. She confessed:

> ". . . I don't like to see myself as, at a higher level than somebody else. And maybe in some of what I do, I don't make that present, physical distinction . . . I don't know if you understand what I'm trying to say?"

I sought clarification:

> "Are you trying to say that you look at people as people and you never think about levels?"

Ember responded:

> "Right. And I want them to think of me in that way too. . . Everybody calls me Ember. And I really prefer that. . . I think by trying to make distinctions, well 'I'm a professional,' and people I work with, or work under, think I'm being non-professional. I try not to make that separateness. If they do give me that respect, they can still call me by my first name. To me it's a way of getting a good end product or project done. I find people are more responsive when you can relate in a more personal manner."

Certainly Ember considered herself a professional, in spite of others' perceptions. Importantly, she considered herself unique in communicating and demonstrating her professionalism. For her the existence of separateness was another issue she perceived as hampering and restrictive.

Snyder and Fromkin (1980) point out that some individuals grow up strongly desiring to be unique. The way to determine this desire is to examine the individual's self-perception. Ember's described herself as:

> "a successful professional, in a very different kind of role than Indian women have gone into, being statistical and mathematics, which I don't find many other Indians at all. . . I see myself as strong, and very courageous, and very beautiful."

Again, in Ember's mind she was not only professionally unique, but her description showed she was psychologically unique.

In her role as a leader and in her personal life experiences, she manifested signs of a harmonious life. Ywahoo (1987) reasons "a leader is not to dominate; a leader is a guide like a walking stick . . . and people may move firmly on the road of good relations" (p. 16). Ember's thoughts on leadership are based on cooperation and respect, which are reflective of her own professional biographic philosophy. She remarked:

> "There are very few things you can do by yourself in the workplace. To be a leader, you must have the respect, the recognition, and the support of the people you're working with. Otherwise, you're not a leader."

Again the underlying theme in the leadership Ember described is harmony. That same quality can be concluded in the following narrative she offered:

> "To me it's the same thing that people give to you, you're honest with people, you give workers your respect and acknowledgement of what they're contributing, whatever their abilities. You're able to work well as a team leader and work with a group of people so successfully you can complete whatever, you can make decisions, give discipline when it's necessary. And also being able to teach."

Ember noted that leadership development begins at an early age. She presented an analogy of a football team and cheerleaders to explain her point.

> "When you participate, you learn to be a leader. . . On the football team you worked as a group. You have 11 people, and you have to learn to make decisions, and read other players. But as a cheerleader, you don't. You just stand there and do

> your cheers, but the same thing after another. It's not that you make decisions or anything, once you learn something, that's all you know, you're not after discovery, or you don't have that kind of experience. . . I think the earlier that you work in groups of people, the better you'll be in your later years of life."

There is an underlying presupposition that men develop leadership skills, while women are not engaged in leadership training. Yet, the experience of group activity builds leadership characteristics. Nonetheless, her remarks further confirmed a harmonious character.

Unfortunately, Ember's life was not always harmonious. She offered increasing hints in her stories that she had experienced episodes of unrest and discord. Deeper probing clarified some of the mystery. Ember described her transformative process when she said:

> "I think I've gone through several different phases in my life . . . I make everything that I do in the more positive, positive thinking or positive things . . . it makes a difference in your actions. . . I had gone through very difficult health part of my life . . . I have rheumatoid arthritis, and there's a point when I was in extreme pain, and had a lot of surgery, and at that time had difficulty walking. . . And I had this relationship with this man, who was jealous of my accomplishments and what I was doing . . . and not destroyed but brought down positiveness of my personality and what I wanted to do. . . I had to change all of that . . . it's been a very good change, a very positive in my health."

It is neither luck nor the generosity of others that brought Ember through the transformative phase of her life. The need for maintenance of balance in Ember's life became evident. Ywahoo (1987) overwhelmingly exemplifies the power of balance found in Cherokee teachings:

> In Tsalagi tradition mental health, physical health, and social order are an expression of the proper balance of things. If the individual disturbs or breaks the pattern of balance with self or others, it creates a discordant vibration in the energy meridians of that body and may cause illness and distress. (p. 178-179)

As this statement suggests, when one's cosmic cycles are awry, it can mean not only the loss of health but the "loss of a positive sense of self" (Allen, 1986, p. 210). As Ywahoo (1987) says, "we are in relationship to all that goes on in this universe" (p. 75).

Ember feels one establishes a continual relationship which is holistic. She also believes a negative or unsettled life creates unbalance in specific areas. For example, she said:

> ". . . if you're not in balance as a whole, it shows up in some way. And, to me, it showed up in my health, my arthritis. You know trying to tell me I need to do something or change something in my life. And when I made that change, or became more positive, and, in a sense, more spiritual, it did change."

It appeared that health and a dominating relationship were the causative forces of the negative in Ember's life. She began questioning herself and these forces:

> "What, why is this happening to me? Is it because I need to change something in my life? Why am I going through this and what do I have to learn from this? I think that's difficult to do when you're going through such a difficult time. But I believe, now, with the amount of pain and what I had to deal with and the negativity in the relationship, both of those have made me very strong, very personally strong and able to better take care of myself and learn to make better decisions but also

> to view other people. Maybe in a sense, I help other people come through their difficult times."

Although Ember was questioning and experiencing confusion about her physical health and personal relationship, she realized the need to again relate to the interconnecting threads of the sacred. Her life was rooted in an ancient tradition that was spiritually based. The modern philosophy of Christianity is separate from the traditons that are her very being. She illustrated how this integration and separation takes place in the following statement:

> "I really did not and don't go to many Christian church things. Church was never a major part of my life. I've learned to recognize that there is a higher spirituality, and I think moving away from the negative . . . the church and everything was a hard thing because that's the only thing, the negative, I could relate to with religion and the church . . . When you let that go and say, 'yes, there is a higher being than me, and because of this higher being, I exist, or the world exists,' then you become appreciative and thankful."

Ember was able to clarify several things. She recognized contraditions in the Christian philosophy. Such an adverse philosophy to her own spiritual philosophy left her with very negative feelings. Ember was also portraying that the "Higher Being" and religion are not necessarily bedfellows.

Ember's spiritual connection to the higher being was through meditation. She said:

> "I find because I do meditation and visualization, I'm connecting more with the higher being because, well, maybe mediation is a form of prayer. But for it to be more acceptable

> to me, it's mediation, because prayer is a negative thing associated with the church."

During meditation Ember engages in a silence that is part of her nature to enhance her spirit. Hobday (1981) reveals the strength of silence in Native American traditions. She suggests that "part of the understanding of silence as a spiritual value has to do with waiting," (p. 320) with practiced silence. For example, at gatherings, meetings, ceremonials, and in worship services, "they wait, giving everyone time to get settled. . . there are often long silences. But the waiting is part of the action, not divorced from it" (p. 320).

Ember's platform for her social and psychological transformation was inclusive not only of a positive self image for herself, but to project a positive self image for others to see. The self-questioning, the recognition of a higher being, the meditation, and the silence allowed her to reconnect with an inner self that had become alienated by the negativity. She realized:

> "I had to become more positive . . . physically and mentally. . . I think spirituality is a result of that. . ."

Ember had come to the realization that not only transformation but spirituality was part of the support system she was cultivating. The two were part and parcel of each other. Her world experiences were being infused with the spiritual, the sacred. It became a reverting to what Polingaysi Qoyawayma [Elizabeth White] (1964) called the "Indian way."

Ember was searching for and engaging in a life purpose.

> "I think everybody on this planet has a purpose in being here. I was put on this planet to have some kind of purpose."

Without mistake, I was interested in the purpose she had in mind. When asked, "Is it up to us to find out what that purpose is?" She responded:

> "I think the things that we end up doing are part of our purpose, but . . . if you don't believe in a higher being, I don't think you follow it as closely or get to where or what you're supposed to be doing as quickly. . . In the end you really have to decide what you want to do and go forward with that. Because you have to make your decisions and be responsible for them. And take what comes with them."

Although there is little evidence that contemporary Native Americans are engaged in consciously seeking a vision, I suspected Ember was describing her vision quest. As Hobday (1981) notes,

> wisdom and understanding can come from the quest. All spiritual traditions consider what is noble, what leads to peace and good living with others, what teaches the most generous way to give oneself away to life, in order to come to live with meaning and direction. . . visions are about how to live. . . In everyday life we climb and hunt. We search, and sometimes we find. (p. 326)

Transformation and spirituality, in Ember's lived experiences, have necessarily been united to achieve harmony. This is the private story, the lived experiences, of a Nez Perce woman who has shared her quest for a harmonious life. To paraphrase Hobday (1981), Ember's fences were down to allow her spirit space to roam and to make space for her harmony to travel far and become a vision for others. As Ember has emphasized and

Beal (1963) states,

> the individual had high status. He [she] was never dominated; freedom of action was understood and observed. He [she] was expected to discover a sense of destiny and pursue it for the good of all. (p. 7)

Jena: A Vigilant Woman

Jena is a Lumbee Indian from North Carolina. Jena's Indian definition or tribal descent was not the central uniqueness which sets her apart as a "vigilant" woman, although it is a vital component. Other factors contributed to her watchful nature, notably her environment.

Jena grew up in Robeson County North Carolina, where the tri-racial population of American Indian, Blacks, and Whites are almost equally divided. Being a part of a tri-cultural environment was cause enough to be "living on the fringes," to be "ever-vigilant." And rightly so, Native Americans, blended or full-blooded, understand all too well that standing in the path of America's progress or of the dominant society's passage, is not healthy. At first the risk of removal was at stake; now the risk is emotional and cultural genocide.

"Defining who American Indians were was not an issue prior to the arrival of Europeans" declares Thornton (1987, p. 186). However, before a clear understanding can be gained about the theme dominating Jena's lived experiences, it is necessary to present a brief historical overview of the

theories that surround her tribe's origin. According to Russell Thornton (1981), origin explanations are:

> critically important to a people and tend to be revered and accepted at face value. Individuals typically do not like to discuss whether the stories are literally true; to do so is often considered heresy. There is some cognitive incongruity, however, for more than one explanation may be present in a society. Western societies today have systems of belief blending traditional, religious, and scientific knowledge, and each system may have its own unique explanation of a people's origin. (p. 3)

Although the Lumbee are the largest tribe of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River they remain, according to Adolph Dial (1985), an "invisible people." The perplexity of the Lumbee's origin has obscured their place in American history.

It was not my purpose to address major theoretical issues of the origin of Native Americans. Yet, some origin stories were part of the native expression of the Lumbee people and help account for Jena's vigilant character.

Several theories about the origin of the Lumbee Indians are offered by Dial (1985). Some historians believe them to be "descendants of the Hatteras Indians of costal North Carolina and the famous 'Lost Colony' of 1587; others believe them to be descendants of Eastern Sioux tribes located in the North Carolina area" (p. 85). A less substantiated theory show the Lumbees to be of "Cherokee descent." The Lost Colony theory, claims Dial, is perhaps most accepted by the Lumbee. "Confusion" is the result, argues

Thornton (1987), "as decisions regarding the tribal status of various American Indian peoples were made, since there were no clear-cut procedures for achieving recognition" (p. 195). Whatever the procedures, conflicting explanations continue to be debated by historians and have created technical definition problems for the Lumbee peoples.

The effects of dissension and strife of one's origin may put the individual in a defensive position. On the other hand, pressure to constantly explain and justify one's existence can actually fortify an individual's identity. Jena recounted a stressful incident imposed by another:

> ". . . when I first came to Washington, it was the first time I went to a meeting of the National Congress of American Indians, I wound up in tears because somebody told me, in effect, that my people were not Indian. I was 22-two years old and in law school. I said, 'Have you ever been down there to visit my people?' 'No.' 'So how can you say whether they're Indian people there or not? You have a standing invitation to go visit. My parents will treat you well. Go down there and visit, you'll see, you'll find there are Indian people there.'
>
> It was very interesting because then I graduated from law school, I came to work for the House Indian Affairs sub-committee. . . less than two years . . . he asked me to do something for his tribe. . . over the years we've gone back and forth, and if I need to scream and yell at him, I get up and scream and yell . . . point my finger in his face. I don't really care what he thinks about me now, but I guess I did then because I was young and I was at a meeting, you know, surrounded by Indians.
>
> It hurt a lot to be told that you were not something that you've been all your life, and had paid the dues for being. You know, it doesn't matter to me now, I'm far more confident, it doesn't matter to me what anybody thinks, I know who I am and where I'm from. And if they want to say we're not Indian,

> you know, I don't care, but at that young and tender age, it did make a difference. There are a lot of them now, I'm sure there still are, but then, particularly, there were a lot of Indian bigots out there--I'm more Indian than you are, that kind of thing--and when I first came to Washington, that was something that many of us who were here from home had to deal with."

At the moment of Jena's sharing this story, the anger she experienced as a result of this confrontation was still present. Her narrative is offered because seldom is such an explicitly stated interpretation of an ethnocentric bias found. As Leslie Marmon Silko (1981) relates in Storyteller "I will not change the story, . . . The story must be told as it is" (p. 31).

This entire episode/story confirmed that being a member of a non-federal tribe can, at times, be devastating. To be told you are not who you think you are puts the individual in an awkward position and has serious consequences for the immediate victim. Moving into an alien environment is a frightening experience for a Native American. An even more terrifying experience is to have that person's Indianness or identity attacked, especially if the individuals' convictions differ.

Jena's observant nature began as a child. Early experiences of less than equitable situations began in her community and educational surroundings. In conversation, Jena recalled:

> "As a child, I remember the "white-only" sign. And I remember the Indian children riding the long school buses with the white children going on the short buses through the countryside. I got some of the books that had white names in them . . . so I

> knew the white schools got the new books and we sometimes got their used books."

Jena was not permitted to ride the short buses to attend school; neither was she given the opportunity to learn from current books. As an Indian child, she had to settle for a community that rejected part of its citizens and provided a second-best educational system. Jena and her fellow Indian classmates were perceived to be less capable academically than children from the dominant culture.

Jena's narrative is analogous to the frustrating story told to Polingaysi Qoyawayma [Elizabeth White] (1964) by one of her fellow educators.

> Mrs. White, you've been through this. You should know the angles. What am I to do? My supervisor says I must stop teaching my pupils science and higher mathematics, because those subjects are too difficult for them and cannot be grasped by the Indian mind. But, I tell you! There's nothing wrong with the minds of my pupils. Some of them are exceptionally brilliant. They'll go far in the world if they are well trained. I've already brought them to a realization of the value of learning and they're eager to forge ahead. They're making good grades in first-year algebra. Does that look as though their brains were inferior? (p. 172-173)

These two episodes are examples of the deeply held assumptions by individuals who deem superiority that other human beings, in this case specifically Native Americans, are internally and externally inferior.

In the process of making sense of these situations and the actions of other persons, I wanted to more precisely define and interpret such realities

that appeared to be a part of the Native American's life experiences. I asked myself if Jena's vigilant nature was partly the result of such misplaced assumptions. I felt the only way to begin addressing my curiosity was to seek a better understanding of her culture. Jena told me her Native American heritage is:

> "a blending of Indian ways that survived since we took the early onslaught of settlers. . . Things that survived and were blended with some of the things that I think our people felt were good or worthwhile or important from the dominant society. . . we have a blending of Indian ways, old Southern ways, and I guess a love of the land, a caring for the land but then also blending in Christianity."

The blending Jena was talking about included other areas of her life and herself.

> "There is language, it's not a uniquely Indian language . . . just idioms, colloquial expressions, but it is a type of language and it is blended and many of our people are also blended. I'm blended, and I'm very proud of what I am. I can't change it. . . I grew up in the Indian community, and that's who I am. . . Whatever mixture racially, makes no difference, it's what I am culturally and what I am inside, in my heart, and which group of people I identify with."

Jena accepted her blended Indian culture with pride. There was no desire to change who she is or her blending.

On the contrary Mary Crow Dog in her autobiography Lakota Woman (1990), explains growing up with a sense of wanting to change her blended heritage.

> I have white blood in me. Often I have wished to be able to purge it out of me. As a young girl I used to look at myself in

> the mirror, trying to find a clue as to who and what I was. My face is very Indian, and so are my eyes and my hair, but my skin is very light. Always I waited for the summer, for the prairie sun, the Badlands sun, to tan me and make me into a real skin. (p. 9)

Leslie Marmon Silko (1975) and N. Scott Momaday (Velie, 1982) also relate blended heritages. Silko describes her ancestry as:

> My family are the Marmons at Old Laguna on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation where I grew up. We are mixed bloods--Laguna, Mexican, white--but the way we live is like Marmons, and if you are from Laguna Pueblo you will understand what I mean. All those languages, all those ways of living are combined, and we live somewhere on the fringes of all three. But I don't apologize for this any more--not to whites, not to full bloods--our origin is unlike any other. (p. 230).

Momaday's views on identity, according to Velie (1982), are "strongly existential. People create their own identity; Indians are people who think of themselves as Indians" (p. 15). These views may be the result of Momaday's own cultural diversity and his childhood experiences. His father was Kiowa and his mother Cherokee. Momaday considers himself to be a Kiowa Indian who spent his early life on Indian reservations in the Southwest.

Cognizant of Jena's heritage, I continued my inquiry of her vigilant theme. During my third conversation with Jena, I asked for clarification of the "ever-vigilant" nature she was sharing. Jena told me:

> "I have used it [ever-vigilant] a great deal in the context of discrimination and looking around me and trying to be sure that that's not happening to me, and if it is, I want to know that it's happening. But . . . not just in the context of

> discrimination . . . I need to be ever-vigilant as to what this department's doing to Indian education, as to what little games are being played here, with Indian preference, and those various things. And, perhaps, if you don't always understand what's going on, but you at least record what's happening, then later on you can kind of see a pattern and piece things together. I think we all need to be vigilant as to what's happening to Indian people and what is being said that's being done for us, and to determine whether it's being done for us or to us."

There it was discrimination and professional vigilance. Although former encounters with discrimination had left it's mark, alertness for all less than equitable situation had taken a foothold. Jena had consciously become a protector, a "guarding angel" of every situation she encountered and her Native American people encounted which intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated forms of discrimination. Her parents and her law degree had prepared her personally, analytically, and professionally to be vigilant.

Jena's father was influential in her life experiences and teachings. She spoke of her father as a friend and special pal.

> ". . . I was for many years a 'daddy's girl'. . . When I talk to my dad, it's often business. . . The thing that was instilled in me by my dad was, 'honey take care of yourself, you don't owe anybody anything.' . . He was very progressive with me, yet with my mother he was chauvinistic."

Jena didn't quite understand her father's ways, but they were never questioned. On the contrary, she developed great respect for her father and great admiration for her mother.

> ". . . he was a brilliant man, a sharp thinker. He was quite a politician and still thinks in those terms. . . I got a lot of my intellect and my interest in politics and dealing with people from my dad. . . My dad's a strong person. So while I got strength from him in dealing with the outside world, I got strength from my mom in dealing with myself, from her a lot of the standards of life. I want a clean body and a decent home, and I don't mind working hard for it."

Both Jena's parents were palmary in her view. Together, they were responsible for her reality, for her personhood.

> "I always say that what's good in me comes from my parents and my community because of the encouragement that I received. . . and that had such an impact. Then whatever is not too good, I did that myself."

Dhyani Ywahoo (1987) in her teachings of Cherokee wisdom speaks that "being a parent is an opportunity to serve. It is also a responsibility and a duty to bring forth beauteous being for . . . the nation" (p. 222).

Equipped with the strengths of her parents and a tri-racial community, Jena moved from long school buses and used school books of her youth to the national arena of education to continue her vigilance. It is really difficult to be comfortable when one feels the need to forever be on guard, on duty. Yet, it is a role she has accepted in her professional commitment to work with Indian education. Jena's vigilance are echoes of what Moses and Wilson (1985) notes to be important. They write, "vigilance as to their own rights and responsibilities is as important today for American Indians as at other times in their histories" (p. 2). These researchers are implying that we need persons to be vigilant as to what is

happening to them inside and outside of society's political spheres. Jena was being vigilant on all political fronts.

Jena's demographic location did not matter; her watchful nature persisted.

> "I noticed when in California, you're still always watching, always watching. . . I don't know if that's good or if that's bad, or if that's adding extra burden to my own being, I don't know what it will accomplish, but I know it's there, still, ever-vigilant, in social situations not so much in business situations. . . I don't know if I'm wasting time and effort and emotion dealing with that, but somehow it just pops up. You know, and you just observe, and look and watch and wait and see."

Jena questioned her watchful disposition. As observer, Jena lies in wait for signs of imparity that might appear, mindful that none will escape her. The watch was for signs of equality. Jena was very much aware that the well-intentioned individuals who believe people are being treated fairly can be perpetuators of oppression. In almost all situations Jena reflects upon being sentry of her social environment. She described her sentinel habit in law school.

> "I had to often just stand back and watch how to feel in certain situations, in social situation that I might be put in."

Somewhere inside, Jena knew the germination and growth of an obligation to be watchful for the profound changes that would affect her as an Indian person. Kenneth Lincoln (1983) observes that 'being Indian' today "can mean living uneasily among white people . . ." (p. 185). It becomes an emotional drama that unfolds not only internally but externally

as the Native American attempts to meet the demands and expectations to be a conformer and participant in the dominant society. Certainly the theme "ever-vigilant" governing Jena's unique life experiences is analogous to the child's world that Gardner Murphy (1974) describes:

> They will immerse themselves in the world; they soak themselves in it's rich qualities. It's endless problems and challenges are intrinsically appealing. Now and then it hurts them, and they learn how to avoid the recurrence of such hurts; but in general it is a rich and commanding world which they must understand and with which they must come to terms. (p. 16)

The implication here is that Jena has accepted and become a full participant in her world with the challenges and hurts, as well as the rewards, it can and does offer. She has acquired the necessary skills to react and talk to:

> the powers of the self as the Apache do. Our songs come from those inner powers. We keep them alive when we sing to them. That way a power knows you are trying to tell it something. It knows when it hears your songs. And when a power hears your songs it wants to listen. If you don't sing your songs, but somebody else's then a power won't know where to find you; it won't know how to work for you. (Moustakas, 1974, p. 21)

Jena's power song is called "vigilance," and she sings her own song. In spite of all these dramatic events Jena does not perceive herself, her culture, her identity to be unwonted. She described how her childhood background has basically remained with her over the years.

> "I don't think I moved, I moved physically, I moved intellectually, you know, learning experiences, but I don't think

> I've ever moved away from the background of my childhood. Because that's all a part of you and you take it with you, and that's probably what makes me vigilant, looking around to be sure that something not quite equitable is happening. I'm always looking for that, and, you know, that because it's my background, my childhood."

However, incidents over the years have expanded her perceptions. She related:

> "When I went to California, I'd had never really dealt with a non-Indian community, I mean you come to Washington, that's a metropolitan area, but you're not involved in community. You have friends, you go out and you have people over, but still it's not a community setting. When I was in California . . . I was actually involved in community. And it was interesting, I made a lot of friends, and I never really knew that I could do that outside of an Indian community, that I would want to do that outside an Indian community. Once you get into it, it's interesting and you want to help people wherever they are and whoever they are and whatever color they are. That was a side of me that I didn't know existed. But I don't think, down deep, that I've changed as far as how I perceive myself as an Indian and as a Lumbee; I don't think that's changed."

Even though her vigilant nature would not change, Jena had finally been confronted with the experiences of another world in a very different way. In a sense Jena was experiencing other cultures, another world; it was an expansion and not coercion. She was engaging in activities that pulled her into another perspective, another world. Although Jena had learn to participate in more than one culture, her Lumbee history and identity would forever be the source of her cultural tap root and the tri-racial environment of her youth the beginning of a lifetime of vigilance for a more egalitarian society.

Lander: A Struggling Woman

Lander is Narraganset from Rhode Island. In 1984 the Narraganset Tribe was granted federal recognition by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Lander was instrumental in supplying the tribal history of the Narraganset, which encompassed more than 600 years, to become a federally recognized tribe. She compared her traditional ways to:

> "going for a walk and you know where you want to go, and it's just remembering all the different things you see along the way."

Lander's comparative rhetoric set the stage for the cultural perspective she pursued throughout our dialogue. Although the topics of our conversations were initiated by me, Lander often shaped the narrative agenda around the story she needed to put forth. She had a profound skill for sharing her experiences and at the same time expanding the personal narrative she constructed in order to interpose understanding of her lived experiences.

Lander spent her younger years in a very rural area of Rhode Island. Her family was poor by today's living standards. She recalled:

> "We didn't have electricity, we didn't have running water, we didn't have all the modern conveniences. We lived in what they term now as a tar-paper shack, and we never wore shoes in the summertime, but I still recall that as one of the most peaceful, wonderful times that I had."

At the time Lander was unaware of being impoverished. Those placid, peaceful times she remembered so fondly have changed. The major themes clearly emerging in Lander's narrative was a story of struggle and conflict.

The struggle and conflict uncovered in Lander's lived experiences is only one component of her uniqueness. Instead, what is most unique is the power base Lander has developed and the growth she has experienced as a result of her struggle and conflict.

Jean B. Miller (1986), in her study of conflict, notes two important factors that concern women and conflict. She writes that "conflict is a necessity if women are to build for the future. . . and . . . conflict is an inevitable fact of life and is not bad by any means" (p. 125). However, as women, we are cultured to view conflict as fearful and sinister instead of a major "source of strength" (p. 126) as Miller implies.

Lander's home environment was a haven of harmony and trust, and its members' respect for the earth and its habitants were the norm. At home, conflict and struggle were not identifiable. She spoke with enthusiasm about the teachings of her father:

> "As a child, I was taught that everything lived within harmony and it didn't matter whether it was a water spider gliding across the water or a frog waiting for a fly, I could pay attention to all aspects of life. . . one could learn from the animals . . . animals could teach you more than people. . . people tell you one thing and mean something entirely different . . . whereas an animal shows true feelings. . . I was taught if one had respect for the earth as to how it has been formulated and the balances that are created within it . . . then you know . . . everything was put there for a reason."

Teachings of harmony with the earth's creation were initiated at home. There were other teachings Lander would learn in the non-Indian

community. Those teachings were not about harmony or "waking up every morning and looking at the sun and feeling the beauty within the earth" as Lander was describing.

Lander shared with me what she had been given in her safe home environment, but I also needed to know about the learning she had gained from the dominant society. Importantly, I needed to be sure about my thematic findings exposed in our dialogues. During one of my conversations with Lander I began by sharing my presumptions about the tacit struggle and conflict theme. The following conversation ensued:

> MB: "As I reviewed our talk, I have and am feeling that the entire episode, that your life experiences, have been a story of struggle and conflict, and more than that, a fight for physical and cultural survival, even from the time you were a child. And that struggle is still going on."
>
> Lander: "Oh, it most certainly is. . . all Indian women or Indian people need to know that anyone that identifies with their tradition and their culture, and want to achieve, there is always someone trying to stop you in that process. I think it is essential that a very firm background and basis and determination goes along with it, because even when one feels that they have met all the obstacles, others appear . . . unless the person is willing to follow through, it can destroy everything that they are striving for. I think that the one thing that I am now sure of, now more than ever before, is that one never knows where any opposition or resistance is going to come from . . . my concept is that I should be able to go as far as I want. Other people feel that I have gone far enough and I should go no further, therefore they put up new obstacles."

The banner Lander was waving was not hers alone; it belonged to other Native American women. Her theme was shouting to be heard and saying

more than one thing. Lander was implying that Native American women must expect conflict as they pursue self-definition and self-determination. In addition, she was suggesting and warning not only herself but other Native women to prepare and not be swallowed up when the struggle for advancement approaches. Stand firm and continue in the race toward your goals regardless of the barriers was the crux of her message.

Struggle, for Lander, did not begin when she had safely reached professional status. It has been a life-long companion. As a child, she engaged in physical warfare to defend her identity. Lander remembered her introduction to the non-Indian world as:

> "not a very favorable one. . . we [Lander and her older sister] were called names, they threw things at us, and it was like a fight for survival. . . I had a bloody nose, I had lost a tooth . . . And I fought, and I was crying. . . I will never forget, in fact I did not want to leave our community. It was a very shocking, horrible introduction . . . It wasn't any fun out there. All of the things my mother had read to us from the Bible . . . stories that my father had told us, from the old Indian stories, none of that was true because the people weren't very nice . . . it was so traumatic . . ."

As a child Lander parents taught her people were good and to love one another, "the Bible said so," the "Indian stories said so," therefore, it must be so. In her fight for survival Lander realized the stories were like a fable, a myth, and the people she met were a fake. Later she began to feel they were out to physically obliterate her. Meeting the dominant society required her to forge new defenses in order to endure a hostile world.

By the time Lander reached high school her struggle had the same mask but a slightly different body size. The physical battle had become emotional warfare. Lander spoke of a time when "everyone considered me to be different." Lander explained the circumstances of her difference.

> "I didn't realize how different until the principal had planned for . . . the entire senior class to go to the local university for senior day. I got all dressed up in my best and I was ready to go and the teacher told me I couldn't go, she said, 'because you cannot go to the school where the others are going.' They wouldn't tell me why. All the other students that were going to college were allowed to go. I'll never forget the teacher's name or the classroom. I was totally broken-hearted and I was discouraged. I remember I sat there and cried and I couldn't figure out what was wrong. My mother and father knew that I was supposed to go and when I got home they said, 'you know, how was it, how was your day at the university, what did you see?' I was so upset. I said, 'I couldn't go, they wouldn't let me go' . . . I got over that, but it still stayed with me."

Lander did not understand racism. At home she was taught courage, love, and equality. Away from home it took all her stamina to stay alive emotionally and physically. Away from home equality did not exist. Lander knew she was an American Indian and she knew she was different but without understanding. "Why?" was always her major question. Answers were difficult to obtain. Lander would not get over the covert messages of racism.

In Lakota Woman (1990), Mary Crow Dog talks about her experience with racism.

> I was too small to know about racism then. When I was in the third grade some relatives took me to Pine Ridge and I went

> into a store. It was not very big, a small country grocery. One of my teachers was inside. I went right to the vegetable and fruit bins where I saw oranges just like the one I always got on Christmas. I sure wanted one of them. I picked the biggest one. An uncle had given me a nickel to go on a wild spree with and I wanted to use it paying for the orange. The store owner told me, "A nickel ain't enough to pay for one of them large Sunkist navel oranges, the only ones I got. Put it back." I still remember that. I had to put that damned orange back. Next to me, the waiscum teacher saw me do it and she made a face saying out loud, so that everyone in the store could hear it: "Why can't those dirty Indians keep their hands off this food? I was going to buy some oranges, but they put their dirty hands on them and now I must try to find some oranges elsewhere. How disgusting!" It made a big impression on me, even though I could not understand the full meaning of this incident. (pp. 20-21)

How could either of these women forget? The pain of being different, of being rejected, the pain of racism, would always be a part of their memory. It was hard to be American Indian. Lander remarked, "I think being rejected is one of the most painful things that can happen to anyone." This experience was only the beginning of other episodes of rejections.

Fears of rejection and the need to prove herself followed Lander when she became a college nursing student.

> "I was so scared because I knew that the smartest kids that I ever knew were on both sides of me, and I was the dumbest one sitting there, and I thought, I've got to prove to the teachers, to the Dean of Women, and to my mother that I can do it. They believed in me, and if they believed it, then I knew that I could, you know, do it."

As a college student Lander considered herself to be as intellectually capable as the two students sitting beside her, and inside she had the

determination to succeed. However, she was frightened and felt "dumb and voiceless." She was paralyzed with two forces, fear and silence. Internally she was in a paradoxical vice.

Mary Belenky (1986) and her fellow researchers found a population of women who felt "deaf and dumb." Although the women were endowed with "gifts of intelligence" they experienced feelings of silence and felt voiceless (p. 24). These silent women were deficient in self-confidence; certainly they were incapable of utilizing their intellectual ability. Belenky believes that:

> . . . individuals grow up to see themselves as "deaf and dumb" when they are raised in profound isolation under the most demeaning circumstances, not because of their genetic intellectual endowment. That anyone emerges from their childhood years with so little confidence in their meaning-making and their meaning-sharing abilities . . . signal the failure of the community to receive all of those entrusted into its care. (p. 34)

Earlier episodes of being degraded in the educational setting added to Lander's fear and silence. However, she discovered early in life that she could escape the piercing hurt and rejection imposed on her by others. Her source of power came from make-believe. She reflected:

> "I found that I could pretend to be anything that I wanted to be. I found that was a great gift to be able to pretend. Because when you start pretending you can dream and believe, and if you believe it, you know the old saying, it's what your mind can conceive and you will believe you can achieve. I think I found that out very early."

Through pretending, Lander was able to change the struggles and conflict she constantly confronted into coping assets. She developed self-composure and patience. Lander explained:

> ". . . it takes more courage not to fight than it does to fight. . . I experienced that by reacting. I could not accomplish anything. I was the one that had to suffer. By getting angry the first time, I had to take my hard-earned money that I was trying to get through school, and go to school in the summer time to take the course again. I also had a chance to think as to what my parents had told me, 'You can get upset, you can get angry, but you have to control it. Because if you lash out, they're gonna strike back and it will change the issue. It will change the whole perspective. But if you want to make your point, let them know that you are as big as they are' . . . it hurts real bad. But I pretend that, they really didn't mean it, they didn't understand."

Lander's experience with anger brought additional struggle; yet as an alternative, she found that her ability to pretend put her at the same level as her adversary. Jerry and Pauline Cross (1983) share Piaget's theory that for the individual to grow from their struggles, they must deal with their problems on their own.

The explosive episodes of struggle and conflict in Lander's lived experiences made life harder for her. She spoke of secret adversaries:

> "There were always people that I was unaware of and that I did not know that they were against what I was doing or what I was trying. . . I think that the struggle of Indian women today is far from over."

Again, Lander never considered her struggle to be her own but one shared by other Native women. Struggle is common in the dominant society, but

viewed differently in the Native American society. The tribal view of the Native women is best explained by Paula Gunn Allen (1986):

> The tribe see women variously, . . . Sometimes they see women as fearful, sometimes peaceful, sometimes omnipotent and omniscient, but they never portray women as mindless, helpless, simple, or oppressed. (p. 44)

On the contrary, non-Indian women look for their struggle to be authenticated by a society who considers their ideas and voices to be valueless. As a result their struggles are filled with anger and pain. Belenky and her colleagues (1986) studied women's ways of knowing and found some women who determined themselves to be mindless and voiceless; others felt incapable of creating knowledge; another group viewed knowledge as personal and private; still others connected ideas instead of mastering them; and lastly some women sought understanding in lieu of proof.

Limits and oppression placed upon the Native woman are burdens imposed by the dominant society. The multitude of obstacles today's Native and non-Native women must overcome will depend as much upon future intellectual trends and the level of equality achieved as upon the cultural existence of people.

From all indications Lander's struggles are far from over, but the skill with which she meets such encumbrance and opposition is a story of courage. During my last visit with Lander she explained that her struggles

and conflicts were continuing. She had made application for an administrative job, "I was the only woman of all the applicants that applied." During this process she had encounted opposition although she was unaware of the origin of the opposition or why it had been erected. Lander considered it another hurdle to overcome. She told me:

> "It's like going into battle, you know you're going and you're not sure as to the outcome, but it's something that has to be done if you're going to make change. . . When you run into barriers or balks, then you regroup, get yourself together and then continue on."

When Lander did not get the results she was seeking, she faced or confronted and dealt with it accordingly. She determined that education is the key; it is a way to succeed

in struggle and conflict.

> "Education is the only way that it's going to be accomplished. . . to get to the top of the ladder.
>
> It's an educational process; you can't go in there blindfolded. It can't be inherited; it can't be given to you. It's something that through education you develop, you nurture. And so it doesn't matter what field it's in, it's an educational process to be able to get there and to be able to handle it."

The Women's Shared Thematic Experiences

In this section, I want to elaborate on the procedural strategy that I employed when interpretations were made. Next, I will present and propose five common themes which unify the four Native American women's lived experiences. Additionally, I will suggest a model to demonstrate how

the researcher and these four women's lived experiences are connected to other populations of women and themes they hold in common.

At times it was difficult to separate the themes because they were intimately interwoven and built upon each other in multiple ways. When this happened, it was best to allow the data to determine the direction of the analysis and interpretation process. Permitting this to happen, I believe, prevented obscuring the stories that shaped the women's lived experiences and offered more comprehensive interpretations and deeper understanding.

During the process of analyzing the Native American women's experiences, several major themes have emerged from the initial interaction with the women and from their narratives.

1. Spirituality,
2. Cultural expression or "Indianness,"
3. Bonding of mother-daughter relationships,
4. Experiences of oppressive Racial Discrimination,
5. A deep sense of "Reciprocity/Inclusiveness."

The foregoing common themes, pulled from the women's conversations, were blended to show how they collectively shared life experiences. To organize the phenomenological descriptions of the women's lived experiences, van Manen's (1984) approaches (thematical, analytical, exemplificative, existential, or exegetical) were the methods utilized. When

applying the thematical approach, I relied on the women's narratives to understand what it was like to be a Native American woman living in a non-Indian environment and thus to identify themes unique and common to their lives. To use the analytical approach, I drew extensively from literary descriptions to analyze and illuminate the women's cultural lives as they described in the narratives of their everyday life experiences. The exemplificative approach allowed me to protract examples of the woman's experiences of living in multiple worlds. The existential approach allowed for the women's expressions of their existence and being to surface. Finally, exegetical approach provided the means for making critical interpretations from the dialogue I had with the women and writings and works from other phenomenological authors.

The aforementioned strategy figured significantly in lucid interpretations of the women's lived experiences which in turn led to a greater understanding of what it means to be a Native American woman living biculturally.

The following phenomenological descriptions and thematic dialogues reveal the subjective experiences shared by the Native American women.

Theme One: Spirituality

The principal shared theme to emerge from the women's lived experiences was spirituality. In our contemporary society, modes of religion

and spirituality have become synonymous. In this research, interpretive distinctions between the two were made, specifically by the women themselves. Joan Wolski Conn (1986) argues that distinguishing qualities are worthy of explaining. She notes contrasting differences between women's spirituality and feminist spirituality. Conn's research asserts that spirituality from a religious perspective is narrow, and spirituality from a philosophical or a psychological perspective is constrictive. It follows that spirituality from merely a cultural perspective is also confining. Therefore, the approach for examining spirituality from the Native American women's perspective combined the cultural, the philosophical, the psychological, and the religious perspective.

In my conversation with the women about spirituality, I asked each of them, "What meaning does spirituality have for you?" Their responses were very connected and showed thematic unity to the traditions of their culture, to their philosophical beliefs, to their psychological being, and to their religious practices.

Adela said:

> "I think spirituality is something deep, it's, it's deeper than organized religion. Spirituality is tied up with your view of people, your view of man, the goodness of man, the relationship that man has with being a part of the greater overall system, the relationship that you have with all other living things in the world. So your spirituality is part of your total consciousness of yourself in relationship to all other things and aspects of being within your life that goes beyond religiosity,

> it's part and parcel of who you are, it's the depth of your, your feelings about all of humanity."
>
> MB: "I am really interested in you saying that spirituality goes beyond religion, it's deeper. With that depth, has that been a means for you to survive in our greater world?
>
> Adela: "Surely. I think it gives you, in the really rough times of your life, the sustenance to continue. It gives you the nurturance to continue on, to survive, to be able to deal with some of the really rough times of your life and with other aspects of your being. If you did not have spirituality, if you didn't have that basic belief, if you didn't have a core structure that represented your strength, I don't think a person could survive without it."

Ember proclaimed:

> "Without my spirituality I don't think I can achieve what I want to achieve. It has to be there. To me, your spirituality is your soul, and you can't go anywhere without your soul. The soul gives you your direction."

For Ember the spirit and spirituality dictates the direction one chooses to take. She further explained:

> "In the whole process of life, I think . . . the spirit is the major part of who and what you are and what direction you go.

Jena articulated her spirituality as her inner self:

> ". . . my spirituality is me. You know, it's a blending of all the things I've learned over the years and what I feel, how I see the world, how I interact with people, what I try to accomplish, how I try to treat people. It's me."

What was a part of Jena, what was more acceptable for her was the internal dimensions for the sacred, for humanity. She emphasized:

> "my spirituality, what I deal with is down inside me, all that other stuff is somebody else's idea of how things ought to be. I've got to do what feels right for me."

MB: Tell me about that inside, that's what I want to hear.

> Jena: "What that is, is my spirituality changed from organized stuff, organized religion that I was taught, to where I am now. I don't necessarily believe that there is a heaven, I think that we may very well be recycled, because it seems that these physical bodies deteriorate, but, the soul and the spirit, there's something else in this world, and this mind is something else, and I'm not sure that they go away. They may very well be recycled, and, if they are, I'm looking forward to the next one."

Jena viewed the physical self as vanishing, as passing out of existence. However, the soul, the spirit is endless; it is immortal. Eastman (1911) writes about the Indian's concept of the immortal spirit. He believes that:

> the spirit which the 'Great Mystery' breathed into man returns to Him who gave it, and that after it is freed from the body, it is everywhere and pervades all nature, yet often lingers near . . . (p. 156).

Ember expressed yet another perspective of immortality. She said:

> "I believe in reincarnation. I believe that at some point, because of the spirit being your part and when you die, it leaves you and goes somewhere else. I believe a lot of what I'm doing is based on the ancestors I've had and the direction they were put on the earth to go forward. A lot of what I think I'm doing has been learned from other lifetimes."

Lander responded:

> "Spirituality means that, there is a power or a being or a thing that is greater than any of us mortals."

These women were saying that spirituality combined culture, philosophy, psychology, and a greater being. Spirituality was part of the

growth process of the women. It provided a sense of direction. It was a source of power and strength, and was a vital part of their being.

Ann Carr (1986) in her study of feminist spirituality affirms what Adela, Ember, Jena, and Lander were saying. She explains that spirituality shapes behavior and attitudes. Carr writes that it is more than a conscious moral code. Spirituality, she says, can be:

> explicitly reflected on, developed, changed, and understood in a context of growth and cultivation of the fundamental self in a situation of response and relationship. . . Although it is deeply personal, spirituality is not necessarily individualistic, because within the relationship to the ultimate . . . it touches on everything: our relations to others, to community, to politics, society, the world. . . Spirituality is expressed in everything we do. It is a style unique to the self, that catches up all our attitudes: in communal and personal prayer, in behavior, bodily expressions, life choices, in what we support and affirm and what we protest and deny. . . spirituality is individually patterned yet culturally shaped. (pp. 49-50)

Carr (1986) further asserts that spirituality:

> can be described as the whole of our deepest religious beliefs, convictions, and patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior in respect to what is ultimate, to God. Spirituality is holistic, encompassing our relationships to all of creation-to others, to society and nature, to work and recreation . . . it is all-encompassing and pervasive. . . spirituality reaches into our unconscious or half-conscious depth. (p.49)

Spirituality and Culture. One of the unique aspects of the Native American people is their spirituality. Charles Eastman (1911) in his interpretation in The Soul of The Indian speaks about the unique religion of the Native American before the white man arrived. He claims that the:

> red man prefers to believe that the Spirit of God is not breathed into man alone, but that the whole created universe is a sharer in the immortal perfection of its Maker.
> (p. 121).

The writings of Joseph Brown (1986) also explain some of these unique aspects and support Eastman's assertions. Brown describes the religion of the Native American to be a spiritual union of the peoples' life-ways and explains that no facet of their culture is separate from the spiritual. Therefore, from these peoples' perspective, spirituality is deeply informed by their cultural philosophies and family value systems. More specifically, spirituality is inseparable in forms of daily life and is ingrained in their moral heritage. Such influences were made explicit during my conversations about spirituality with the four Native American women.

Ember's spiritual legacy was exposed within patterns of her Native American upbringing and in her culture. She explained that much of her spirituality was learned from her maternal grandparents. Spiritual unity with an ancient Native American philosophy was the underlying theme found in her statement. She explained:

> "I think a lot of my spirituality in a sense came from my being so much with them [my grandparents] because I would spend the summer, and camp with them or go digging roots and such. I think, one of the important things is if you give your word to people, then you really have to keep it, keep your word, because then if you do that people respect you. And you really need to treat other people as people and accept them as they are, because you don't know what kind of life they've had before. It's the same now, I mean, I haven't experienced your life so I can't tell you that you shouldn't feel that or you

> shouldn't be doing that because I don't know. I think those ..two things really helped set a lot of the foundation for what I believe or do now."

Ember described spirituality as part of her culture, as part of her world view, and as part of her respect for being "human" to all persons. Her spirituality was not a separate entity of life. It was her consciousness. Spirituality was the basis for her life philosophy.

Brown (1986) writes of the religious relationship of the Native American. He notes:

> one key to the Native American religious perspective . . . may be found in Native American concepts of relationships . . . This sense of relationship pertains not only to members of a nuclear family, band, or clan, it also extends outward to include all beings of the specific environment, the elements, and the winds, whether these beings, forms, or powers are what we would call animate or inanimate. (p. 53)

Brown's assertions about religion from a Native American perspective seemed to reinforce what the women were saying.

Spirituality and Philosophy. Ember grew up in a culture where the right to be unique was allowed or even taken-for-granted. It was part of the philosophy of her people. Her personal mission in seeking spirituality penetrated her consciousness so deeply that a personal conversion to meditation became her philosophical alternative. Visualization, clearly, was part of this spiritual mission. To clarify her meditation practice and to share more about her spirituality, she revealed her process of affirmation:

"I think one of the things that I do to keep myself whole is to meditate. Meditate is more acceptable to me than saying I pray because prayer to me has that negative thing that I had to work through before. And it's just having quiet times during the week, rebuilding energy within myself, physically and mentally. And I find that my life goes better and I can do better things at work, or be better friends to my friends, or be a better supervisor to the people I supervise, and it just makes things more positive in everything I do."

MB: When you're in the process of your meditation, is that when you use the quiet time to free your mind?

Ember: "Well, I do different things at different times but giving thanks for what I have. If I'm in a difficult situation, or I need to solve a problem, whether it's work or with other people, asking, in a sense, for guidance or for help to solve that problem where everybody involved comes out more positive, you know, beneficial to everybody, where, everybody wins and nobody really loses in anything.

Ember clarified her philosophical thoughts:

I think everybody is here on earth to do; they're here for something. In a sense, we make sure we are fulfilling, Why I am here?"

MB: We have a purpose?

Ember: "I think everybody on this planet has a purpose in being here. That I was put on this planet to have some kind of purpose."

MB: And it is up to us to find out what that purpose is?

Ember: "I think the things that we end up doing are part of our purpose, but . . . if you don't believe in a higher being, I don't think you follow it as closely or get to where or what you're supposed to be doing as quickly."

Ember was not the only woman who believed life to be guided by a purpose. As Ywahoo (1987) points out:

> "it is a common concept in Native American philosophy that we all have a purpose, a spiritual duty. The religion of the indigenous peoples teaches that we have a spiritual relationship and a responsibility with our entire environment." (p. 76-77)

Lander also discussed a life purpose and vision, specifically for education. That purpose and vision seemed to merge into the focus she was striving to achieve for other Native women.

> "I think I've had it [vision] for a long time. . . one of the things that I was brought up being, what I enjoyed most was education. . . I think my vision has always been to be a teacher. Not a teacher-teacher, but to be a leader of teachers. . . Basically my vision is a combination, to teach and tell about it. . . And my vision is not only for myself, but for all Indians. I think that Indian women particularly, will be teaching all people how to get back, not only to the basics, but to what was there: the spirit that she has, that she brings forth, not only within herself but the children. And this is the only thing that is going to keep the world going if it is to go on. I think women have a lot to offer. I think I can help; I can help in that process. And even if I only help one, I would have accomplished it. . . anyway . . . A vision is not a vision until it actually takes place."

Lander's vision was as much communal as individual. As Hobday (1981) explains:

> "a vision may be a private one which the seeker needs to live out quietly. But it may also be for the good of all the people and have to become public. . . But visions are about how to live" (p. 326).

Spirituality and Psychology. Jena's religious encounters, although at time surfaced feelings of discomfort, helped develop an awareness that spirituality was one of the strongest forces in her life. Her spirituality not

only brought comfort but provided personal satisfaction in her daily life. Daily undertakings were described as spiritual acts. Spirituality was a source of empowerment.

> "I have a talk, and I don't know if I'd call it Jesus, or Lord or God or what, I feel that there is something much bigger than I am out there, that kind of guides me and directs me, a great spirit. That Great Spirit makes me feel good when I do something good, and when I do something that's not so good, it makes me feel a little guilty, you know, maybe it's my conscience . . . that entity or that spirit . . . and sometimes when I say it out loud, it even feels better. But it has helped me have the strength to do the other, helped me find the way, and thank you for helping me find that way. . . I know that there's something bigger than I am."

Jena's day-to-day challenges were dealt with in the form of talks with the great image she held in her mind. In addition, spirituality offered Jena a connection to her Native predecessors. She explained:

> ". . . people who have gone on before me often feel very close. I make little silly comments about, 'oh my ancestors are taking care of me,' when I come through some really strange situation, and somehow I am protected. This may seem crazy, but often I feel some of those people who have gone on before are very near. I guess that is nothing that I have been taught anywhere, it is nothing from any kind of Native American religion or Christianity or anything else. It's just something that may be a conglomeration of some of those concepts, but it's one I feel comfortable with and one I deal with."

Death was very much a part of Jena's spirituality. Hobday (1981) notes that "the Indian attitude toward the dead links the memory of those who have died with those who still live" (p. 322). Jena talked about the realization of death and its effects. When confronted with a friend's death,

Jena dealt with her bereavement by engaging in a sacred ritual that fused early religious teachings with her newly developed spirituality. Jena's ceremony, a memorial, for her dead friend eased her apprehension of death and allowed his spirit to be free and gave her psychological peace.

> ". . . I've had to deal with death because I've lost some very close friends and it was only when I started saying things out loud, saying, 'I can't be afraid of you, we will probably see each other again, you are special to me. I feel you are with me now, but I have to let go.' In fact, a couple of years ago I discovered I had lost a friend who was very dear to me, who had been dead already for a year, year and a half. And to finally let go of that, even though I hadn't seen the guy in eight years, I still had to let go, and it's strange, the way I let go was to articulate through this, this whole thing that I'm talking about and feeling that he's near me and maybe will be there, spiritually for the rest of my life. . . I had to sit down at the piano and go back to what I was taught earlier, and basically have a funeral for him, playing and singing and crying, those old songs that we used to sing at funerals, and then it was all dealt with and then I could not be consumed with the whole thing . . . grieving still."
>
> MB: "And allow his spirit to be at rest."
>
> Jena: "And to not be afraid. The strangest thing that happened to me . . . just before I discovered about his death, I . . . started reading about past life regression, reincarnation, and all that seemed to be preparing me to get to the point where I could find out about this person and then deal with it. . . It does sound a little crazy when I articulate it, but it's very real to me."

For Jena death and reincaranation was part of her being, who she is and what is right for her. Jena was also describing what Mary Jose' Hobday (1981) writes about in her essay "Seeking a Moist Heart: Native American Ways for Helping the Spirit." She remarks that Native

Americans do not allow the memory of the dead to be forgotten. Instead, "familiarity with the dead, communion with the dead, can lessen the fear of death" (p. 322).

Although Jena remarked that her spiritual nature was not part of her Native American teaching, certainly she had been a participant in "helping the Spirit to keep the heart moist."

Spirituality and Religion. Dialogue with Adela not only disclosed her participation in more than one religion but also revealed a differentiation between spirituality and religiosity. She had not conformed to the teachings of one church. Instead, Adela had found a means of amalgamating Catholicism and Longhouse religion into her spiritual life. She explained:

> "I think religion is part of the organized view of religion, one of the great traditions of the world of being either Catholic or Protestant or Jewish, the great base of the world and in my case it really is a combination of two organized forms of religion, I am a good Catholic and I'm also a good traditionalist in a long tradition of the Longhouse that the Seneca have had, so I've practiced a dual form of religion."

Both religions were realities for Adela. However, I was curious about suppressed conflict that may be experienced as a result of what Brown (1986) describes as religious "polysynthesis" and Adela's dualistic religious practices. Adela clarified her religious realities:

> "It's never caused me any conflict; I think it causes some conflict with other people. But I think the majority of our reservation, as well as within similar, I know from the research that's been done, other Indian tribes have as high as perhaps

> 80 to 90 percent of Indians practice a dual form of religion, either Catholicism and their tradition, traditional Indian beliefs or, whatever it is. But it doesn't cause any inner conflict."

Multiple religions were also a part of Lander's spiritual practice. She explained:

> I have learned the traditional ways of belief of the tribe which my father was the ultimate in traditionalism. I have learned the Christianity way from my mother who always read us Bible stories. . . I think within myself that I have gone through a number of changes in trying to accept both, which I have no problem doing."

Lander participates in the ancient and traditional religious ritual activities of her Narraganset culture as well as expressions of Christianity. To get to this point of coalescing traditionalism and Christianity has required vicissitude.

Jena talked not only about the meaning of spirituality but also about the spiritual transformation that had transpired for her over the years. In addition, she spoke of the forces of organized religion and the challenges she had experienced in finding her own spirituality.

> "When I was growing up . . . spirituality meant Baptist religion, going to church, singing in the choir. . . Then I went away to the University of New Mexico, . . . I walked for blocks and blocks and blocks to the nearest Baptist church. Well, I went to that church and I was the only brown face in there. Maybe they weren't looking at me, but it just felt that all those white faces looked at me throughout the service. I was so lonely, being away from home for the first time . . .with my folks at home. . . I cried all through the service, the whole thing, tears streaming down my face, and there was this little old lady there; she had an old, old, car, she gave me a lift back

> to the campus, so that was very nice. But I never went back to that church, and I think that was the beginning of the end of organized religion, Baptist religion, Christianity. . . My mother still prays for me, she definitely believes in that, but, somehow, that is no longer a part of me . . ."

Jena's first experience in an organized religious service, away from her comfortable Native American community, was traumatic. She had entered this church with a different set of expectations. The unpreparedness of not seeing other Native people, or "brown faces," during worship was more than Jena could take emotionally and psychologically, even though there was a person who demonstrated warmth. Her vigilant nature had become activated; she had to be watchful even in a strange land. The experience was a turning point in her spiritual life. Jena's church experience did not feel right.

During another dialogue, Jena reflected on the above incident as one of my most "powerful learning experiences."

> "I was heartbroken. . . I learned that was not the place for me. And that Christians, I guess, are not always the answer. They're not always kind and concerned . . . That was not comfortable for me."

Jena was experiencing spiritual metamorphosis. Jena's efforts to rationalize her views of spirituality were diverse. These efforts not only explained how her spirituality came to be, the expansiveness of her spirituality, how she dealt with life and death, but the disappointments with organized religion. There was a tone of interrelatedness in the

experiences she shared. Her spirituality, although individually developed and shaped, at times pulled from those earlier experiences of organized religion.

Ember expressed similar feelings to what Jena had experienced. In her illustrative story she talked about her negative church experiences and spirituality. She recalled:

> "I never really had a very positive kind of experience with church-related activities. There was a time when I did go to church, but it wasn't really satisfying, or really meant what I thought it might. . . I've had things that happened, I had an uncle who was more like a Pentecostal person . . . who would come, not only to my grandparents but to my mother and my father, and say, 'you're going to Hell because you're not going to church' . . . and that just made me really negative on kinds of church-related people in general. I always knew that we weren't here if there wasn't some higher being in the world or in the universe . . . it doesn't matter if I don't go to church, you know. I believe there is a higher being and if I follow through on how I perceive that higher being and be more, well, I guess thankful for the things that I have, to me, that's sufficient."

As part of our last conversation Ember expressed concern that I fully understand her position on religion. She explained:

> "church has never been a major part of my life. The foundation of Christianity has never been established with me. It is not part of my being. The society of America accepts as the norm that all persons are to be part of organized religion. I do not believe that is necessary."

Ember further reiterated:

> "Spirituality embraces equality and dictates how we as human behave in our daily encounters with others, not once a week but every day of the week."

As noted earlier, the impact of Catholicism and Christianity has been felt by Native Americans for generations. In spite of the enormous pressures to conform to the dominant society's religious practices, Native Americans "find strength and meaning in their own religious beliefs and ceremonies" (Brown, 1986, p. 30).

Summary

The four women in this study have consciously chosen to follow their individual convictions and distinctions regarding spirituality. Maria Harris (1989) observes that there is a "quiet revolution" taking place. "That revolution is the rebirth of a genuine 'women's spirituality'" (xi), she writes. Harris was speaking about a spiritual world of depth, a spiritual world of mystery, and a spiritual world of promise. After examining and analyzing the narratives of four Native American women, I believe, these women are involved in what Harris calls a Dance of The Spirit.

Three of the women participated in organized religion at some point in their life. Two of the women chose not to participate or to leave organized religion behind, while the other two women were active in dual religious activities. Negative experiences with organized religion placed Jena and Ember in spiritually precarious situations. These religious barriers left Jena and Ember isolated from church-related experiences;

nonetheless, they had become more tuned to the deep spiritual beliefs they held within their being.

Jena and Ember's spiritual fortitude in a sense was also a personal and spiritual biography. On the other hand, Adela and Lander fused organized religion as well as their respective Native spirituality, without inner confusion.

Jointly, all the women spoke of a spiritual belief in a supreme being. Each shared a common concept of spirituality and viewed organized religion and spirituality as serving different purposes. The common message in the women's narrative was that spirituality cannot be compartmentalized or separated from any aspect of their life experiences. The spiritual perspective held by the four women characterized not only the major common theme exposed in their lived experiences, but it was probably the single most significant entity in shaping their cultural ethos.

Theme Two: Indianness

Native people tend to think of themselves tribally, such as: Lumbee, Narraganset, Nez Perce, or Seneca, secondarily as Indian. The cultures of the Native American tribes have been transformed from multiple perspectives. Although there has been cultural change in their lifestyles, this process is viewed as acculturation or adaptation and not assimilation. Despite these cultural changes, the four women's Indianness prevails. The

enduring traditions of Native American people seem to evolve from an innate nature that stirs within them a passion to be connected, not only culturally but humanly. It may be the "anchor," as one women explained, that provides the flexibility needed to preserve their Indian culture.

As the Indianness theme evolved, I was drawn to the book Beyond Tradition: Contemporary Indian Art and Its Evolution (1988). Inside the jacket cover, Lois Essary Jacka writes:

> Native American artists today walk a pathway that has been traveled for thousands of years. In their memories lie the traditions of their ancestors, in their visions lie the horizons of the future. As time-honored art forms are interpreted in contemporary designs and revolutionary colors, cultural heritage is never far below the surface. . . From that heritage comes important characteristics that make up each individual. From ancestors they receive artistic talent, from their culture, inspiration. And from somewhere deep within comes the courage and tenacity to pursue their dreams.

Jacka could have been describing the Indianness theme I had encountered in the women's narratives. These women were revealing cultural and professional passages in their lives instead of contemporary art.

Preserving Indianness. What makes the Native American a unique people is their relentless drive to resist a completely imposed American ideology in favor of their Indianness. Instead they have become multicultural persons, superimposing the contemporary with the traditional past thereby creating a futuristic culture which is individually shaped.

Native Americans are the only group of people in North America who carry a card, known as a "tribal card," in their purse or hip pocket to identify their cultural lineage and their tribal connections. To become more acceptable by society, of course, would mean assimilation or at least to become enculturated. Few are willing to make such a sacrifice.

Ember talked about assimilation and the need to resist assimilation. She reasoned:

> "to me assimilation is giving up everything you know. Everything!"

Berkhoffer (1979) agrees with Ember. He writes, "Complete assimilation would have meant the total disappearance of Indianness" (p. 30). Such surrender of native identity is not part of the agenda of the Native American. The essence of their distinctness, their Indianness, is found in a relentless determination to remain a Native people.

Who are the people who identify themselves as "Native"? In the Prologue of Barney Bush's (1985) Inherit The Blood he defines "Native" as "anyone who is from this earth and does not seek power over the lives of others." Although Bush's definition is far-reaching, it clarifies the position of most contemporary Native Americans and builds on Kenneth Lincoln's (1983) framework. He describes the degrees and demands of being Indian. Lincoln captured the essence of maintaining Indianness in his writing on "Now Day Indi'ns."

> Indians are even more ethnically self-contained, in many instances, since they have lived on separate and traditional land bases, apart from the American mainstream, and they consider themselves "Native" American, distinguished from all others. . . Degree of Indianness is not measured, de facto, by refusal to adapt, or by scarcity of organic materials for a ceremony, but is distinguished more by the spiritual significance of the ceremonies, as witnessed and infused among tribal peoples, performing the old ways wherever they are . . . they bring their Indianness with them into the city, redefining themselves. (pp. 186-187)

Jena's degree of Indianness was no less. She took what she needed from her Indian culture and what she needed from her non-Indian culture. Jena illustrated the rationale and necessity of combining both cultures, yet nurturing her native identity.

> "There's no reason I should have to live in a tepee or a moveable lodge. I want conveniences, too, but that doesn't make me any less an Indian because I live in a brick house and because I drive a Mercades or any other car, rather than ride a pony. Things change and at the same time remain the same with the basics. . . Perceptions change."

The definitions the Native Americans have are carried in their belief in themselves and the acts of that belief. "Their Indianness is not individually seized, but tribally granted and personally carried out, as the old one carried time down to where it is on their backs" (Lincoln, 1983, p. 188). Adela reiterated what Lincoln was saying in her description of herself and her Indianness. She remarked:

> "I think I am a very American Indian person. I am a traditionalist, a tribal traditionalist person. I'm a Seneca and grew up in a very traditional family where our language was; Seneca was my first language, English is my second language.

> I grew up knowing the lifeways of the Senecas, and we adhere to the ways of our people, practice the religious lifeways of the Longhouse people, still do, practiced all their religious practices, medical practices, what have you, know those quite well, so I'm a very tribal traditionalist person. And also growing up in the Iroquois culture and the Seneca culture, where women played a very dominant role, we were, we are a matrilineal society. We are a matriarchal society as well as matrilineal one, therefore the importance of women is well understood."

Adela had an abiding interest in her Seneca heritage since she was a child. Adela was taught how to participate in the traditions of her people. She knew early in life what her expected role as a Native American woman would be. It was clear that she was part of a society of people who recognized and respected tribal women's influence and power.

Indianness, according to Lincoln (1986) is as much attitude and behavior, life style and mind-set, as are the consequences of bloodline or history. Tribally gained values are steadfast, mainly materialistic values change, but philosophy is rarely sacrificed.

"Indian identity, or Indianness," Moses and Wilson (1985) has written:

> may only be understood in the way Indians perceive themselves in relation to the rest of the world and how those perceptions shape their actions. The idea of Indianness, therefore, must not only be expressed but lived. It is in the living of the identity that the identity is realized. (p. 10)

On the other hand, Jena described a mirror reflection of the contemporary Indian and the living of an identity:

> "We've got people who look in the mirror and they're very fair and they've got blond hair and blue eyes, but coming from our community when they look in that mirror, they still see Indian. I don't know that some of the other tribes understand that until they get some grandchild who is mixed, and then I think they start to understand. It's really interesting being from a community like that and having to deal with the outside world, and all the things you learn, and then all the things you remember and cherish from your childhood. . . "

I asked her if this had affected her world view.

> "Oh yeah, sure. Had I grown up in the majority society, I would cheer the winner. Instead, I cheer for the underdog. And not because I feel that we inherently are underdogs, but because we've been put in that position so often, where you have to fight your way out of various types of situation. It's affected my world view and I find myself siding with the Brownskins first whether they're Hispanic, or Arab, or whatever, and, you know, maybe that's a simplistic way of looking at the world, but there is, I guess, just a camaradie, if you will, with others who have dealt with some of the same attitudes and European expansion."

Jena's lived experiences were influenced by the tri-racial environment (Black, Indian, White) where she spent her early years. There was no need for her to cheer society's dominant group, they were already in the winner's circle. White supremacy abounds in her native homeland. Such environments have contributed to the cultural genocide of the Native American.

In conversation with San Steiner (1987), George Wilkinson remarks:

> Indian people . . . see themselves as a People who live in a certain space, on land where their ancestors are buried. On that space . . . a culture takes place, because the People live there. . . What sustains us is our culture. And what sustains our culture is, . . . it comes from the land. It is America. . . No one can make a culture. You don't make a culture. You don't

> make a nation. You don't make a tribe. The Great Spirit makes them. It happens because people live together, because they have to survive. That's what makes a culture, a nation, a tribe. That's something that's given to you. And you just accept it; you don't make it. What is a tribe? It's not rituals and customs. It is the relationships of human beings who share their lives, who are together in the way they express themselves. And if you are nothing, you can be anything. (pp. 291-293)

Some of Lander's most vivid reflection of her Indianness are from childhood experiences. These times were viewed as part of who she has become. She reflected:

> ". . . some of the most beautiful times were hunting, fishing, trapping, learning about the animals, learning about the earth as a whole, Mother Earth and Grandfather Sky, and the sun and the moon, and how they all relate to one another, to know the different tides, know the weather, be able to predict it without instruments, to know the animals reaction if a storm was coming, to know how people themselves react . . . and to learn to be a part of the traditional things."

Lander's narrative indicated her early years were a time when struggle and conflict appeared distant and unrelated. In the context of being in communion with nature and with the natural forces of life, she remembered an awareness or a time when as a child she was able to freely and fully experience her culture and life. She told me of another memorable experience and the feeling that these beliefs were comparative with others' experiences:

> "I remember what it was like when I made my first Indian regalia myself, how it felt to have something that I had made of my own, the ceremonies that I took part in, the beliefs that one had, they're not so much different than anyone else's."

"If the person looks upon himself as an Indian, and if he [she] lives within an 'Indian cultural community,' and if an Indian's social or legal entity accepts him [her] as such," as Moses and Wilson (1985) have explained, "then that person is regarded as Indian" (p. 5-6).

A Multicultural World. It is widely accepted that most Native Americans consider themselves to be constituents in a bicultural world. The are culturally bound by their Indian identity and culturally bound to the dominant society by their profession. Adela has worked primarily in a white world and now is back in a predominant Indian environment. During one of our conversations, I asked Adela if she perceived herself to be different now than in the past. She reflected:

> "Right now yes. It is interesting. . . When I go home to the Indian Reservation, I see all Indian people . . . I came here from being in an environment where I saw few Indian people. During the last 14 years, I was within the environment where it was all Anglo people. Then I came here, it really struck me, as my gosh, here I am in an environment where the majority of the people that I see again are Indian people, and you have no idea what a joy that was to me . . . It was like being home again."

Adela's life has been characterized by the influences of a dual world. She lives in an Indian world and in the non-Indian world. Adela expressed a degree of calmness and comfort in both roles. She said:

> "It's like being a 'dually' cultural person, and you develop a sense of even comfort with moving in and out of each world that you live in."

Adaptability to both worlds was an indication to Adela and to the non-Indian world that she had become a successful person.

Jena, on the other hand, refuted outsiders' claim of a lost Indianness and spoke of blending multiple worlds.

> "People say to me . . . it's a shame that Indian people in North Carolina have lost their culture. I said, 'you've got to be out of your mind, Indian people here indeed have a culture, but it has evolved, it has blended things from both worlds.'"

This was not the end of Jena's thoughts on multiple worlds. During another conversation she remarked:

> "Sometimes it's more than two. I think that we've got the two worlds socially, Indian and the rest of the world, and then there's a third category, there's the work world which blends some of the social aspects, but within a different context. And it's a world that I deal with certain people that I would never deal with otherwise in any of the other. I wouldn't deal with them in the Indian social world, I wouldn't deal with them in the white social world. But in my work, I have to, I'm forced to deal with them. . . it's a world combined with technical aspects, a technical world where I indeed feel secure because I prepare myself . . . just as well or better than anybody from the dominant community or from the Indian community."

At first, Jena was describing the changes that had occurred over an extended period of time. Secondly, she was categorizing her multiple world and its people. In addition, she was indicating she, in effect, was better prepared to deal with the professional world, technical world.

Ember, too, perceived that we live in more than one world. She remarked:

> "I think there are definitely separate worlds, but I think sometimes they cross over each other. . . being Indian is a

> world. And I think my spirituality goes along with that world. Then I see the professional world, and living in this area as a separate world. To be a part of this world, to exist, you're in the dominant society. . . The job I'm doing, the success and everything that I have has unified the Indian and spiritual world."

Ember viewed herself not only as being a bicultural person, but also as a person who experienced multiple worlds. Although the worlds were divided in her mind, they extend and overlap into each other.

Adela's experiences in the non-Indian society were challenging and at times complicated. She admitted:

> "I think it's been, it's been a real challenge. I never gave it a whole lot of thought, probably until I went to Ohio University in 1975 because before that time I was living in two worlds. I was on the reservation; I grew up and lived there all my life and worked in New York. You live in a dual world: during the daytime I was at work and I was the only Indian person at work, but when I went home, I saw few white people. . . you learn to accept that; it's just the way life is for you; it was a normal part of life."

A bicultural life was anything but norman for Adela, although she perceived that it was. She had no anticipation that it would be different until she became a full participant in the non-Indian environment, when she went to Ohio. The move offered another perspective, another challenge she accepted.

> "When I went to Ohio University . . . I was totally living in an Anglo world. I don't believe I saw any American Indians, and I guess that's when I became really aware, very keenly aware, that I was, I acted like other people, I did the same things they did, as well as they did, in fact, in some instances, probably better. But I was not, I was not one of them because I looked

> differently. You do look different. Let's face it, you see a lot of blue-eyed, white-skinned persons, and here I am this dark-haired, you know, Indian, very Indian-looking person. And you become aware of the difference."

Adela was very surprised that she acted like other persons, even though she didn't look like others. However, the situation was more complex than appearance and behavior. Her interpretation was expressed in the following comment:

> "You can be as different as you allow yourself to be. The controller of who you are and what you are and how different you are is all in your mind; it's a perception of yourself and who you are and what you do. I view myself as being the equal of those that I was with, and, in many instances, could do my job as well if not better than they did. And I did."

Adela's perception of herself and her ability put her on equal footing with the people she interacted with professionally. Confidence and self-assurance had always been part of her agenda as an Indian woman. Her stories point out aspects of her cultural experiences which allowed for opportunities to gain new and broader perspectives.

Lander's Indianness and multicultural perspectives may be seen in the following narratives:

> ". . . I am an Indian and I think I know more about Indian ways than some of the ones out there . . . because I've lived it. I've lived on both sides of the fence and I have survived both places."

Lander was telling me to be Native American is to live with the Indian tradition. She also lived and experienced the complexities of the non-Indian

world. Specifically, she was talking about being a bicultured person and importantly being able to survive these roles. During another conversation she told me:

> "We perceive ourselves differently at different points in time. If I go home to our pow-wow, or to my area or to the tribe, I'm an entirely different person even though I'm still me. I know that they understand my traditional world; they understand where I'm coming from. They respect my background, my knowledge as far as my family . . . they accept the herbs, the different types of medicine, they accept the teachings, they accept the oral history in which I relate. There is never any question asked."

Again Lander was describing her Native American world. In yet another conversation, Lander spoke of the contemporary world which she perceived to be a second world. She further implied that she was also experiencing a third world. She told me:

> "In the contemporary world, as long as I do my job and am doing it in the way I expect to, then I don't have any particular problems. In the third world, per se, is when I go back and forth like I am now. When I have a situation where I am striving to excel in the contemporary world and maintaining my tradition because that's where I come from. And not lose faith."

In Lander's cultural community there was no need to explain the traditions of her people. She was able to maintain her identity; Lander's subcultures were fused together and viewed as being triadic. Importantly, she related:

> "I view it as a part of rather than a separate. When you put them all together, it is your culture now. One can interpret it but it still comes out to have the same meaning. It's a tough act to follow, whether it be men or women."

Indianness Influenced by Family. As Ember talked about her heritage and her Indianness she described her family composition and their backgrounds. Her childhood experiences were influenced by her native Nez Prece Reservation environment. Ember's grandparents played a very important role in her life. They were a main and stabilizing force during the early years of her life. They spent summers together and engaged in a rich cultural exchange, and Ember was afforded the opportunity to learn the basic philosophy of her Native American heritage.

> "My father is Laguna and my mother is Nez Perce. . . When I was born they had moved to Idaho on the Nez Perce Reservation were my mom grew up. We lived with my maternal grandparents. I think in terms of a lot of the culture kind of things, the stories, the legends and the myths, really came from my grandparents, because we were all together. . . I didn't learn the language, either language, mainly because my mom and dad didn't know each other's language. I did learn some language from my grandparents. . . basic conversations in readings and numbers and respect. . . I learned with my grandparents more so than with my parents because I would go with them a lot to different functions."

Joseph Brown (1986) elaborates on the role of older members of a Native American society.

> . . . the elders of experience serve as repoitories of the oral lore of the people. Living oral traditions give the elders of the society a position of respect and importance. (p. 55)

Certainly this was an important role of Embers' grandparents. There were other traditions that became important forces in her everyday life, especially thankfulness and her corresponding actions. Ember commented:

> "One of the things I've been doing and I think it applies not only to what I do but maybe to other traditions, is to be thankful for what I have . . . for what I have achieved or my family, or the work I'm doing. . . and . . . well I look at people differently. I think, sometimes I can't understand why people do things they do in terms of maybe physical action or verbal action, and then I think, well, maybe, that's the way to live and talk to be, to succeed."

Ember followed the philosophy of her culture and at times experienced difficulty understanding the teachings of others because those teachings were in conflict with her native family teachings. Dbyami Ywahoo (1987) describes some of the Cherokee teachings she received from her grandmother, which are analogous to Embers. She writes:

> My grandmother was telling me, 'Your actions have more meaning than your promises; they need doing now.' And she took that lesson deeper: she showed me that when you think something accomplished, it is easier. . . 'Your thought is just as important as your action because all action begins in your mind.' (p. 164)

Summary

Concluding remarks summarizing the women's Indianness can be found in Lander's context. In one of my dialogues with Lander, her story of her Indianness took on an even deeper meaning and forced my thoughts in a surprising directions. I was prepared to hear about specifics of her Indianness, instead she told me:

> ". . . to know that everything is put here for a reason, and people are put here for a reason, that whatever comes up one has to adapt and change. I guess it was very interesting to know that, you know, what I had been trying to achieve to

> become a nurse, to become a leader of people, that to obtain it I had to use what was given through my tradition . . ."

This narrative reflected two perspectives. First, these words are reflective of Landers Indianness and her spirituality. She holds the belief that all persons have a purpose and what one chooses as a vocation are often synonymous and are expansive of ones' tradition.

Second, this narrative reflected what the other Native American women were saying: Indianness is dictated by culture and identity; Indianness is expanded by the influences of a multicultural society; and Indianness remains a legacy of strength when it is anchored in the traditions of an ancient peoples' history. The women's stories captured the human struggle to maintain their Indianness, yet be successful in a society that expected them to be anything but Native American, anything but Indian women.

Theme Three: Bonding: Mother-Daughter Relationships

Bonding and attachment are often interchanged in the literature. For the purpose of my inquiry, bonding was "a unique relationship between two people which is specific and endures through time" (Klaus & Kennell, 1978, p. 5). It was understanding this enduring bonding as a uniting force between a Native American mother and her daughter that was sought.

"Being a daughter, not a mother, is what all women share with our mothers and all other women," (Catherine Keller, 1986, p. 152). The

concept of bonding in the mother-daughter relationships was a major theme, although other areas of bonding were evidenced in the women's lived experiences. Even though Native American mothers as teachers, as sharers of knowledge, as passers of identity have been stressed, other roles and expectations of tribal women as mothers vary from tribe to tribe. Anne Cameron (1981) writes in the Daughters of Copper Woman that traditional Native American women concerned themselves with:

> spiritual things and with studying the teachings of the society, and with children, and keeping the society strong, and with making sure life was lived as it ought to be, fully, and with contentment" (p. 56).

Even though Traditional Indian women were concerned with being the educators, the teachers, the transmitters of culture, such concerns have not ceased with the mothers of contemporary Native American women.

Mothers: Teachers and Role Models. I wanted the four women of this study to tell of the teachings they learned from their mothers. Before this could be fully realized, Paula Gunn Allen's (1986) interpretation of: Who is your mother? was reviewed. She writes:

> your mother's identity is the key to your own identity. . . Of course, your mother is not only that woman whose womb formed and released you . . . But . . . your mother (or her equivalent) enables people to place you precisely within the universal web of your life, in each of its dimensions: cultural, spiritual, personal, and historical. (p. 209)

Gunn was saying that the identity of one's mother is exactly that which defines us as a woman. Was there any substance to the interpretations Gunn had made? My preoccupation with Native American mother-daughter relationships has been to determine to what extent the four women's experiences are reflective of the teachings of their mothers, in other words, What did your mother teach you? The women's response to my question offered some insight. Adela told me:

> "My mother taught me everything. She taught me how to be a woman, she taught me how to be an Indian person, she taught me how to be a good person, she taught me about the basic values, she taught me things that I have come to prize, to value in my life: family traditions, the solidarity meaning of family, with marriage . . . she taught me everything about life."

Lander told me:

> "My mother taught me everything I know. . . she taught me how to be a person first, how to have respect for others . . . she gave me a lot of insightfulness . . . she taught us basically to give of ourselves, and if we had something, it was better to share it . . ."

Ember told me:

> "Three things really stand out when I think of my mother. She is a very strong person and if you believe in something, then you really should stand up for what you believe and voice those beliefs. . . and I think knowing that, if there are obstacles you can overcome the obstacles. . . My mother was very important to me. . . she was always there when I needed her."

Jena told me:

> "she taught me that . . . the greatest thing is making sacrifices to help those you love. . . My mother taught me a lot about herself, about womanhood. . . The woman has sacrificed so

> much to give me and yet gotten so little it seems other than my love and that seems to be what she's lived for . . . sacrifices for the people she love and that's what she taught me, that's what I learned from her."

These women were saying they had been taught cultural, personal, and spiritual traditions by their mother; they had been given the qualities which became their identity.

As more mature women they had developed a deep sense of respect for their mothers. Adela's respect for her mother can be seen in this story she related:

> "I became a Catholic after my mother died. My husband is Catholic. While I did not join the church, I was there to attend Mass. Mass is an important part of my life. It means a lot to me, but by the same token, I did not do that [join the Catholic church] until after my mother died, out of reverence for her as a traditional Longhouse person, for her belief. I felt she would not--I don't know if she would have approved or disapproved, but I never wanted to test that. I never wanted to have her be disappointed in my choice. So I chose not to make it an issue. She died not knowing I was going to become a Catholic. I waited for that time to occur simply out of respect for her."

Adela's mother had not demanded status or respect. In Adela's perspective her mother had earned respect as a result of an early bonding relationship that had been established. Such a relationship was not only a psychological bonding, but it was a relationship accomplished through cultural traditions and earned with maturity. The early years of Adela's life had been part of a teaching process to take her place in the traditional Longhouse religion. Possibly, Adela's mother would not have understood her daughter's practice

of Catholicism or her participation in multiple religions. Whatever the possible outcome, Adela consciously chose not to test her mother's traditional expectations she held for her daughter.

Role modeling was also a means of teaching. Mothers as role models had tremendous implications for two of the women. Jena and Lander talked about their mothers as a role model, as a friend, and as a hero.

Jena considered her mother to be a good friend and a role model. She remarked:

> "She's an absolute sweetheart . . . My mother is such a good friend. . . I can be just an ordinary, normal human being with my mom, I can tell her all my fears and anxieties, and she'll pray for me. . . She's just really a neat lady. . . it's just over the last ten years or so that I've really appreciated my mother the way she should be appreciated."

Bonding, although developed in the earlier years between Jena and her mother, had not been fully realized until recently. When Jena became a woman, she and her mother were at a point in their bonding relationship in which they could share the earlier teachings of womanhood. The learnings of womanhood, for Jena, were viewed as being human, making sacrifices, and being a good person.

On the other hand, Lander learned from her mother insightfulness, the unselfish qualities of sharing, and demonstrated that Indian women represent strength. However, Lander's bonding with her mother was

established in other on-going teaching roles. Her mother was a role model; she was Lander's hero. Lander related:

> "If I could become the woman that my mother is, maybe I would feel successful. . . I think many Indian women . . . want to be like their mother, because most of the Indian women are a tower of strength. And they have so much to give, and yet they're the most unsung heroes in the whole world."

Lander was equating being like mother and strength as necessary qualities for becoming a successful Indian woman. Although Lander's mother demonstrated successful characteristics, Lander as a daughter and Indian woman was unable to view herself as having attained success.

Grandmothers: Teachers and Leaders. Historically grandmothers were teachers and a major influence in the life of the Native American female. Beverly Hungry Wolf (1982) writes in The Ways of My Grandmothers, "I got my education from my culture. My teachers were my grandmothers . . ." (p. 55). Wolf identifies her grandmothers as "all of the old women of the past" (p. 8).

Ember talked about the role of her grandparents. Her grandmother was significant not only in the contribution she gave to Ember's native cultural education, but she described her grandparents' love as absolute.

> "My grandparents played a very important part in my life. They not only shared the old stories of when they were growing up or the legends my grandmother would tell us, but just spending a lot of my time during the summer. . . They would camp out for the summer at different places and I'd always go with them. They had this unconditional kind of love, they always loved you and demonstrated it."

Adela talked about her special relationship with her grandparents and specifically with her grandmother. She explained:

> "My grandparents were very influential and very important in my life. . . my grandmother was really the matriarch of the family, that was a role that my mother came to also have. You know, Indian elders, elderly Indian women are very prized people; they're the source of knowledge, the source of wisdom because we are matrilineal and a matriarchal society."

Adela was fortunate to be part of a society of women who were the keepers of knowledge, the passers of knowledge, and assumed the role of leaders in their tribe and that, too, was passed to the next generation of women, specifically to Adela. She talked about women's leadership position in her tribe:

> "we are in our leadership position legally and culturally. Therefore, it's part of your role that you are introduced to. It's part of who you are."

I asked her:

> "In reflecting back, how young do you think you were when you realized this leadership responsibility would someday be yours?"

Adela responded:

> "I don't ever remember not having it. I mean, it's just something you're consciously aware of from the time you're a child. . . you never knew there was anything different because you saw it all the time, and I guess you're born into that, and . . . it's never <u>not</u> in your conscious. . ."

Adela's leadership qualities were the result the roles and teachings of the mothers and grandmothers of her tribe. They were the source of knowledge

and wisdom. In addition, they not only demonstrated leadership, but through them leadership was taught. Her role as a leader in the dominant society was part of her early teachings from the society of women she grew to admire--her mother and her grandmother.

Adela was taught she was special. She remarked:

> "I think I saw those roles very early on. I saw the kind of relationship that men convey to women, the special status that you have I think are things that I learned and that influenced the role of who I am."

Adela, Ember, Jena, and Lander were special and all were taught how to be a woman. Those teachings can be seen in Cameron's (1981) discussion of the learnings of a woman. As a women, Cameron writes:

> you had to learn or you weren't a woman. It isn't easy becomin' a woman, it's not somethin' that just happens because you've been standin' around in one place for a long time, or because your body's started doin' certain things. A woman has to know patience, and a woman has to know how to stick it out, and a woman has to know all kinds of things that don't just come to you like a gift. (p. 101)

Summary. The mother-bonding and the grandmother-bonding that the four Native American women experienced from birth were determining factors in the life responsibilities they chose in their Native American society and the dominant society. The mothers and grandmothers of Adela, Ember, Jena, and Lander taught them how to be a woman, how to be a person, how to believe in something and voice that belief, how to be strong and endure, and how to make sacrifices for those you love. Importantly, the

mothers and grandmothers of these Indian women passed on identity, knowledge, leadership, and wisdom to their daughters, thus, preparing them for survival in Indian and non-Indian cultures. These mothers were empowering their daughters with an identity and strength which was part of their own Native American heritage. Their power was enmeshed not only in their role as "vitalizers," which was the power to make life, according to Paula Gunn Allen (1989), but in the power "to make, to create, to transform" (p. 27). Traditions, insightfulness, strength, ingenuity, and how to be a person, are key concepts the women used to describe the teachings of their mothers, the "ones who tend the fires of life" (Allen, 1986, p. 11).

Theme Four: Racial Discrimination

Most persons dislike talking about racism. In fact, it is easier to deny the existence of racial discrimination. "Understanding discrimination," according to Paula S. Rothenberg (1988),

> "starts with an awareness that such a process exists and that to avoid perpetuating it, we must carefully assess the context and consequences of our everyday actions . . . " (p. 16).

Researchers have been able to share their statistical findings of racial incidents and issues, but they are unprepared to interpret and translate the tragic effects of racism on peoples' lived experiences. It is the lived experiences of four Native American women that can add understanding to what statistics have left unsaid. The women's lived experiences helped

reveal what it is like to be a propulsion force against the barriers of racism.

Since the beginning of my conversations with the Native American women of this study, the racial discrimination theme has gone through some revisions. And, I suspect, some of my own deeply felt and firmly entrenched attitudes toward racism have forced their way to the surface and influenced this change. Originally the theme was "racial inequality"; however, two of the women reminded me:

> "We are not suffering inequality, we are equal to all. We suffer oppressive racial discrimination."
>
> (Jena, fourth conversation)

> "You must include racial discrimination. To only include inequality means nothing. The entire context is lost if racial is removed."
>
> (Lander, fourth conversation)

Racism, according to Rothenberg (1988), is a "comprehensive system of oppression that deny individuals their personhood" (p. 1). Another perspective is offered by Robert F. Berkhoffer (1978) in his version of The White Man's Indian. He writes racism is:

> "an understanding of human diversity mainly or solely in terms of inherent racial differences (and the moral judgments thereon) and an explanation of that diversity is entirely or mainly in terms of racial inheritances" (p. 55).

Even with the dawn of Civil Rights and the myriad of awareness and consciousness rasing, racism continues to abound when least expected. Each of the four Native American women related their lived experiences of racial oppression. Some of the women's experiences were stronger than

others; some experiences were covert and some experiences were overt. My objectives were not to seek a solution to the process of racial discrimination, only to understand some of the experiences which shaped these women's narratives.

The Meaning of Racism. My conversation began by probing the meaning racism had for the four Native American women. Each women talked about her own interpretation of the meaning of racism. To Adela racism represented:

> ". . . the embodiment of all of the most negative types of connotations I can think of. It represents misinformation, it represents bigotry, it represents hatred. It represents all of those negative aspects of humanity. . . and . . . there's a lot of differing degrees of racism. I'd rather a person be an overt racist than a covert racist because at least when they're overt, you know what you're dealing with right up front. I think there's a lot of covert racism that exists in society where you would least expect to encounter it. I've learned to encounter it at every corner, at every level, and in almost every aspect of life. In the religious world, in the academic world, in the economic world, it's there . . . it's a real blot on our existence that it's there."

I heard an echo of Adela's concepts in Lander's remarks. However, Lander's interpretations and remarks did not reflect so much the contextual meaning of racism as making an observation that racism continues to exist:

> ". . . it has not gone away. It's very sad to see because it appears that it's something that is a constant. It's always there. And I think because it is carried forth primarily by people . . . which means their teachers . . . their parents . . . give it to them . . . I see it everywhere, I see it here."

Ember described racism from yet another perspective.

> "Racism to me is . . . basically when a group of people or even individuals are thinking they're superior and better than anybody else and proceed to keep them at a lower level and let them not achieve."

Jena described her scars of racism as a little girl.

> "I remember my dad took me to the Raleigh Farmer's Market once, and we had a load of tomatoes; he was going to try to sell them either to a factory or peddle them. . . we had breakfast before we left home, but it was getting noontime and I was hungry, so he said, 'honey, take this money and go over to that snack shop and get us some lunch.' I went over there and there was this 'white-only' sign in the window. I came back and I said, 'Daddy, I can't go in there, there's a 'white-only' sign in the window.' So my dad said, 'honey, we're both hungry; you're hungry; I've got to get you something to eat.' We went in and we sat down and I had tears in my eyes but I ate my lunch inside that place sitting at a table with everyone staring at us. . . I knew that was racism."

Jena's experience with racial discrimination had left unforgettable memories in her mind. It was one of her first lessons in the development of her vigilant nature. This overt act of racism that Jena had experienced, although sad, left her with good feelings and sad feelings. She was glad that her dad had stood up for her. Jena's dad had ignored the 'white only' sign in favor of his daughter physical needs. She was sad that society rejected her because she was not white. Although this was Jena's first encounter with discrimination, she understood the 'white only' signs.

Rothenberg (1988) distinguishes between discrimination and race discrimination. Discrimination, she says is "more than the imposition of

barriers at a given point in time; it entails a process of constantly defending one group's privileges gained at the expense of another" (p. 43). On the other hand, race discrimination "can be seen as behavioral processes aimed at maintaining the privileges of the dominant group" (p. 43).

Jena had experienced what Rothenburg was describing as privileges for one group at the expense of another. Jena shared the following observation of race discrimination after she finished law school.

> "I recall going home and you don't see the 'white only' signs anymore, but you see the white sales ladies following either Indian people or black people around in these little stores. You know, I had one follow me and I was the first woman of any color to be admitted to the practice of law in the sixteenth judicial district down there, which includes Robeson County. She followed me around thinking I might take some of that stuff. . . That bothered me because had I been white, I don't think she'd have followed me around."

It is really difficult to be comfortable when such oppressive attitudes are imposed. Furthermore, individual racial discrimination as Jena experienced is a form of domination--control of whites over non-whites.

Racism at School. Many of the first racial incidents the women experienced were during their school years. For Ember this experience was one of "separateness."

> "I find that through my whole lifetime there's always been a separateness. If you go into an area where you usually have lots of whites and lots of blacks and you're the only person there . . . "

> "I never really thought about being different. But once we got in the school system, there was a definite separateness because you had most of the Indian children in one room and the white children in another room. You could see the difference . . . that was all the way through high school. I can remember . . . some of the white parents being very upset with their children playing with Indian children . . . and in the attitude of the teachers. They didn't give you, how do you want to say it, expectations were, as Indians, you don't do well in your studies. Well, it was very subtle."

At home Ember was accepted and respected for who she was; however, at school it was not popular to be someone other than white. The situation was clear to Ember that it was an adult attitude: Teacher expectations of poor academic performance were being conveyed to Ember. Such a characterization consists of separateness and the oppressive racial discrimination Ember experienced during her early life experiences. What was also revealing was the intensity of the experience and it's impact on her "being" as an adult.

Lander recalled an eighth grade experience:

> "When I was in the eighth grade, people began to dislike me, they didn't want to talk to me, they ignored me . . . but I knew whatever anyone else could do I could do better. So what was the big problem? I . . . had the highest scholastic average, was to be the valedictorian and the one that had the best speaking voice. To qualify, I had to memorize the Gettysburg Address. . . I remember standing on a chair in our kitchen, our kitchen was our living room, dining room and den where all the family gathered . . . where I would recite the Gettysburg Address. I had my entire family who tell me what I did or did not do wrong. So that my expressions were right, I rehearsed and I rehearsed. At school they kept having run-offs and eliminations, I was always listed as a finalist. . . Finally they made the decision, I was valedictorian and would speak at graduation. In my mind, at that time, I did not know or understand racism or

> prejudice or bias or discrimination; those things were relatively foreign. I just knew they treated me different."

Lander never understood what was happening to her. She understood the labor of working harder than other students to be the best she could be.

Adela recalled having experienced it:

> ". . . at a time when I was least prepared to experience it, not that one is ever prepared. I experienced it as a youngster in high school for the first time. . . In high school comments were made to us by the Anglo student about various things; when you're not prepared for it, that's when you're most vulnerable."

Somehow Adela tried to determine, in her mind, how she could handle racism, how she could be prepared to deal with it. Racist remarks were made to her classmates, and of course, she thought these attitude were mainly directed toward Indians only. While attending nursing school, the reality of common racial situations with other populations became increasingly clear. Adela explained:

> "I always thought that the racist attitudes, and the racism that existed were only directed at Indians, and what a real strange phenomenon when I went away to nursing school and found out that there was even greater racism directed towards the black people. And that was just a real profound thing for me to see. We were connected with a large school of medicine, and a lot of our staff were Jewish, that even blew me away too, you know, that there was racism, or bigotry, that was exhibited towards Jewish people. . . When I first encountered it, I was just astounded."

Within her mind, Adela had perceived that discrimination was reserved for Native American only. Also, I suspect, Adela thought she was prepared to deal with racism, especially after her experience in high school.

Nonetheless, her four years in nursing school clarified this misconception. She added:

> "I came to realize that racism towards Blacks and Jews was of even greater intensity. Not that it was a comfort, it was just a real revelation, that other people experienced the same kinds of things that we did."

Adela realized while Indians were suffering from white supremacy, Blacks and Jews suffered not only race and ethnic discrimination, but were also objects of hatred.

As Jena entered law school she encountered a non-Indian environment for the first time. Reflecting she said:

> "I was uneasy. There was one of me there. No other Indians were there. During my first year, I was the only minority female. There were Black students there, but they were all male. I'd never really dealt in the Black community either. . . so this was a new experience. . . it gave me another perspective . . . it was broadening, because I hadn't had that before. . . I had to deal with White students. I also learned to deal with Black student, and I found it far easier, and they accepted me easier than the white students"

Jena began her professional schooling in an environment filled with apprehension. She was faced with law school, an unaccepting dominant society, first time experiences with other cultures, and feelings of being the "only one." She developed strong friendships with the Black students; however, she had less favorable experiences with the White students.

Reflectively she responded:

> "I remember a guy, who came up behind us and said, "an Indian, or half-breed." This guy was a North Carolinian. Now

> what the hell difference did it matter? I said I was Indian, what did it matter whether I was full-blood or what. I looked around at him and screamed, 'drop dead.' . . . I consider him an enemy and will to the day I die."

When Jena had experienced racism as a child she had a protector, her father. When she entered law school she had to become her own protector. Her vigilance increased with each encounter. The narrative makes clear that Jena felt anger about the blatant incidents and verbally retaliated, which did little to relieve her feelings then or now. It followed that Jena's anger was current and not just part of the past.

Summary. Understanding gained from the lived experiences of the four Native American women is that all have experienced and suffered as a result of racial discrimination. The magnitude and consequences vary with each woman. Almost all incidents were in the contexts of education. Nationally we have made progress against overt racism; however, from the women's narratives, there remains substantial room for improving covert racism. Rothenberg's (1988) concluding remarks on the problem of individual discrimination may provide greater understanding not only of the racial discrimination these four women have suffered, but raise our consciousness to transform society beyond racism of any degree.

> . . . whether conscious or not, open or hidden, desired or undesired, these acts build on and support prejudicial stereotypes, deny victims opportunities provided to others, and perpetuate discrimination, regardless of intent. (p. 11)

Theme Five: Reciprocity and Inclusiveness

As the theme reciprocity evolved, I realized there was a constant helper present most of the time--inclusiveness. During this section I would like to coalesce reciprocity and inclusiveness as a way of substantiating each other. There are probably two reasons why this approach is appropriate. First, the women's narratives held an underlying tone of reciprocity and at times that tone assumed an inclusive quality. Second, both themes were characteristic of Native American culture.

Dictionaries define reciprocity as a reciprocal condition or relationship. More clearly, it is a mutually shared or complementary interchange between two or more persons to give and take something mutually. Inclusiveness takes everything into account. This comprehensive quality might be better stated as the act of including or the state of being included.

These definitions represent different objectives. However, in a more humanistic way, elements of each were involved and interactive in the stories of the four women. In conjunction with current literature, I moved back and forth between both themes, to amplify the themes as they emerged from the four women's stories.

Family. Adela described her relationship with her family as a life connection, and she defined her clan structure as a reciprocal system and a system that was inclusive of many members. She said:

> "I think we are part of a greater system in the clan. . . You become aware as a youngster that you have your nuclear family, and then you have your grandparents, and then you have all these aunts and uncles so your connected into this biological family that you are born into; but then on top of that you're part of a bigger system because you are in a clan. People have obligations towards you as well as you having obligations toward them because you're part of this bigger structure called the clan structure."

In Adela's narrative, there appeared a sense of obligation or feeling that necessitated reciprocity and embraced inclusiveness. She grew up with those cultural values taken as the norm. Thus, Adela's sense of belonging and inclusiveness were part of that mindset. The sense of belonging was not just biological, it was "clan" inclusiveness as well.

> "You know you belong, because they let you know that in so many ways. They didn't have to come out and tell you, but no matter, you know and you have that confidence. It's there for you all the time; no matter what you do, where you go, or what you are, what you become, you're going to belong. You're going to be part of your clan and your family. . . If you're part of them, you're connected with them. . . It's more than an obligation, it's a real commitment that they have to you, and then you, in turn, have to them."

In another aspect Lander expressed feelings of giving without expecting a return.

> ". . . if you don't share what you have, it means nothing. No one can benefit from it, no one can utilize it, and it has no effect. It is worthless. So to have something, you have to share it if you want to keep it. And if you don't share it, you've lost it. . . I try to tell my daughter, 'it doesn't matter what we have, you'll have more . . . if you share it."

Sharing was not only a reciprocial duty for Lander, but it was part of the reciprocal teaching process she passed on to her daughter. Ember on the other hand looked at the benefits of her profession as a means to reciprocate her family.

> "Personally it gives me an opportunity . . . to give back to my family, whether it's money or gifts . . . especially to my parents, giving back to them for all their commitment to me, you know, taking care of me and making sure I got to school and was able to go to college and plus giving me all their love and now that they're retired and I'm working, I can give things back to them."

Ember had a sense of responsibility to return something to her parents for the sacrifices they made for her education. The cycle of returning was never ending.

Although Jena's sense of reciprocity had been an important theme since her childhood, she had included it as part of her commitment as an adult. She reflected:

> ". . . the whole thing of wanting to give back is part of my background, my childhood. I don't think I've moved away from it through the years; I think I've taken it with me."

Presently, Jena's sense of responsibility to reciprocate was directed toward other Native American women, men, and children. Jena told me:

> "I feel . . . as an Indian woman who's had a lot more opportunities than other Indian women, and not just opportunities to go to school, but being in the right place at the right time, somehow, things have all worked out. I've been very fortunate. And I've got to give those gifts that have been given to me and give them back. And try to teach other

> Indians, whether it's children or adults, they need to give back, too."

Jena's feelings of reciprocity were commitment connected as well as duty. She had taken, now she felt the need to return her good fortune. Jena, like Lander, wanted to teach others the responsibility they have to recipicate.

Ecology. Reciprocity from an ecological perspective had been part of the philosophy of the Native Americans since their existence. Probably one of the issues and battles between Indians and non-Indians has been the lack of respect for our earth, the land, nature.

Adela's feelings of reciprocity were strongly directed toward the environment. She described her commitment, her sensitivity, and interchangeable relationship to the environment as:

> "It is there for us to give to, it is there for us to protect and it will protect us. It offers us everything we need to survive. But in doing that we create our own environment externally as well as internally. But we are also under obligation to take care of it. We need to nurture and take care of the environment and the environment will nurture and take care of us."

Hobday's (1981) explanation of the moral and ethical relationship Native American's have with the land can be equated to the level of Mother. She writes:

> The land is not only the soil. It . . . teaches courage, birth, warmth, and death, as well as what in life is up, what is down, and what is inside. . . Native American's include nature's raw gifts . . . all are part of the land, the whole world, and are reverenced. . .

Hobday's study further substantiates this human-world connection and respect. She says:

> Indians do not consider nature to be only the servant of humans, and often they will be inconvenienced rather than disturb a beautiful mountain. They feel it is more gracious to yield at time, to take the long way around, rather than tunnel through or slice the top off a mountain. They do not consider a swift passage necessarily superior to a beautiful one. Indians have always had a more accommodating spirit toward the land, because they believe the land shares the Great Spirit. (pp. 322-323)

On the other hand, Hobday argues, Anglo persons want "to conquer, to dominate: Make the land fit! Force the land to yield!" (p. 324). Conversely, Native Americans conceptually believe the land to be strong, but fragile, and as persons are obliged to reciprocate when taking. The spirit of reciprocity and inclusiveness toward the environment are linked together by the philosophy of a people, a people who believe the strength of their native cultures are found in the relationships of people and relationships toward their land.

Lander also expressed strong connections as well as an inclusive--reciprocal respect for the earth. She explained:

> ". . . everything was put here for a reason. There's no harm in us taking a certain portion out, but it has to be replenished."

Lander was saying we can take but we cannot afford not to give back. In the Introduction of Indian Lives, L.G. Moses and Raymond Wilson (1985) write that "without their land the people [Native Americans] would be set

adrift in a world removed from their ancestors" (p. 4). One of the strengths and uniquenesses of the Native American people are the preservation and respect for the land because it protects the ones who have passed before us.

Inclusiveness in the following statement by Lander encompasses great depth. She opposed the dominant society's idea of individualism, instead she deemed inclusiveness to be an absolute for all of life. Lander explained:

> "Individualism is not there. It's nothing. Because the thing is, one person does not make the world, nor does the world make one person. It is all inclusive. So what I'm saying is that the traditional Indian way is to look not only to your family but to your extended family. I need to relate in there that you treat animals as your friend, and your friend as your family. Therefore, it cannot be totally ego-related. You have to look at the whole world, everything and everybody in it. Otherwise it's not the same. You can't take out one segment, then it would change the entire complexion of the world. I'm talking about wholeness, rather than a part or segment of."

Lander's overriding concern with individualism reflected her world view and her ecological concerns. She viewed herself and others as becoming part of the world. Her inclusiveness was communal, it encompassed the entire universe.

Summary. For thousands of years, Native Americans have philosophically practiced reciprocity and inclusiveness. Putting the two themes together proved to be a strong theme for the women of this study. In addition, reciprocity and inclusiveness created a philosophy that abandoned

individualism in favor of completeness, unity, and cradles giving and expanding. Reciprocity in this sense was giving and receiving. Inclusiveness was all-embracing and expansive. Each of the four women showed a deep concern for reciprocity and for inclusiveness as part of their agenda as Native American women.

Connections to Other Populations of Women

Who are the women of other populations? What possible connections could there be that would have relationships to the four Native American women in this study? What are the themes that connect the identified populations with the four Native American women who participated in this study and the researcher? A brief discussion of the various entities of the questions, I suspect, will also bring forth answers.

Other "Native American Women" are a part of the greater population of women. "Women of Color" is inclusive of women on this continent who are not considered Native American or white women. Women of color from other nations or culturally distinct women of color who live in the United States are categorically included in this group. "White Women" includes women who are not in the grouping of women of color or Native American women. "Global Women" includes all women outside this continent. I realized these distinctions would be open areas for argument. However, for this study, I felt the above classifications were appropriate to be inclusive of

the entire population of women. My intentions were to make all women, who were not participants in this study, part of the "other" population of women.

Connections to Other Women

Inside the cover of Mary Catherine Bateson's Composing a Life (1989) she writes that, "life is an improvisational art form." She studied the life stories of five women who she termed "productive and successful." She says of the women and herself, "each of us has worked by improvisation, discovering the shape of our creation along the way, rather than pursuing a vision already defined" (p. 1). In a great sense, I tried to follow Bateson's thinking as I looked for themes in the lives of the women in this study. However, I must confess, my own agenda for composing the four Native American women's lives required careful leashing. Nonetheless, I realized, the women set their own agenda by their response to questions put forth at the onset of the study.

During my first conversation with the four Native American women, I determined there was a connection between these four women's lived experiences and the greater population of women. Some of that realization came about because of the opening question I posed to the women. I asked each of them, "Tell me what I ought to be asking you about Native American women?"

Adela replied:

> "Gosh, there's so much to know and to ask. We need to determine the different degrees of your commitment, or how you see yourself as an Indian person. I think there are different degrees of traditionalism. Ask: How much of an Indian person are you? and the concept of being able to speak their language. Do they practice their traditional lifeways of their culture? Were they born and raised within the core of what represents the American Indian, their tribe? and how steeped are they in the traditions of their tribe. . . The women's perceptiveness of what it is to be an Indian woman raised in the American Indian culture. . . the kind of experiences they've had as they've encountered the non-American Indian world, where they see themselves in that world, how they came into contact with it, what they experienced, what they felt, what they went through in becoming part of the greater world, so to speak. And then also, where they see themselves in that world today and how much--how the 'connectedness' or the core of their being-- how much of that is still with the American Indian tribe, their tribe, their lifeways, their folkways? Do they still continue to be a part of that and yet continue to exist in the non-Indian world."

Ember replied:

> "I think sharing the importance of the research and letting other women know, and especially other younger Indian women know, that they can achieve things. It's not always going to be easy, but other people have done it. And let them know they're not alone, they have role models, or I guess, mentors, other women that they can identify with and relate to. And I think in the whole life process, whether it's personal trials, or things you have to do when you're young, or when you moved away and entered the school system (even now, working in a really bureaucratic system, and succeeding), there's not enough of this that young women can read or young women can relate to."

Jena replied:

> "I think Indian women like other non-majority women are faced with several situations: They are the bread-winner or

> are not in a position where someone takes care of you. Do you want to have Indian children because that deals with our continuity as a people? If you've got to work and you have children, you've got to deal with those children and instill in those children, values, information about their people, particularly if you're away from an Indian community. Time is important; there doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day for a lot of non-majority women, including Indian women. It's often difficult to find a mate and if you do, sometimes you outdistance them, or those who are at your level are already taken. What would it be like to not have an Indian man beside me? And career is important, specifically how do they fit into the department around them or the world around them."

Lander replied:

> "There are many perspectives. What are they doing today versus what they did, 10, 20, 30 years ago. The pathways or the trials primarily or any obstacles that impeded or make it difficult to afford the accomplishment. Next, where is the future of Indian women heading at this point. Then the perceptions people have of an Indian woman, stereotypes . . . I think the stereotypes have limited Indian women more than any other group in the entire country. . . It's difficult to see them in 1989 versus 1889 . . . I think knowing how the traditions of Indian women still can be maintained and carried out even if they are sitting behind a desk. . . bring in the educational aspects that have their own set of positive and negative connotations."

In their introductory responses the four Native American women told of tribal connections and traditions vital for younger women, concerns for creation and the continuation of a people, oppressive issues which serve to impede the progress of Native American women, commitment to becoming role models and a voice for other women, and ways to successfully encounter the mindset of popular America about Native Americans. The women were saying that connection, creation, oppression, and voice were serious issues

to be addressed. I realized the themes that were surfacing were not only a part of the lived experiences of these four women, but they were potential themes in the lives of all women. This selection of themes in no way is exhaustive of all the themes found in other populations of women, it is only a beginning.

The following section seeks to integrate connection, creation, oppression, and voice to experiences affecting Native American and other women in order to enhance our understanding of all women. It is this collection of themes and their potential relationship to all women that is addressed.

Theme One: Connection. Mary Belenky, Carol Gilligan and Louise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach (1988) have determined that the "connections" of women has not been valued. Connection as a theme was used in the sense of relationship or connection to others. Louise Eichenbum and Susie Orbach (1988) write, "A woman knows herself and gathers a sense of well-being through her connection and attachment to others." Women "stay with, build on, and develop in a context of connections with others," (p. 83) writes Jean Baker Miller (1986). Therefore, connection was the foundation of women's experiences. Without connection, according to Eichenbum and Orbach, "identity is at risk" and an "underlying insecurity" develops (1988, p. 60).

Jena was mindful of her identity, her image. She considered herself to be a role model for young Indian people. She talked about this role as:

> "I've got to take care of myself . . . I've got to be concerned about my image. . . I'm a role model, and I don't want to disappoint people, I don't need to have some young Indian person say, 'look at her, this is what a lot of greed does to you, or this is what that position does to you.' I'm very careful."

Lander recognized the need for support from other tribal persons if success was to be realized. She remarked:

> "the more Indian women that exceed or excel, they should be supported by not only other Indian women but other Indian people as a whole, so that they can show the non-Indian world that a Native American can do it, and accomplish it just as well."

I found evidence that the Native American women of this study valued connection, and research documented that it was a issue to other women. As Sheila D. Collins states in her essay "The Personal is Political" (1982), "We realized that while each woman's life follows a distinctive course, there is a general pattern that unites us all" (p. 363). This idea was documented by the women's narrative in their reference to mentorship and role modeling. Connection was not only considered essential, but connection was to be prized.

Theme Two: Creation. Johnnetta B. Cole, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Catherine Keller remind us not to overlook issues of "creation." The traditional and contemporary concepts of creation are anatomically linked to motherhood.

Infinitely, women's distinctiveness was marked by their ability to give life. "In spite of the contradictions, most women want to be mothers" emphasized Michele Hoffnung (1984). Traditionally the process of creation and the relationship of motherhood were absorbed by women; however, society has these conventional processes under scrutiny. Presently, women are relinquishing their traditional arrangement in favor of alternative behaviors that are more inclusive of female and male.

In the last two decades, the most controversial issue women, as a population, have faced is the freedom of choice: to become mothers or not to become mothers. Today's women are striving to make this issue an individual component of family-planning in lieu of the criminal ideology some members of society have embraced. The impact and the consequences of being a woman, the creation issue, and women's human caring relationships were alluded to by three of the Native American women in this study.

Adela shared the following story about what it means to be a woman:

> "it's a gift, I think we are blessed to be women. . . to be a woman is, it's your very being. We are born sexual creatures. Being a woman is no better than being a man, it's just being different. . . I think we are especially blessed because we have the gift of creation, if a woman chooses, and it's a choice that we can make today, and thank goodness for that."

Ember determined "as women we have a lot of responsibility." She further described women as:

> "the salvation of the future. Because it's the women who bear the children who will be the future of the country, of our tribes. . . women haven't really portrayed that to men. . . I think it needs to be portrayed more. As women we hold the future in ourselves."

Lander elaborated on the nurturing aspect of women's nature:

> "Being a woman basically is being a caring, loving person, not only to myself, my family, but all others, regardless of what they have or have not done to me. . . I think there is a certain amount of sensitivity and concern that a woman has, whether it be maternal or instinct as to how one cares for its young or how they perceive to get along or accomplish in the world."

The conversation with Lander turned to women's natural sense of caring. Nel Noddings (1984) noted that "women often define themselves as both persons and moral agents in terms of their capacity to care" (p.40). Lander's definition of women put great emphasis on their capacity to care as stated by Noddings.

The descriptions of womanhood, the definitions of creation, and the means of caring that the women shared suggested that the traditional role of women had not vanished in Native American populations. However, the traditional role of women has become more inclusive of creation, choice, and caring. Creation, the choice to create or not, or the inability to create, was an eventful issue with all women.

Theme Three: Oppression. Nancy Bancroft (1985), Jo Freeman (1984), Bell Hooks (1984), Anne Wilson Schaef (1985), and Kathleen Weiler have

determined that women are dealing with inequality thereby causing them "oppression." The third theme in other populations of women, and in the lived experiences of the women in this study, was oppression. Without a doubt Jo Freeman in her 1984 Women: A Feminist Perspective has made an important contribution to the understanding of oppression. Freeman points out that the sociostructural (the economic, social, and political institutions) and the psychological (self-hate and distorted perceptions) are two aspects of oppression. Anne Schaef (1985) supports Freeman's perspective, "Women are oppressed because they are women and because their perceptions are seen as worthless" (p. 93).

As women we've come to realize that "oppression" is important in and to our capitalist society in several ways (Bancroft, 1985). First, the minority individuals, especially women, justify cheap labor markets. Second, racial inequality hinders solidarity between persons, especially women. Third, sexism, which is experienced by women, serves the dominant class in our society--men. Our society holds the myth that men are more valued than women, and women are dependent (Freeman, 1984).

Native American women are oppressed as women and as a culturally distinct group of persons. Racial discrimination and it oppressive effects were personally experienced by the researched and the researcher of this study.

Theme Four: Voice. A listing of themes would be incomplete if it did not contain supporting literature for the development of women's "voice." Thus, voice was the fourth theme. For this theme, I looked at the writings of Carol Gilligan and Mary Belenky. In the past two decades, important implications for self development and moral development have been noted by these two researchers. Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1982), brought to the attention of the public that one of the distinctive differences between men and women was voice. Gilligan's focus was in the:

> interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives. (p. 2)

This interest was reflected in the assumption she made as she engaged in her research project. Her central assumption was the way:

> people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connection they make reveal the world that they see and in which they act. (p. 2)

Gilligan's work reshaped our thinking about human experiences, and it has required us to take a different view of women's moral development, their personality development, and to look at how they make decisions.

In her 1986 Women's Ways of Knowing, Mary Belenky and her coauthors found women were struggling to have their voice and ideas heard. They determined women have been viewed as being seen and not heard. Belenky heard endless connotations (speaking up, being silenced, feeling

deaf and dumb, etc.) which made women's "sense of mind, self-worth, and feelings of isolation from or connection to others" (p. 18) very distinct. The voice of four Native American women were at times very distinct and inherently connected to other populations of women.

Although the women's stories and supporting literature have added understanding to Native American women and their link to other populations of women, there remains a schematic model to further clarify the contextual explanations of the women's lived experiences. This model is now presented and visually shows how all women are inherently and thematically connected.

Translation Model

From our dialogue and the interpretations of the women's narratives, I developed a schematic model that serves to bridge the four Native American women's experiences to the experiences of other women.

Much of what is known about Native Americans shows a major quality of their life philosophy to be unity. Life is viewed as being interrelated, as a circle and everything has a place within that circle (Allen, 1986; Ywahoo, 1987; Cameron, 1981). Our lived experiences have a place within this circular scheme. Given this integrative quality, the challenge to conceptually and visually demonstrate how the women's life themes were interflowing and overlapping gained concernment. The first idea for the

Model was realized in one of my dreams. Specific details were formulated in subsequent dreams.

The concept for the model is an outgrowth of Kenneth Lincoln's (1983) basic paradigm of translation. Lincoln sought to show how Black Elk's story proceeds through several phases before a reader can assimilate the account. The Translation Model presented is divided into five subsections and depicts the mental blueprint the researcher used to interpret the lived experiences of four Native American women. The model should be viewed to have a dynamic nature. It is never still, always in motion, always in process of becoming. Such a process is continuous and not an event. More specifically, the model demonstrated how themes in the women's lives were individual yet unified and inter-flowing.

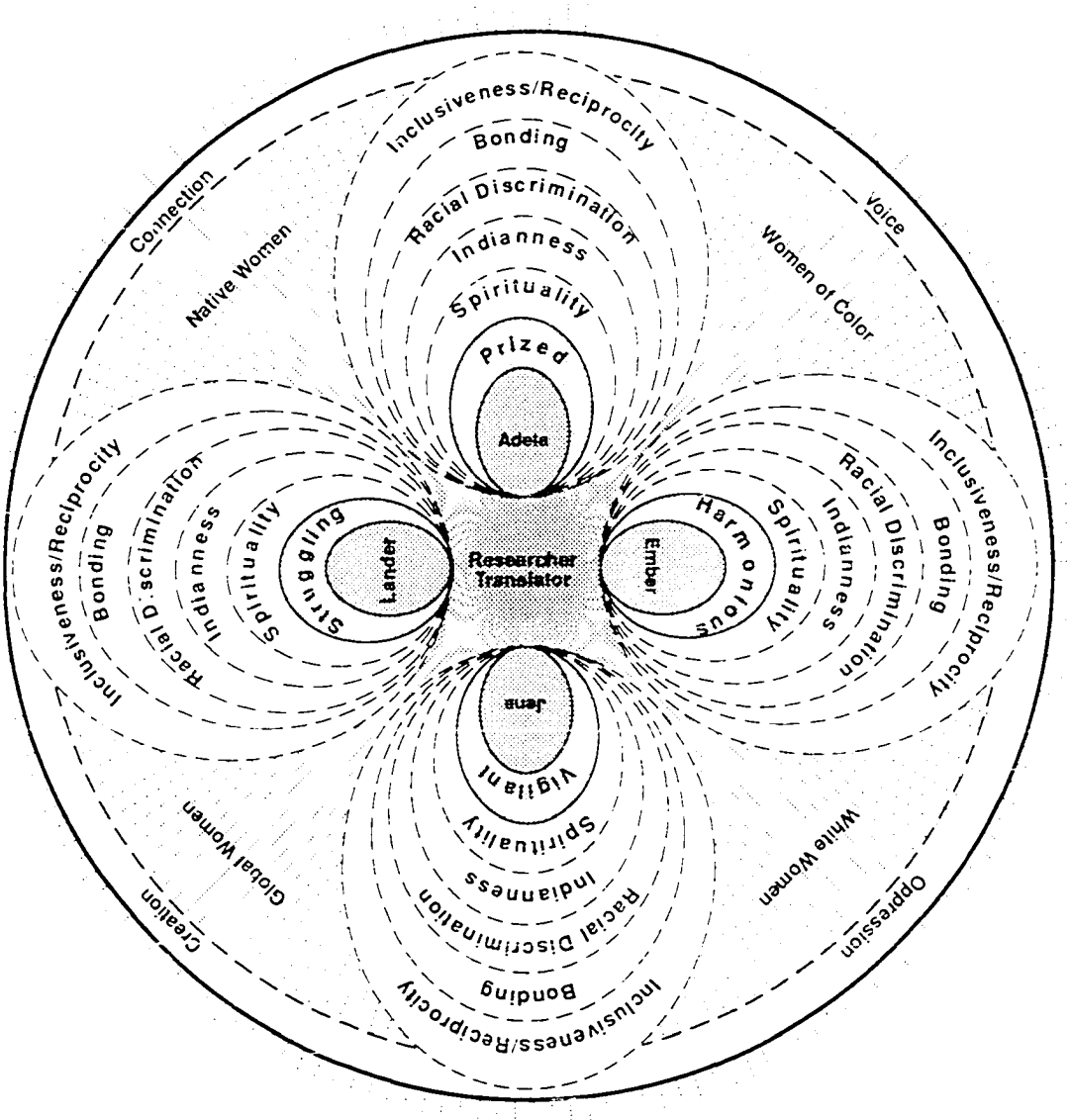
The internal section of the model represents me, the researcher, and connects all subdivisions of the model. The analysis began with me and the themes that were crucial to my lived experiences. It is within these themes that my preconceptions were freed from and incorporated into the women's themes in order to understand their lived experiences. This section of the Model was the focus of Chapter IV.

The first and second concentric rings flow outward and are characterized in the second section of the Model. The four Native American women's identities and their self-perceptions are revealed in this section. This section emanates from the first and gives prominence to the

uniqueness of each woman. Such variations make the common themes more meaningful and add greater understanding to the women's experiences. Within the third section, major common themes shared among the women were identified and examined. The broken lines indicate how the themes empty endlessly into each other. At times the themes appear to be vigorous, forceful, or placid in nature. This characterization allowed for what Renata Tesch (1987) called "theme overlapping" and placement into more than one category. Themes were not mutually exclusive of each other, but only appeared to be. Section four connected the researcher/ translator and the four Native American women to other women. Although many themes were found in the lived experiences of other populations of women, prominent research findings suggest connection, creation, oppression, and voice as four common themes that Native American women, white women, women of color, and global women share, which is section five. Finally, the model becomes the nexus to the individual woman in our greater society.

The Translation Model did not encompass all the themes the four Native American women shared, nor has the model been inclusive of all the themes shared by the greater pop-ulation of women. The model revealed consistent themes that emerged from the analysis of these women's experiences and four possible themes from other women's lived experiences.

The Translation Model



The final chapter reveals the conclusions that have been reached after studying four Native American women's narratives, the stories of their lived experiences of adaptability in the multicultural society of contemporary America. These conclusions describe women who not only live in two cultures, but women who have combined those cultures to create another culture. The third culture dawns from the traditions of ancient ancestors, the contemporary Native American, and the dominant society of North America. The third culture is the phenomenon which has emerged from the women's lived experiences.

CHAPTER VI

REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This ceremony is ending, however, another ceremony has begun. The ceremony is filled with stories. The stories shared by four Native American women are real and significant. The stories were told to me and interpreted by me; now they have been written for others. As the stories are read, it is my hope that readers will reflect upon the narratives of their own lived experiences thereby giving them greater insight to better understand the stories of these four women. Most of all, I want the stories to develop more awareness and lend greater understanding of the lived experiences of not only Native American women but all women.

Experiencing the stories of others is powerful. Such an experience changes the perceptions' of others; the experience changes the one in the experience. As Hyemeyohsts Storm states in his 1972 Seven Arrows:

> as we learn we always change, and so does our perceiving.
> This changed perceptions then becomes a new Teacher inside of us. . . Stories, or Mirrors . . . where . . . reflections will go on and on forever. (p. 20)

Such an experience exposes the hidden. As persons we are made up with a significant double exposure. We have an exposure that others see. We have an "un-exposure" that others cannot see. It is the unexposed aspects of the

life experiences that I sought to expose. LaFerme Ellis Price (1970) captures the concept I am speaking about in her poem "Double Exposure."

Sometimes woman must surface
expose herself to the flowing
world around her
live in it
look upon it
love it
face its realities
so when she submerges
exposing herself to new meanings
she is moved to wonder
at the significance
of her double exposure.
(p. 43)

I have been allowed to expose, to unmask, and to unveil the multiplicity of realities found in the lived experiences of four Native American women. Each voice had a story, and each story had its time and its place. I have been allowed to lend my eyes, so others can see what I have seen. I have been allowed to share my voice, so others can hear what I have heard and read what I have interpreted and what the women and I have interpreted together. My own perceptions have changed and I have observed changes in the women.

Reflections

As a Native American woman and educator, after reflecting on the research process, I have been concerned about the existing body of literature on Native American women. The meager representation of Native

American research scholarships and the few works of a male-dominated research community has done little to transform the research gap. My research endeavor has not only strengthened existing literature, but has forged new and critical perspectives of understanding women. The life experiences and themes which emerged in the conversations between these four women and myself has presented greater insights into Native American consciousness. In conversation, we opened ourselves to exploring the processes of culture, education, employment, relationships, and spirituality, processes that spin the web of life itself.

Initially, I searched the literature to determine what other scholars were saying about Native American women. What appeared to be missing was scholarly research that addressed the realities of the Native American women who were masterfully juggling multiple identities. A vital expectation was to realistically illustrate the strength of the Native American women's survival in a multicultural society. My greatest hope was to have my research aid in the fight against Native American social and cultural genocide.

An important objective was to make interpretations of the women's lived experiences and present the uncovered realities to the academic community, a community where dissemination would be effective, thereby adding to their understanding of a silent population. Reflecting upon Black Elk's words, "it is from understanding that power comes," (Neihardt, 1959,

p. 176) and power in the life experiences of Native American women comes from understanding the meaning of their stories.

Second, my process required me to reflect on my own lived experiences and begin discovering and rediscovering myself. A part of me remained the same little girl who knew freedom as a companion, who was not bound by constraints, yet I had developed a sense of association that was familiar and foreign.

Djohariah Toor (1987) in her book The Road by the River, speaks of the healing quest of women as "often a life out of balance." Toor determines that our task:

> is to know our own identity as individuals and as women. Our work is to reestablish with our essential self, and with the force of the spirit of life within us. Our work is not to prove ourselves in the world of men, but to come to that world as women unafraid to speak of the sacred intent of life itself, and to speak it as women. (p. ix)

The themes of connection and disconnection in my own life were a bridge to connection in the lives of other women. Connection did not belong to me exclusively, instead it was a theme to a larger body of females.

Third, after learning about myself and liberating my preconceptions, I was prepared to engage in dialogue with four other Native American women. We conversed for hours and I documented more than six hundred pages of narrative that held the themes of these Native American women's lives and themes that connected them to other populations of women.

The women's masks were removed, the hidden exposed, and the experiences became the context for analysis. The women's narratives offered "privileged access to their consciousness" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 9). The women's words, the text, became an "improvisational form" that would make the invisible visible. N. Scott Momaday (1987) in an interview with Joseph Bruchac talks about the magic of words. Momaday remarks:

> . . . words are powerful beyond our knowledge, certainly. And they are beautiful. Words are intrinsically powerful, I believe. And there is magic in that. Words come from nothing into being. They are created in the imagination and given life on the human voice. (p. 183)

With Bateson's (1989) ideas on composing and enriching women's lives as part of my understanding, I searched for and determined what was unique about these four Native American women. Adela's theme showed her to be a prized woman. Her description of herself as an Indian woman, as a woman, and as a person to be "prized" fit Abraham Maslow's criteria of the self-actualized person. Ember's unique theme was identified by her harmonious ways. Her efforts to make everything more positive earned her the distinction of constantly striving to live in harmony with herself and others. Jena's uniqueness showed her to be a vigilant women. She holds a constant vigil for her Native American people. She is ever vigilant as to what is happening for and to Indian people. Lander is a struggling woman. Although Lander had been challenged by continued struggle and conflict she managed to capitalize at every emergence. What is unique about Lander is

the power base she has developed as a result of the struggle and conflict that began when she was a child and continues to be a major force in her life.

Fourth, I analyzed the women's texts for commonalities. At times the conversations, the dialogues, become specific, concrete, and very personal. Together we clarified, we discussed our uncertainty, and we shared our comfortable and uneasy feelings about portions of the narratives. During the process of interpreting the four Native American women's experiences, several major themes emerged from the initial interaction with the women. Spirituality, Indianness, bonding, racial discrimination, and reciprocity/ inclusiveness were identified as significant themes.

The process of uniting the four Native American women to other populations of women and their themes constituted another part of the improvisational model. Creation, connection, oppression, and voice are the four themes that unite all women in some form.

Weaving the women's themes together and bridging those themes to other populations of women has not been an effortless task, however, the process has been an exhilarating ceremony. The schematic translation model became a visualization of the connections among the women's themes during the interpretation process.

Has understanding been achieved? Certainly a clearer and greater understanding of the lived experiences of the four Native American women

in this study has been attained. Commonalities and differences between the four women have been identified and a greater understanding of their struggle to survive in multiple worlds has been reached. Showing a connection between the four Native American women in this study and other Native American women has been accomplished. Bridging the gap between all women's experiences and significant themes of their lives has been strengthened.

Implications for Education

This study has important implications for pedagogical programs, educational programs, and feminist programs. Such programs should include information that will sensitize practioners to the sacred traditions and cultural experiences of Native American people.

Educators in pedagogy can be motivated into designing curriculum which is intrinsically beneficial to students in multicultural classrooms. The Native American student and other minority students should not consciously or unconsciously sense they have to surrender their indigenous cultural practices in order to achieve success as defined by a European dominant educated society. A more liberatory educational pedagogy would contribute to the development of broader perspectives which supports the historical traditions of the individual, whether they be Native American, Mexican American, African American or Asian American. Such a

perspective would allow for the celebration of diversity and multiple world views, and for experimentation with a variety of rich educational viewpoints.

Implications for feminist practioners are innumerable. Feminist practioners working with students and families must be:

> "encouraged to write about their everyday personal experiences in trying to apply feminist principles . . . how they work within a system; how they resist, circumvent change, a system; how they experience double vision/consciousness as feminist practioners. (Walker, Martin & Thompson, 1988, p. 21)

Recognizing this need can be the first steps to creating greater support among educational program to incorporate the perspective of diverse populations of women in academia.

As research supports (Allen, 1986; Bataille & Sands, 1984; Cameron, 1981; & Witt, 1979), Native American women have held important positions within their respective societies for centuries. The importance of this knowledge is not to be used as an instrument for assimilating Native American women into the dominant ethos of society. Instead, it serves as support for the Native American's woman enormous capacity and skill to survive in a society that has continually fostered male superiority in favor of inclusive and communal values.

Educators can incorporate the understandings illuminated in this research of Native American women into information offered in academia, workshops, and use it as a framework for other research undertakings. The

significance of sharing these understandings in the research community can serve to increase awareness of the importance of reflecting upon one's individual experiences. These reflective moments have endless personal implications for individual students, their educational systems of knowledge, and their understandings of other populations. Perhaps one of the greatest individual impacts can be the realization of alternative thinking that can result from the reflective process, from the process of experiencing life, and from connecting those experiences to others.

Untold implications will occur from sharing life experiences. A frequently shared assumption comes not only from the academic community but also from others that research findings has vast implications when printed. The understandings and reflections of the Native American women in this research reflect a genuine concern for the advancement of knowledge about Native American women. Ember told me she engaged in this research so that others would know and experience some of her experiences. She reinforced that her own consciousness and commitment to other women had been revitalized. She explained:

> "Our downfall as Indian women is the failure to establish networks. If networks were established, if we engaged in open conversations, if we had sharing dialogues, such interaction would allow us to help each grow spiritually, professionally, and educationally. This interaction is needed to hold onto and to maintain our 'Indianness'."

Ember shared the poem at the conclusion of this dissertation. Jane B. Katz (1977) used the untitled poem by Niki Paulzine as an introduction in her book I Am The Fire of Time. Ember remarked, and I agree, that the poem was an appropriate ending and a beginning of our experiences toward greater understanding, construction, and dissemination of knowledge together.

i am the fire of time.
the endless pillar
that has withstood death.
the support of an invincible nation.
i am the stars that have guided
lost men.
i am the mother of ten thousand
dying children.
i am the fire of time.
i am an Indian woman!

Niki Paulzine

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APPENDIX A

Dissertation Questions

Background/Self-Description/Cultural Identity/Gender

1. Tell me what I ought to be asking you about American Indian women.
   a. As an American Indian Woman how would you describe yourself?
   b. What is your life like right now? What do you care about, think about?
   c. What has it been like for you to be an American Indian woman?

2. Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past?
   a. What led to the changes?
   b. Have there been turning points? Describe those points.

3. What does being a women mean to you?
   a. What, do you think, are the important differences between women and men?
   b. How has your sense of yourself as a woman been changing?

4. Can you describe the first real (lived) experience you had in a non-Indian environment?
   a. How were you different and similar to other people you were interacting with in this non-Indian environment? Why?

b. Tell me about your Indian heritage.

(1) Has it affected your worldview?

(2) Tell me what is unique and important?

5. Tell me about the links to your American Indian tradition (s) that exist in your everyday life.

Education

1. Tell me about your college years.

a. What experiences have stayed with you from your years in college?

b. What was most helpful to you during those years?

c. Where there things (program, environment, etc.) that school did not provide for you that were important to you?

2. Tell me, did college change the way you think about yourself, or about the world?

3. Looking back over your whole life, can you tell me about a really powerful learning experience that you've had, in or out of school?

4. Can you talk about racism?

a. What does it mean to you?

b. How have you experienced racism?

5. Can you talk about sexism?

a. What does it mean to you?

b. How have you experienced sexism?

Employment

1. Tell me what meaning does employment have for you?

   a. What external/internal benefits come from your work?

   b. What is your perception of success?

   c. What does being successful mean to you?

2. How did you move from the background of your childhood to where you are now?

   a. What were/are your survival techniques?

   b. What have been the emotional costs/rewards?

3. Does your Native American ancestry affect you professionally?

Mother-Daughter Relationships

1. What did your mother teach you?

   a. How has that teaching influenced your life?

   b. How was she a role model?

2. Looking back at your life, how are you the product of your family?

   a. In what way are you different from them?

   b. In what way are you similar to them?

3. Tell me about the most important people in your life. Why do these individual(s) hold such importance?

4. What has been your philosophy to help you over the rough spots?

   a. Tell me how have your coped with these troubled times?

   b. What is the basis of your philosophy?

Spirituality

1. Talk to me about spirituality. What does it mean to you?

2. What has been your means of surviving? In other words, how has spirituality contributed to your survival?

3. What has your spiritual agenda been like, your task as a Native American woman?

4. I've heard it said that as human beings we have three parts. We have a physical part, a mental part, and a spiritual part and it is important to keep them in balance. Tell me about your feelings on these thoughts?

5. I have been doing some reading about living with the cycles of creation. Tell me how does one live in harmony with the cycles of creation?

6. Tell me how you have woven spirituality into your life experiences?

APPENDIX B

Correspondence

March 14, 1989

Dear

The Laguna women have set an example for other American Indian women to follow. These women have attained literary success for all of us to enjoy and examine.

Being an American woman and realizing the need for scholarly research on Native American Indian women, I felt compelled to advance knowledge and understanding of this population. However, one cannot undertake such an endeavor without the support of other American Indian women. I would be ebulliently grateful if you would consider being a partner in my dissertation research. Sharing your story with me and others will present an unfiltered view of a Laguna Indian woman's perspective. Your story is unique and deserves honor, as do other Indian women who participate. This research method, interpretive inquiry, will allow a reasonably accurate picture of truth to emerge.

Find enclosed a copy of the dissertation abstract. I feel this design will give you a clear concept of what the research will involve. I will call you in a few days. If I can answer any questions at that time don't hesitate to let me know. Thank you very much for your consideration to share a contemporary Indian woman's lived experiences.

Sincerely yours,

Mary E. Brayboy
Graduate Student
University of NC at Greensboro

Enclosure

September 12, 1989

Dear

Enclosed are the transcriptions for our first and second conversation. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to be able to see your thoughts, your words on paper. They are a work of art. I would like for you to read what you have said. Then make any additions, corrections and/or notes you feel will better clarify what you are saying. If you feel the response you have given is what you wanted to say, then we will leave the response as stated.

Additionally, I am enclosing a copy of the basic questions that were discussed in the course of our conversations. I thought the specific questions would be helpful to you as you read and think about your responses.

Most often when a researcher has had a conversation with a participant, the participant does not have the opportunity to review the response. In my review of the literature, I have not found any evidence that this method has been utilized with dissertation research when Native American persons have been involved. Such a methodology is just one of the aspects about this study that makes it so unique. Of course, another is your willingness to be a partner in forging new knowledge about Native American women. And, I want to thank you for such a wonderful partnership.

I have pre-selected two dates that fit my school calendar. If one of the scheduled times will fit your calendar and is a possible ate, please enclose your response in the stamped self-address envelope provided. Note that I have not indicated a specific hour. I will leave that option up to you. If you will give me two different hours I will respond immediately so that we have a mutual time. If these two date are not possible, please select two other dates and note a time that is convenient for you. I think our conversation should fall within one hour range of time.

Again, I thank you for your participation in this research about native American women.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Brayboy

Enclosures

May 17, 1990

Dear

At the onset of this study, I asked and you willingly became my partner in research. You shared with me your lived experiences centering around cultural experiences/identity, educational experiences, professional experiences, mother-daughter relationships, and spirituality. You talked, I listen, recorded, transcribed, read, made notes, re-read, marked, and finally clarified my thought with your help. This was only the beginning of our joint efforts.

During the past few months, I have been analyzing and making interpretations of the lived experiences you have shared with me. It is the first summary of these findings that I want to share. My efforts have yielded a unique theme for each of you and six common themes shared by all four of you. You will find the list of themes attached as well as a translation model and explanation.

I think it only fair that I share my intentions for this section of the dissertation. This is what I have written to explain the analysis process:

> "The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the "truths," the experiences of four Native American women. The goal of the analysis is to extract the shared themes and the unique themes within the experiences of the women and determine the language that capture these themes. My efforts are to search the women's experiences and ascertain the critical meanings of these four women's stories as a pathway to understanding the experiences they have lived through."

You have just read a small segment of the analysis chapter. A draft of the chapter is not ready for you to read, because I want to be sure I have captured your unique themes and be reasonably sure I have identified the common themes you share as a group.

I would like for you to read this summary and reflect on our conversations in light of the themes presented. Think in terms of your own experiences and help me determine if I have successful exposed the unique theme hidden within those experiences. Next, review the common themes and tell me if you consider spirituality, Indianness, bonding, inequality, reciprocity, and inclusiveness to be other themes found in the experiences you shared with me.

May 17, 1990

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Finally, study the translation model. It visually shows your unique themes and how your common life themes not only overlap, but interact together with the other women in the project and flow into themes common in the lives of other women. I think the written commentary will clarify the model. You may have suggestions you want to share.

As we walk and talk during our visit, we can share and clarify our thoughts. Your input will help the interpretation process. Once the final draft of the analysis chapter has been completed, I will also share it with you. Again, I hope you will offer feedback. I think this process can be carried out through a telephone conversation. I anticipate completing this phase in a few weeks.

When the research is complete, I will present to you a copy. Please accept my thanks for your participation, your advice, and most of all for sharing your experiences. I look forward to continuing our research partnership.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Brayboy

Enclosures

APPENDIX C

Unique Thematic Experiences

Adela: A Self-Actualized Woman

"I'm a nurse.
I'm a tribal traditionalist person.
I'm a Seneca.
I grew up with a sense of being a prized person.
I always had a sense of being a prized value,
a woman, a feminine person."
[Adela]

Adela's description of herself as an Indian woman, as a woman, and as a prized person reminds me of Abraham Maslow's (1973) fulfilled need for self-actualization.

Ember: A Harmonious Woman

"I am a successful professional.
I see myself as being a very true friend to my friends.
I work toward a betterment of all persons.
I see myself as strong, and very courageous, and very beautiful.
As women we hold the future in ourselves."
[Ember]

Ember's efforts to make everything in the more positive earned her the distinction of living in harmony with herself and others.

Jena: A Vigilant Woman

"I am an intelligent, caring, Indian person,
who will do whatever it takes to help
Indian people progress.
By progress I mean, being able to live and survive and interact
with the rest of society in as good a fashion as they do.
I'm ever-vigilant as to what's happening with Indian people.
The one word I hope would describe me is facilitator."
[Jena]

Jena holds a constant vigil for her native American brothers and sisters. She is "ever-vigilant" as to what is happening for and to Indian people.

Lander: A Struggling Woman

"There's nobody like me, because there's only me.
I would speak to my tribe or any other member
of another Indian tribe the same
as if they were my family, and I can do that because I feel very
comfortable about myself and what I do.
I love people."
[Lander]

What is unique is the power base Lander has developed as a result of her struggle and conflict.

Shared Thematic Experiences

During the process of interpreting the four native American women's experiences, several major themes have emerged from the initial interaction with the women.

1. Spirituality,
2. Cultural expression or "Indianness,"
3. Bonding or mother-daughter relationships,
4. Experiences of oppressive racial inequality,
5. The need to give back for what they have received or a deep sense of "reciprocity," and
6. Inclusiveness.

APPENDIX D

Translation Model

From our dialogue, I developed a model that serves to bridge the four Native American women's experiences to the experiences of other women.

Much of what is known about Native Americans shows a major quality of their life philosophy to be unity. Life is viewed as being interrelated, as a circle and everything has a place within that circle (Allen, 1986; Ywahoo, 1987; Cameron, 1981), and our lived experience has a place within "the sacred hoop." Given this integrative quality, the challenge to conceptually and visually demonstrate how the women's life themes are interflowing and overlapping gained concernment. The first idea for the model was realized in one of my dreams. Specific details were formulated in subsequent dreams.

The concept for the model is an outgrowth of Kenneth Lincoln's (1983) basic paradigm of translation. Lincoln sought to show how Black Elk's story proceeds through several phases before a reader can assimilate the account. The Translation Model presented is divided into five subsections and depicts the blueprint the researcher uses to interpret the lived experiences of four Native American women. The model should be viewed to have a dynamic nature. It is never still, always in motion, always in process of becoming. Such a process is continuous and not an event.

Specifically, the model demonstrates how themes in the women's lives are individual yet unified and interflowing.

The internal section of the model represents me, the researcher and connects all subdivisions of the model. The analysis began with me and the themes that are crucial to my lived experiences. It is within these themes that my preconceptions are freed from and incorporated into the women's themes in order to understand their lived experiences. This section of the model was the focus of Chapter IV.

The first concentric ring flows outward and characterizes the second section of the model which reveals the four Native American women's identities and their self-perceptions. The third section [shaded area] emanates from the second and gives prominence to the uniqueness each woman as identified by the unique themes. Within the fourth section, major common themes shared among the women are identified and examined. The broken lines indicate how the common themes empty endlessly into each other. At times the themes may appear to be vigorous, forceful or placid in nature. This allows for what Renata Tesch (1987) called "theme overlapping" and placement into more than one category. Themes are not mutually exclusive of each other, but only tend to be. Section five connects the researcher/translator and the four Native American women to other women. Although many themes are found in the lived experiences of the female population, prominent research findings

suggest connection, creation, oppression and voice as four common themes that Native American women, non-Native women, women of color, and global women share. Finally, the model becomes the nexus to the individual woman in our greater society.

The Translation Model does not encompass all the themes that the four Native American women share, nor is the model inclusive of all the themes shared by the greater population of women. The model reveals consistent themes that emerge from the analysis of these women's experiences and four possible themes from other women's lived experiences.

The Translation Model