

10-29-2010

## More Than Bows and Arrows: Subversion and Double-Consciousness in Native American Storytelling

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More than Bows and Arrows: Subversion and Double-Consciousness in  
Native American Storytelling

by:

Anastacia M. Schulhoff

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Sociology  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:  
October 29, 2010

Keywords: Master's Tools, Formula Stories, Mythologies, Stereotypes, Traditional  
Knowledge, Nature, Identity

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am thankful for the men and women who made available their stories and voices on the websites I draw upon for this thesis.

Secondly, I am fortunate to be surrounded by women who believe in taking risks, voicing unconventional thoughts, and taking an alternative path to life. When in the search of social justice and social change, these women are not afraid to take an intellectual stand or to write boldly, something I want to continue to emulate in my future endeavors. I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to Dr. Laurel Graham who picked me up when I had fallen hard. She gently encouraged me back towards my passion and allowed me to trust my voice and ideas. Without her compassionate guidance and infinite support, I could have never completed this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge my committee member Dr. Jennifer Friedman whose brilliant opinions and challenging proposals encouraged me to grow in both thought and foresight. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Cheryl Ellerbrock who so promptly and kindly joined this committee.

I am, indeed, blessed to be surrounded by people who support my dreams and aspirations. I would especially like to thank my mother, father, Anne, Robert and Susan Schulhoff, Marc Settembrino, Mychel Estevez, Patricia Greene, Joan Jacobs, Christina Partin, Rochelle Murphy, and Georgeann and Joyce Cordes.

Finally, I would like to recognize my extraordinary friend, Gabriel Alfonso Lopez. With your daily companionship, respect, intelligence, inquisitiveness, encouragement, and honorable spirit you have been an influential presence in my life. I have been fortunate in knowing somebody like you.

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**More than Bows and Arrows: Subversion and Double-Consciousness in Native  
American Storytelling**

**Anastacia M. Schulhoff**

**ABSTRACT**

W. E. B. Du Bois' legendary reflections on the "peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" has been applied almost exclusively to the souls of African American people (Du Bois 1903). This thesis shows how the concept of double-consciousness is alive in the stories told by Native Americans. I draw upon data from two websites that have recorded the stories told by "exemplary indigenous elders, historians, storytellers and song carriers" and their oral traditions that serve the "purpose of cultural preservation, education, and race reconciliation" (Wisdom of the Elders, 2009). From that population, I chose one hundred and three stories for my sample in this study. Employing qualitative methodology – thematic analysis, grounded theory, and narrative analysis - I examine these stories for the ways in which they claim to present a more satisfying identity for Native people than the myths, formula stories, and stereotypes of Native Americans that circulate through the dominant culture. They construct subversive stories that arise from their double-consciousness and challenge hegemonic concepts of Native identity, nature, and knowledge. This research will begin to fill the large gap in sociological literature on

Native Americans in general and Native Americans in particular, while offering a novel application of “double-consciousness,” a foundational concept in critical race theory.

## INTRODUCTION

Storytelling speaks to the heart or spirit of the listener.  
(Rose High Bear, Founder of WOTE and TISN)

In this complex and diverse world, there exists something we all have in common and upon which the success of our entire society rests (Eakin 2007). It is the mysterious way in which we communicate and understand each other. Simply stated, it is storytelling. Storytelling is the human action that conveys feelings, thoughts, identity, and culture (Cruikshank 2005; Eakin 2007; Plummer 1995). Since the beginning of civilization, we have shared through stories the events, beliefs, and values that make us who we are (Cruikshank 1990; Eakin 2007). Stories and storytelling lie at the heart of the human experience (Eakin 2007; Paulus et al. 2007; Jarvinen 2004). The most important stories may be those we share with family and friends, but all stories help preserve memory, explain our present, and imagine our futures (Cruikshank 2005).

We find direction in our lives through stories because they are a cultural tool-kit or a manual that enables us to understand our worlds (Eakin 2007; Plummer 1995). Sometimes a “person can literally find themselves in the text” of a story (Plummer 1995). Stories, however, are much more than tool-kits or manuals. If looked at closely, stories show the social structure of a society, “the exchange between individuals and the social structures they inhabit is a dialogic, give-and-take process” (Eakin 2007:131). People live their lives and tell their stories within socially structured conditions (Eakin 2007).



Despite all of the cultural transformation in the U.S. society, and Native Americans' interconnections with it, their traditional stories have survived (Cruikshank 1990). However, Native American<sup>1</sup> voices and stories are largely silenced in the mainstream discourse and in academia (Davis-Delano 2008). Sociologists have paid little attention to Native Americans' in general, and their stories in particular (Snipp 1992). Moreover, there is sparse literature in the field of sociology and little agreement on what makes up a Native American identity (Davis-Delano 2008; Minderhout and Frantz 2008, Shanley 1997; Weaver, 2001). Snipp (1992) states there can be little doubt that literature on Native Americans will offer important insights about Native Americans and the larger society in which they live. Therefore, I believe this gap in sociological literature is important to fill.

We do realize that storytelling is enormously important in Native American cultures, but it is uncertain how these stories connect with the identity work of Native Americans. The goal of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how Native American storytellers attempt to challenge stereotypes and reclaim honorable identities for themselves and their listeners/readers. In particular, my goal is to understand how Native American storytellers invoke stereotypes, mythologies and formula stories, undermine them, and/or absorb them while in the process of constructing their identities.

---

<sup>1</sup> I understand that the words we choose to use when speaking about groups of people have the power to label individuals in a way that they might find problematic. In this research I use the words Native American, Native, Indigenous Peoples, and First Nations peoples because these labels are currently used by various tribal peoples in the United States. Whenever possible, I do use their self-ascribed labels, tribal affiliations, or nation names. I make every attempt to avoid stereotypical or derogatory labels that some may find offensive. When it is absolutely necessary to convey a major point in this thesis, I do reference the dominant cultures' stereotypes that construct Native Americans.

I will focus this discussion on the particularly profound roles that stories play in the identity work of Native Americans. In the following pages, I will first explain how stories contribute to identities of people in general, and particularly how formula stories, mythologies, and racial stereotypes influence identity construction. Then, I will identify the dominant culture's constructions of "the Native American." Subsequently, I will give details as to how Native American storytellers interpret stereotypes and the dominant culture's stories and create new images. Next, I will specify the methods and sample that I use for this study. Lastly, I will present my findings and conclusions.

## **CHAPTER ONE: NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE DOMINANT CULTURE**

Traditional storytelling is difficult to explain to the modern mind, and often frustrates the rational listener who does not consider the power of story.

(Rose High Bear, Founder of WOTE and TISN)

The success of a handful of tribal governments in gaming and mining enterprises across the United States feeds a misconception that all 564 tribal governments are now multimillion dollar businesses, all with access to power that enables them to voice their stories (Spilde 2000). While I do recognize that some Native American groups have made serious inroads in the political and economic structures in the dominant culture, the vast majority of the 564 Native American nations, in particular the forty-one Northwestern and Plains tribes that I look at in this thesis, continue to be marginalized and silenced in the dominant culture (Davis-Delano 2008; Minderhout and Frantz 2008, Shanley 1997; Spilde 2000; Weaver, 2001). I am not attempting to homogenize the forty-one divergent tribes I studied in this research; rather, my interest resides in the information self-identifying Native American storytellers tell in their stories. Traditional storytelling has been a way for Native Americans to tell their own versions of their peoples' identities and their own histories (Cruikshank 1997). However, there is an inherent tension between being Native and American, an insider and outsider in both cultures that brings this questions to light: How do Native American storytellers struggle with the dominant cultures' narratives framing of Indian life and attempt to find authenticity in the traditional stories that they tell?

## **Narrative Identity: Cultural and Personal Identities**

Narrative research has become popular in the social sciences because people make sense of others and their selves through stories – “People live storied lives and telling and retelling one’s story is a fundamental way that an individual makes sense of their lives” (Paulus et al. 2007:299). In fact, one cannot understand the meaning of life outside of the narrative process (Jarvinen 2004). People, therefore, turn to narratives in an effort to understand the meaning of life. Events in our lives can have more than one possible explanation. Stories allow us to connect past experiences and actions that enable us to construct meaning for our lives and our selves (Eakin 2007; Paulus et al. 2007). In the same way narratives allow people to make sense of their self identities and experiences, narratives also construct an understanding of and identity for others (Eakin 2007; Jarvinen 2004; Loseke 2007; Paulus et al. 2007). Native Americans stories are important given their historical position in the dominant culture (Cruikshank 1997; Shanley 1997). While there are many types of stories that people tell, I am interested in two types of stories – stories that individuals tell about their selves and stories that are told about types of persons (Loseke 2007).

Stories can be located at the four levels of society – cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal (Loseke 2007). For this project I focus on the cultural and personal levels of identity narratives. Cultural narratives construct formula stories about “disembodied types of people” (Loseke 2007:107). These stories define for a culture what it means to be a man, a woman, a student, a teacher, or a Native American. What is more, formula stories construct “types of people” as good/bad, moral/immoral or worthy/unworthy (Loseke 2007). Formula stories circulate at the cultural level of society

providing ways to think about people in the absence of personal familiarity. In that sense, they are much like stereotypes. While formula stories do assist in the construction and maintenance of stereotypes, formula stories contain information about types of lives, types of experiences, and types of identities. Stereotypes are images of people whereas formula stories contain a system of ideas that involve typifications. To be clear, formula stories rely upon typifications. Typifications are “typical way(s) of behavior and a typical way of acting, and assumes typical underlying motivations or personalities” for “types” of identities. Formula stories are “about types of experiences [such as the “Native American experience”] involving distinctive types of characters [such as “the” Native American] (Loseke, 2001:107). These stories convey experiences and can “become virtual templates for how lived experiences may be defined” (Loseke 2001:107).

Formula stories are composed of “typifications” *and* personal stories. On a personal level, we construct stories about ourselves to make sense of our lives; to account for our social positions in life; and to communicate our understandings of the values, beliefs, and norms within a culture (Eakin 2007; Loseke 2007). Personal stories create “particular and unique embodied selves” (Loseke 2007:107). In constructing a personal identity, an individual may rely upon frames of reference, such as formula stories, that already exist in the culture.

One example of a cultural narrative is the formula story about the African American single mother. This story involves typical characters such as the African American single mother and the absent father. The typical experience of the African American female in this formula story is someone who experiences extreme hardships due to poverty and early single parenting responsibilities. The story constructs the moral

character of this “type” of identity as having a lower moral status than others because this identity is devalued within the public sphere of the dominant culture. This formula story becomes a widely acknowledged way of interpreting the African American single mother experience, but it leaves out the complexity of their actual lived experiences (Loseke 2007). People encounter these cultural frames of reference to understand and convey their personal experiences.

There is a reflexive process that occurs between cultural and personal narratives (Loseke 2007). In order for a personal narrative to be intelligible to others in society, it requires some elements found within the cultural narrative. Once the personal narrative is recognized as familiar to others in society it is used to construct the cultural narrative. Yet, individuals’ personal stories about their experiences and perceptions about who they are do not always match the larger cultural narrative. Therefore, narratives are constantly being “challenged, negotiated, and then re-created” (Loseke 2007:10). Native American storytellers, including the one hundred and three Native American storyteller narratives that I look at in this research, present an excellent study of how this challenge and renegotiation of formula stories comes about. Their stories reveal the significance of storytelling in constructing a less stigmatized and disparaged identity, showing their resistance or perhaps resilience.

Native Americans construct their identities against the backdrop of formula stories and popular mythologies of Native Americans. The concepts of mythologies and formula stories overlap. As previously discussed, formula stories are about types of characters, types of experiences, and types of moral evaluations and outcomes. In this sense they are like Barthes’ (1957) “Mythologies” - socially constructed notions,

narratives (formula stories), and assumptions that become unquestioned within a culture. Barthes (1957) referred to mythologies as cultural logics that are neither true nor false but simply believed. When a formula story becomes entrenched within a culture it becomes a mythology.

Undeniably, stories about “types” of people are extremely powerful because they construct an understanding of and identity for groups of people within a society (Loseke 2007). It is important to note that not every group within a society is able to make their stories heard. This is especially true for oppressed groups that are denied access to the possession of resources, including political, social, and economic resources within the social structure (Cruikshank 1997; Gongware 2003). The denial of resources to certain groups demotes them to a lower social standing within the social structure, thus, they become marginalized (Mullaly 2007). Marginalized groups are disallowed from fully participating in society because they are excluded from services, programs, policies, and the media (Mullaly 2007). Without the access or the allocation of resources, such groups are unable to present narratives or images about their cultures or identities that would reveal their lived experiences and actual identities. This is particularly apparent within Native American groups that have historically and systematically been denied resources within the United States (Minderhout and Frantz 2008; Nagel 1994; Shanley 1997; Weaver 2001). Their marginalized status and lived experiences intersect when you look at the fact that Native American groups experience particularly higher rates of suicide, lower than average life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates, higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of alcoholism, higher rates of domestic abuse, lower educational performance, and higher rates of poverty compared to other minority groups

(Davis-Delano 2008). Like any racial minority and perhaps even more so, Native Americans confront monumental misrepresentations of their culture and identities, mythologies that circulate within the dominant culture.

Unrepresented in positions of power within economic, social, and media institutions, Native Americans are largely unable to challenge the formula stories and mythologies that exist about them. In the 2000 Census, 4.3 million people reported being Native American. Yet, only 295 Native Americans are employed by the mainstream press and only .2% hold roles in television, film or theatre (Media Awareness 2004). Only 10% of Natives Americans own a personal computer and have Internet access at home compared to 23% of African Americans and 74.6 % of white Americans (Pew 2009; U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau 2006). Thirty-nine percent of Native people who live in rural areas have basic telephone service compared to 63% of Latinos (Bissell, 2004; Pew 2009; U.S. Department of Commerce 1994). Lack of representation in and lack of access to media sources are factors that contribute to the continuance of culturally insensitive, damaging, and misleading stories about Native Americans. Their personal stories and lived experiences are fundamentally silenced in the dominant culture. This is one reason why Native American stories are important to their own culture. Cruickshank (1997) found that in the process of presenting their stories, storytellers do not consider themselves victims, but rather, they resolutely connect larger social issues to local contexts. In this way, stories enable individuals to find strength and perseverance in their local communities and identities (Cruickshank 1997; Lamphere 2007).

Yet, mythologies and formula stories create, maintain, and perpetuate racial stereotypes because of the racial structure that exists within the larger cultural system



(Waters 1999; Johnson 2005). A racial stereotype is a standardized mental picture commonly held by people in a society that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudicial attitude, or an uncritical judgment about “other” racial groups within society (Blumer 1958; Waters 1999). Racial stereotypes are automatic and exaggerated mental pictures, common narratives, and unquestioned mythologies people hold about racial groups. Racial stereotypes create false ideas about the actual identities of groups of people and their cultures. This is particularly apparent when looking at Native American racial stereotypes.

People who hold racial stereotypes tend to ignore individual differences that challenge stereotypes in order to make sense out of an extremely complex social world. Stereotypes label different racial groups as superior/inferior and good/ bad, developing an “us vs. them” way of thinking about groups within society (Tajifel and Turner 1979). The “us” vs. “them” or “we” vs. “they” enables people to identify with groups to which they belong. Racial stereotypes create boundaries between groups.

Joane Nagel (1990), in her work on Native American identities, asserts that Native American identities are closely associated with boundaries. Racial or ethnic boundaries<sup>2</sup> “determine who is a member and who is not a member” of a racial or ethnic group and who or who does not have the right to resources within society (Nagel 1994:948). Even though people may choose to identify with a group for reasons of belonging, memory, or meaning such as third generation Irish immigrants who claim a

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<sup>2</sup> Race refers to a human population that is believed to be distinct in some way from other humans based on real or imagined *physical* differences. Ethnicity, while related to race, refers not to physical characteristics but *cultural traits* such as nationality, tribe, religious faith, language, and traditions.

form of symbolic ethnicity for St. Patrick's Day, not all people can choose who they are because of external racial categorization schemes (Gans, 1979; Nagel 1996; Lang 1998).

Racial stereotypes are extremely harmful because they distort, demean, devalue, limit, and sometimes physically harm racialized groups. They lead to discriminatory and racist practices (Waters 1999; Massey 2008, Blumer 1958). Racialized minority group members who are repeatedly ascribed a negative racial stereotype could experience feelings of inferiority, invisibility, hate, aggression and conflict (Massey 2008; Waters 1999). Native Americans experience these problems because of the persistent negative stereotypes that surround their identities (Davis-Delano 2008). What is more, Native Americans have had to challenge these mythologies, formula stories, and racial stereotypes that are imposed upon them from the dominant culture.

Hollywood Westerns and a handful of film documentaries by and large shape the dominant culture's perception of Native American people. These forms of media most often depict a mythic Indian of long ago, giving viewers the sense that Native Americans lived in the past and not in the present. Americans in general perceive Native Americans in the past tense, as people who lived prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Doble et al. 2007). Native Americans are the only population to be portrayed and thought about far more often in a historical context than as contemporary people (Doble et al. 2007; Yarrow 2007). Despite some "recent, politically correct romanticizing of Indians as spiritual environmentalists, most Americans think of Native Americans in a narrow, morally laden dualism, beginning and ending "with Pocahontas and Sacajawea (good), and half-formed notions about primitive savages and alcohol-riddled reservations (bad)" (Yarrow 2007:2).

## **Stereotypes, Formula Stories and Mythologies in the Dominant Culture**

Research reveals five universally constructed stereotypes that shape the American consciousness about Native Americans - the Indian princess, the Native warrior, the noble savage, the failed environmentalist, and the aggressive yet defeated drunk (Doble et al. 2007; Media Awareness 2010; Moon et al. 2009; Tan and Lucht 1997; Yarrow 2007). Recently, the wealthy and greedy Indian Casino owner stereotype has emerged (Media Awareness 2010). Native storytellers often regard these stereotypes as damaging and inaccurate myths. A brief look at the images and stories told by the dominant culture about Native Americans will clarify the “commonsense” notions of Native Americans that storytellers attempt to reconcile or undo.

### **The Indian Princess**

The Indian Princess is the Native beauty who is sympathetic enough to the white man's quest to be lured away from her tribe to marry into his culture, and further his mission to civilize her people. Images of the Indian Princess are romanticized in paintings, movies, books, brand labels, and in documentaries. The representation of the Indian Princess is intended to represent the “exotic, beautiful and dangerous New World” (Media Awareness, 2010). The Indian Princess is not depicted as a powerful, competent, or articulate woman but rather as a sexual object that can help white men defeat Native American resistance to colonization. It is important to note that an Indian Princess is a European construct that arrives from the ruling structure of kings and queens – there has never been a “princess” in Native American tribal structures. The Indian Princess is found in such movies as Disney’s Pocahontas (1995), Legends of the Fall (1994), Dance Me Outside (1995), and White Fang 2: Myth of the White Wolf (1993) to name a few.

### **The Native Warrior**

One of the most common images of a Native American male is that of the Native Warrior. The Native warrior is depicted as a fierce threat to a civilized society. By and large, this image is illustrated as a bare-chested male, wearing a war lance, which epitomizes the savagery that must be overcome. Recently, a romanticized (eroticized) figure of the strong silent Native American male who is minimally clothed has appeared on book covers, upon the walls of banks and business, and within movies. These representations demonize and eroticize Native American males because the image is understood as a threat to civility: this is a sexualized barely clad young male, who is on the hunt for women to be ravaged. Examples of this stereotype can be found in movies such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Five Savage Men* (1971), and *Thunderheart* (1992).

### **The Noble Savage**

In an effort to redress past wrongs, there has been an increase in another time-honored romantic stereotype -- the mythic Noble Savage. "Elevated to a sphere of righteousness unreachable by those in the contaminated white society and usually possessing some spiritual connection to the land, the Noble Savage communes in a cloud of mysticism and places no value on material possessions" (Media Awareness, 2010:1). This image is largely represented as the Native American who attends powwows, participates in sweat lodges and partakes in vision quests which all represent the destruction of the native culture but is celebrated as being a "noble" act of attempting to resurrect something that was destroyed by the dominant culture. *The Education of Little Tree* (1997), *Thunderheart* (1992) and most recently, *Avatar* (2009) are three examples.

## **The Failed Environmentalist and the Wise Medicine Man**

The story of the Native American as the environmentalist is also prevalent within the dominant culture. These stories construct the Native American as possessing a profound spiritual kinship with nature where they are overly concerned about the environmental welfare of the planet. Images and narratives that construct the failed environmentalist are that of the Native American shedding a tear as they view the polluted and destroyed landscape around them. Ironically, these images depict the Native American wearing buckskins while surrounded by automobiles, indicating that they still wear such things in the present day. The things associated with American Indians—wildlife (particularly wolves), nature, and the warrior tradition—tend to romanticize their connection to the natural environment and even portray them as part of nature themselves, able to communicate with other “wild things.” By and large, these narratives serve as a critique against the industrialization of society, but they do not take into account the Native Americans understandings of and interactions with the environment. The connection to land and environment is seen as central to Native American survival, but since technologies and modernization have persisted in changing the environment, their way of life is constructed as failed, thus, eliminated. Many of these images are used as symbols for American environmentalist and New Age mysticism groups that take an oppositional stance against the urban industrialized society. These representations then construct the Native American as a people who are resistant to modern-day progress and its institutions. The earth day television commercial that features Iron Eyes Cody (1971), Al Gore’s book *Earth in Balance* (1992), and the best seller children’s book *Brother Eagle Father Sky* (1992) are three examples of this mythology.

### **The Aggressive and Defeated Drunk**

One of the most deeply embedded stereotypes about Native American life is that of the alcoholic Indian. Old western films often showed a Native American, drunk to foolishness, next to a bar pleading for beer. There are narratives about chiefs giving up miles of land for a taste of "fire water" and Injun' Joe in Tom Sawyer was hardly ever depicted as being sober. Many of these narratives arise from the "Firewater Myth." This myth asserts that Native Americans are "predisposed to heavy drinking and are unable to control their behavior when intoxicated" (Caetano et al., 1998: 237). The myth dates back to the 1600's when colonizers observed Native Americans drinking to the point of intoxication which resulted in drunken impiety and violence (Caetano et al., 1998). This myth continues today and is seen in the movies *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007) and *Hidalgo* (2004).

### **The Wealthy and Greedy Indian Casino Owner**

More recently, American media have given us a fairly new stereotype: that of the wealthy, greedy Indian who owns a casino. The rich Indian is pocketing money by gaming the system: Indian casinos are allowed by the government because they are believed to enable economic development for sovereign Native American nations. However, the "wealthy and greedy Indian casino owner" stereotype works in two ways – it calls into question the economic need and rights of tribal governments and it is used to question the authenticity of "real" Indians. Once a tribal nation or Native American acquires wealth, they cannot be real Indians (Spilde, 2000). Two examples of this stereotype found in the mainstream media today are the narratives that surround the Seminole Indians and the Cherokee Nation casino activities and development.

These stereotypes emphasize particular consequences for Native Americans who reject the dominant culture's way of life – they will become drunks, failed activists, oversexualized objects, primitive, inferior, or social deviants. When Native Americans do succeed in the eyes of the dominant culture by achieving financial wealth, they are no longer thought of as Native American (Spilde 2000). Despite a heightened awareness of these cultural misrepresentations of Native Americans and their histories in the past quarter century, these distortive mythologies continue unabated today (Shanley 1997). The continuing prevalence of these stereotypes in the mass media and popular culture forces storytellers to come to terms with them in their own creative work. In this thesis, I ask how do Native Americans both use and contest these mythologies, formula stories, and racial stereotypes.

## **CHAPTER TWO: DOUBLE-CONCIOUSNESS AND SUBVERSIVE STORIES**

You know, stories teach us so much about ourselves.  
(Arlie Neskahi, WOTE)

### **Double-Consciousness and Authentic Identities**

In the case of racial minorities, existing mythologies, formula stories, and stereotypes create a context where minority members develop a “double consciousness. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) presented the idea of “double-consciousness” to express how African American people who live in an Anglo-Saxon society *use* the black culture and the white culture to make the other. Double-consciousness is the “sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others” (DuBois, 1903:8). Racial minority groups see themselves not only through their own perceptions of who they are but through the perceptions of the larger society. Double-consciousness foists a tremendous burden upon the individual who must constantly negotiate between two cultures that may have two contrasting expectations for him or her. At the same time, racial minority group members who understand and embrace their own double-consciousness gain the ability to understand the minority culture and the larger culture because they are insiders in both. DuBois (1903) believed that racial minorities are best served by lifting the veil that creates this duality to begin with – it allows for a greater clarity in understanding the dualities of a person’s life when they acknowledge both identities. In this way, double-consciousness is not a form of alienation but is an expanded way of understanding the



world that can transform the problem of the color line. The veil in DuBois' theory refers to three things – first, the “veil” signifies the physical segregation of blackness from whiteness in American society; second, the veil implies white Anglo Saxon majority group members lack the ability to see African American minority members as American; and lastly, the veil refers to the lack of clarity that African Americans have to the extent that they cannot see themselves outside of what the white Anglo Saxon majority group portrays and prescribes for them. The myths and formula stories that circulate at the cultural level of society create the veil that DuBois speaks of.

I borrow this concept from African American critical race theory and apply it to Native Americans in three ways. First, the racial stereotypes perpetuated by the formula stories and mythologies create the boundaries that “physically and mentally separates” Indianness from whiteness in American society. Second, the white Anglo Saxon majority group members cannot see Native Americans as Americans because myths and formula stories construct this identity as being an “other”. Third, Native Americans, themselves, find it difficult to view themselves outside of the prescribed identities that are created from the dominant culture's myths and narratives. The “veil” is both a form of power and alienation. The veil is a form of power because it supplies Native Americans with a “double consciousness,” an expanded view to see this “twoness” of “warring ideals,” between an Indian culture and the dominant white Anglo Saxon culture. Thus, there is a need for stories to create strength and perhaps perseverance to challenge stories from the dominant culture. Minority peoples who lift the veil become liberated due to the awareness of their “double consciousness.” Double-consciousness can be a way to persevere despite hardships or adversity. The theory does not claim that people should

ignore the white Anglo Saxon perspective, but rather it claims that people should not be dominated by, and limited to, that perspective. In fact, there is a kind of pride in knowing a different vision of self and nation from what “others” think.

Patricia Hill Collins’ (1999) outsider-within concept is similar to DuBois’ double-consciousness. Collins (1999) uses this concept to explain “social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of un-equal power” (p.86). Outsider-within identities are attached to “histories of injustice” where these groups “gain a form of knowledge that emerges in defense of the groups search for justice” (Collins 1999:86). Both theories focus on marginalized racial groups that suffer from injustices due to the unequal power relations in a culture. Both theorists assert that a racial minority can gain insight from the “double-consciousness” and “outsider-within” status. The insight that is gained as a result of the “double consciousness” and “outsider-within” status provides insight to racial minority groups to find creative ways to counter the unequal power relations within society, which encourages social justice and social change (Collins 1999). Storytelling, in particular, is a mechanism for lifting the veil for Native Americans. Storytelling is a vehicle for a release of the knowledge and creative insight that results from the “outsider-within” status. Marginal racialized groups that challenge hegemonic meanings and power relations by the process of constructing subversive stories could reshape these definitions and boundaries, thus, resulting in social change. It is also a way to provide strength to people so that they believe in themselves and their own cultural stories.

While these concepts are not commonly applied to Native American groups, these concepts can be appropriately applied to them, particularly because, Native Americans and African Americans have much in common, including experiencing forced removal

from their traditional homelands, enslavement, and oppressive acts of assimilation. By applying DuBois' theory to Native Americans, we can see both groups view "this society as a world which yields no true self consciousness, but only lets [them] see themselves through the revelations of the other world" (DuBois 1903:2). This is particularly apparent in Native American groups because the dominant culture imposed very purposeful efforts to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant culture, including boarding schools that worked toward eradicating Native tribal languages, religious beliefs, and cultural ceremonies. Native Americans view themselves through the veil of negative mythologies, racial stereotypes, and formula stories imposed upon them from the dominant culture. Native American storytellers actualize "double consciousness" in their stories to lift this veil. Therefore, the innate tension between being Native and American, an insider and outsider, brings these questions to light: How do Native people lift the veil and attempt to discover a more authentic and less troubling self identity? How do Native American storytellers struggle with the dominant narratives framing of Indian life and attempt to find authenticity in the traditional stories that they tell?

### **Comparison with "Other" Narratives of Resistance**

It is useful to compare and contrast Native stories with other narratives of resistance from racial minorities, such as Slave narratives that have functioned in American society as a form of resistance against the oppressive cultural system. Slaves created "slave narratives" to convey knowledge about their own African American history and culture, specifically, the complexity of the white Anglo Saxon oppressor and the black oppressed. The slave narrative "sought to indict both those who enslaved them and the metaphysical system drawn upon to justify their enslavement" (Gates 1987).

While it is true that Native Americans and African American share similar minority group experiences, they do differ in particular ways. Both groups have experienced slavery, forced removal from their ancestral homelands, and assimilation attempts<sup>3</sup>. Both groups continue to suffer from severe forms of prejudice and discrimination and both groups earn lower than average annual incomes which forces many into poverty. These groups do, however, differ in particularly profound ways. For instance, African Americans were freed from slavery in 1865 under the Thirteenth Amendment and their rights were protected by the 1867 Fourteenth Amendment. At that same time, Native Americans were explicitly denied their rights to citizenship or any protections under these same amendments.

Moreover, Native Americans who were forcibly marched to reservation lands, experienced acts of racial genocide and seizure of their ancestral lands during the same time period that African Americans were “freed.” It is estimated that 18 million Native Americans were living in North America before contact with European settlers (Dobyns 1983). When the “Indian Wars” ended in the 1890’s less than 250,000 Native Americans remained. Many scholars note that American institutions such as government organizations, churches, and schools attempted to deal with the “Indian problem” by destroying Native Americans “institutions of family, clan, tribal structures, religious belief systems, customs, and traditional way of life” (Deloria 1988; Garret 1996:1; Locust 1988; Reyhner and Eder 1992). The reservation, in particular, was the primary method used by the United States government to “take care of the Indian problem” because it has

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<sup>3</sup> I point out the institutional forms of injustice and inequality to highlight forms of overt oppression, while being aware of covert forms of oppression.

long term effects. Native Americans were placed upon cramped, isolated, and inhospitable lands where they lost their means of sustenance, were largely forced to abandon their lifestyles, and had children taken from their families and placed in boarding schools (Locust 1988).

Boarding schools were implemented in 1870 where Native American children were forcibly removed from reservations with the goal of having them conform to white Anglo Saxon societal standards (Bear 2008; Lamphere 2007). Specifically, children were banned from speaking their native language, banned from practicing religious practices and were expected to give up their “Indian” identity and adopt the “white” American identity. All Native Americans were banned from their religious and cultural practices in the 1887 Dawes Act.

The United States government’s policies and practices concerning Native Americans ultimately fractured the Native American society. It was not until 1924 when Native Americans received citizenship status, fifty-nine years after African Americans received their citizenship status. Native Americans did not gain the right to vote until 1947, eighty years after African Americans gained these same rights. What is most shocking is that boarding schools for Native children still operate today, however, religious practices and native language is no longer restricted (Bear 2008). In 1978, Native Americans were given religious freedoms under new legislative changes (Garrett and Pichette 2000). Accordingly, their histories largely influence how Native Americans continue their fight today to reclaim power to determine their identities and culture (Shanley 1997).

Examining the similarities and differences between these two minority groups, we can understand how these two types of narratives might function similarly in its purposes yet, may bear little similarities in certain respects because of different social contexts. Native American stories, consequently, function in a role not played by slave narratives. Native American narratives are a comfort for double-consciousness because they offer an alternative view of reality. What is more, unlike slave narratives, Native American narratives are much older and more intimately connected with one's family, nature, spirituality (not religion), geographical locations, and traditional histories (Cruikshank 1997; Garrouette 2003; House et al. 2006; Nagel 1994). Native Americans do not solely rely upon scientific knowledge, school-taught or the church-taught perspectives when constructing their identities and narratives, unlike slave narratives. This is the consequence of boarding schools, forced assimilation attempts, and differing cultural worldviews. Their stories contain information about Native American language, spirituality, geographical locations, ceremonies, songs, rituals and their identities (Cruikshank 1997). The goal of storytelling in Native American communities, has always been to have the story and the knowledge it contains be committed to memory, passed down to later generations, and to be preserved (Cruikshank 1997; House, et al. 2006).

### **Storytelling: Central to the Identity Work of Native Americans**

Storytelling is a primary mechanism that Native Americans use to contest or renegotiate mythologies, formula stories, and stereotypes. Storytelling may also enable Native Americans to engage in interpretive work that builds up what they understand to be a more authentic identity. Scant literature exists in explaining "authenticity" in Native American identities. The studies that do exist use measures created by federal agencies

and non-Native peoples. Therefore, Garrouette has urged scholars “to enter tribal philosophies and to enter tribal relations—and begin doing intellectual work within a Native American philosophy of knowledge, allowing themselves to be guided by its assumptions, values, and goals” when they study authenticity in Native American identities (Garrouette 2003:177). Storytelling, in particular, contains “ messages about the energy, the pride, and connection the Native Americans once had [and] replaces the stereotypes of Native Americans with the traditional identities that once proudly led the Indians of the past and continue into the present” (Kim 2008:73). Native American storytellers execute oppositional readings of the dominant mythologies in order to carve out contemporary identities for themselves. They create subversive stories that offer new, alternative identities where they may be able to understand a more authentic identity by challenging stereotypes, where they can also finds strength and empowerment.

### **Types of Readings/Interpretations**

Yet, how do we make sense of these texts in storytelling? Hall (1980) presents three methods of decoding texts: dominant-hegemonic readings, negotiated readings and oppositional readings. The first, dominant-hegemonic reading, refers to the passive acceptance of the myth or formula story, which is the preferred reading. Dominant hegemonic readings are the interpretations that swallow those stories without criticism (Hall 1980). For instance, consider when you watch a movie or hear a story about Native Americans that exclusively depicts their identity in a historical “past tense” context, where you interpret “Native Americans” no longer existing in the present day; you are engaging in the dominant-hegemonic reading. A negotiated reading occurs when you watch a movie and engage in some degree of resistance to it, such as questioning “why

does this movie or story only depict Native Americans in the past tense context?” If you reject the meaning in the story or movie all together, you are forming an oppositional reading to the mythology. Most often, oppositional readings are formed by audience members whose identities or social positions are marginalized by the dominant culture (Hall 1980). Native American storytellers, by and large, experience oppositional readings to the myths and narratives that are located in the dominant social structure. They present new alternative identities in the stories that they construct in order to build what they perceive to be a more authentic identity for themselves.

### **Types of Stories**

Ewick and Silbey (1995) state that narratives can expose truths about power within a culture. This is accomplished by investigating two types of stories – hegemonic tales and subversive stories. Hegemonic tales are stories that reflect and reproduce the existing power structures in society favoring the dominant culture’s ideological system (Ewick and Silbey 1995). Examples of hegemonic tale are the stories of the stereotypical Indian Princess, Failed Environmentalist, and Native Warrior found in popular films. Subversive stories, on the other hand, unsettle power and reveal truths about the social world based upon personal accounts (Ewick and Silbey 1995). Subversive stories emerge from a perspective of opposition to the hegemony. A subversive story can become counter-hegemonic when it “find(s) expression in the culturally available plots and characters” within a society (Ewick and Silbey 1995:221). Subversive stories often attempt to reclaim a lost identity, reinstate a proud heritage, and build new associations between “types of people” and honorable attributes. For example, Native American storytellers who reject the myths, formula stories, and stereotypes of the dominant culture



and voice alternatives to the dominant Western, hegemonic perspectives on Native American identities are constructing subversive stories.

### **Master's Tools and "Other" Tools**

According to Lorde's (1979) theory, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" - the hegemonic tales concerning Native American people will never offer Native Americans the tools they need to dismantle damaging stereotypes and formula stories. Instead, storytellers have to invent their own tools. Their stories may not look like a movie script or a standard American novel. Instead, their stories follow a different logic and invoke different kinds of images.

On the other hand, Mary Loving Blanchard (2002) counters Lorde by asserting that Native Americans can use the dominant culture's "tools-" such as the formula stories, mythologies, and racial stereotypes that oppress, racialize, and silence them, as a means in which to "dismantle" the dominant culture's system of oppression and racism. This process can be adeptly explained when she states:

In our hands, the master's tools have become ammunition in the dismantling of his house, as we set about adding an extra room or two. We have taken his tools and with them made tools that fit our individual hands, as each of us sets out to do the work we have to do....[W]e'll realize that those tools didn't belong to the master, after all. Well, they didn't belong to him all by himself. And that is one way that we gain agency, by adapting the tools we have rather than by reinventing the wheel; although the wheel is reinvented along the way (Blanchard 2002:256-7).

Storytelling in indigenous cultures has always been a vehicle for cultural maintenance (Cruikshank 1997). Cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs are passed on through storytelling. However, current Native American stories offer an alternative view

of reality and are a covert form of resistance against the dominant American society (Cruikshank 2007). Therefore, Native American storytellers utilize the “master’s tools” and their own “culturally distinct creative tools” as a means for liberation.

In the following chapters I will explore the stories constructed by Native storytellers. My analysis will explore how Native American storytellers’ bi-cultural awareness of the dominant culture’s mythologies, formula stories, and stereotypes shape their identities, thus, indicating their own double consciousness. Their stories further reveal their use of their own tools as well as the “master’s tools” to create subversive stories. These subversive stories reshape the stereotypes, mythologies, and formula stories of Native Americans while at the same time challenging Western philosophies about nature, knowledge, and the individual.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY**

Native people of North America have created countless ways to preserve our knowledge and transmit our values and traditions. One way is the storytelling tradition.  
(Arlie Neskahi, WOTE Program One: Turtle Island Storytellers)

Imagine exploring a website that brings you to the oftentimes hidden stories of Native American storytellers. You push play on the featured audio button and begin to hear Native American flute music, with its distinctive plaintive sounds reverberating through your thoughts, building your anticipation for a profound discovery that awaits you. It sounds like two tree branches rubbing together, sparking a flame in your mind that is ancient and time honored. While on the internet site, a narrator introduces an “exemplary” and “respected” Native American storyteller. You reflect upon his word choices, “exemplary” and “respected,” thinking the person who will be telling this story has an “expert status” in the Native American community. Then, you hear his/her personal introduction – telling you both their tribal and English name, welcoming you to the story using his/her tribal language then, switching back to the English language to tell you about his/her lineage and the tribe’s geographical location. The storyteller’s presentation of self bolsters your perceptions about his/her “authenticity” as a *real* “Native American Storyteller.” The website’s side column, next to the transcript, provides you with the ability to scroll through personal information that is oftentimes invisible. Their contact information, educational achievements, community involvement, and personal accomplishments lend credibility to your confirming thoughts about their

Native American identity. You can view pictures of the storyteller wearing vibrant traditional Native American dress, jewelry pieces that reflect his/her tribes' identity, and displaying various other cultural artifacts. The intersection between the dominant culture and the Native American culture that you now cross begins your enlightening discovery about the stories of Native American storytellers. This path will answer, "How do Native Americans make sense of themselves and the world?"

### **Sample**

I first hoped to gain approval from a local tribe so I could conduct interviews on narrative identity. However, this proved too difficult. As established, Native Americans are an "invisible" group, in that they are not widely visible in general populations and are therefore difficult for researchers to contact. Additionally, Native American tribal groups who are located on reservations are sovereign nations. Therefore, they will not participate in scientific research without tribal government approval. For this thesis, I decided to make use of several untapped Internet resources provided by storytellers from a wide variety of tribal affiliations. I chose to look for online groups that were constructing a Native American identity through the processes of storytelling. Initially, I found a total of eight websites. I decided upon two affiliated websites that provide audio recordings and transcripts of their stories. The other six websites were not chosen because the stories featured were not directly told by Native Americans.

### **Data Collection**

It is spectacular to think a group that is often invisible to the public and typically protected from scientific inquiry by tribal governments would present such a

spectacular oral and visual picture to the public about Native American history, life, and their philosophy about the world. If you peruse the internet you will locate a public display of Native American identity construction for all to consume at two affiliated websites –Wisdom of the Elders Inc. (WOTE) and Turtle Island Storytellers network (TISN). The organizers of these websites assert that the purpose is to:

Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. records and preserves traditional cultural values, oral history, prophesy and other messages of guidance from indigenous elders in order to regenerate the greatness of culture among today's and future generations of native peoples. As First Peoples, we are humbled by the wisdom of our elders and the deep connection they share with Great Spirit, the world of nature and family. We regard our elders as rapidly vanishing, irreplaceable keepers of oral history, tradition and environment. Values they extol represent an ancient legacy of knowledge which has become as endangered as many disappearing species in our fragile ecosystem.

Turtle Island Storytellers Network is the American Indian online speakers bureau which promotes 80 tribal storytellers, historians, and song carriers. This network was developed to provide speaking and consulting opportunities for tribal elders, oral historians, storytellers and song carriers from 13 states in the Northwest and Northern Plains states. Individual webpage portfolios include information on talented oral cultural artists, their biographical summary and contact information, along with audio, transcript and photos.

WOTE was created first, in 1993, as a site where people can hear Native storytellers telling their stories. Its offshoot, TISN, created in 2005, promotes the careers of storytellers and disseminates the stories themselves. Both sites include oral recordings and written transcripts of the stories told. The recordings attained during the production of WOTE helped provide the initial content for the TISN site. Rose High Bear, founder of WOTE, states that the storytellers located on TISN were

“chosen by myself and our radio team as we traveled to record for our Wisdom of the Elders Radio series. Most of the storytellers were recommended by tribal cultural leaders in the process of producing the series.”

The WOTE is an eight-week recorded series that has as its mission to share the oral histories and cultural arts of Native American Nations. The program originally launched in May 2005 on American Indian Radio on Satellite (AIROS) network, on NPR (National Public Radio), and on community and college radio stations. Today, this program continues to air on weekly radio stations such as “Native Voice 1” and various other Native American radio stations located in the United States and Canada. This audio series is also available online at the WOTE website<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the website is enhanced with written transcripts, outreach information, and educational materials. The series airs continuously on various radio stations and can be accessed online at anytime.

WOTE is funded by a variety of endowments and non-profits. Because these stories are intended to air on Native American radio stations and to appear on the Internet, they are useful for teaching both the dominant culture about “the Native American,” as well as, teaching Native Americans about themselves. Dual audiences are being addressed – the Indian audience and the dominant white Anglo-Saxon audience – and this is well-known to the storytellers who choose to have their work included. These stories give us an excellent vantage point from which to view identity negotiation and identity construction by the storytellers.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.wisdomoftheelders.org](http://www.wisdomoftheelders.org)

The structure of the WOTE program and website consists of three series, each containing eight shows. Every show consists of nine topical sections in this order: Historical Introduction, Elder Wisdom feature, Speaking Native, Sacred Landscape, Tribal Rhythms, Health and Healing, Artist's Circle, and Turtle Island Storytellers. I selected the last section, the one titled "Turtle Island Storytellers," from the WOTE site as it contains an oral story with a written transcript which highlights "tribal storytellers who share legends, creation stories and other traditional and sometimes contemporary stories that illuminate the roots of the storyteller's cultural identity." All twenty-four stories from the Turtle Island Storytellers section were included in my analysis. I did not select the sections on history, language, landscapes, music, medicinal knowledge, and art for analysis because these topics would have been too narrow in focus for this research. Furthermore, these sections did not contain the information necessary to reveal the complexities associated with identity work.

The separate website called Turtle Island Storytellers Network (TISN) showcases the work of seventy-nine storytellers. Combining these storytellers with my original twenty-four meant that I had access to one-hundred and three Native American storyteller's oral recordings and transcripts of their stories. These stories have historically been limited to Native American communities, especially friends and family members. This site allows unprecedented access to a large slice of life often hidden from the general public.

Each oral rendering includes a two to three page transcript. Each section contains present day pictures of the featured storyteller and historical pictures of their tribe. Thirty-seven percent identify their tribal affiliations. Seventy percent of the

transcripts provide pictures of landscapes and maps where the tribe was/is located. The accompanying audio section features Native American flute music and a narrator's voice introducing the storyteller and the story. All stories offer a recorded audio feature. The audio recording that is provided online is identical to what is aired on radio. Storytellers are quickly introduced by the organizer then the storytellers begin to tell their stories. The storytellers literally *tell* their stories: they did not write these stories down for the purpose of this archive. The organizers of the websites later transcribed their stories and made both the transcripts and oral recordings available online.

On my initial exploration of these stories, I found the use of the words “we” and “our tribe” is especially apparent. Many storytellers speak in their tribal language at some point in their presentation ,usually occurring in the introduction or at the closing of the story. Also, the audio recordings reflect the differing dialects of each tribe represented. This website presents narratives that come from a large and diverse group of individuals who claim a Native American identity and actively participate in storytelling practices.

The affiliated online site, TISN, supplied additional audio recordings and transcripts<sup>5</sup>. TISN provides seventy- nine individual Native American storyteller's biographies and their stories (see Appendix B). I used all seventy-nine individual narratives in my analysis. The transcripts average one page in length. Each transcript includes pictures of the storyteller, family members, or tribal members wearing Native American costumes and jewelry or displaying cultural artifacts. A side column

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.turtleislandstorytellers.net/>



provides additional information such as contact information, educational achievements, community involvement, and personal achievements.

The sample is equally divided between genders. The ages of the storytellers range between their early twenties to late eighties. Storytellers are located in twelve states in the Northwest, West, and Plains of the United States: Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Washington. Forty-one self-identified tribal affiliations are represented in this sample, including the Nez Perce, Winnebagos, Crow, Assisiniboines, Sioux, Chippewa, Shawnee, Kiowa, Choctaw, Paute, Cowlitz, and Cherokee to name only a few. The website organizes the storytellers according to their current geographical location of residence revealing that some individuals who claim a tribal affiliation are not living in an area where the tribe is located. This also reveals that some of the storytellers are living in urban areas while others are located on reservations.

I used this sample because it represents storytellers from diverse urban and reservation locations from twelve states. I do recognize that each tribe and geographical location is distinct. I took this under consideration when reading their stories. This sample also includes equal gender representation and storytellers who vary in age. As best stated by WOTE, this sample will:

Develop greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity of American Indian oral history and cultural arts still thriving among more than 550 nations in America today. You will learn more about traditional indigenous cultural values which have been obscured by history and misunderstanding. (WOTE)

## **Methodology**

In my thesis I use the framework of Floersch et al.'s (2010) study that applied three methodological techniques (thematic analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis) to understand adolescent meaning making. They state this approach achieves a "multidimensional understanding of the human experience" (Floresch et. al 2010:2). Like them, I use an integrated methodological approach because it advances a researcher's profundity of thought and findings and it has never been applied to Native American storytellers' stories (Charmaz 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Floersch et al. 2010; Saldaña 2009).

I applied thematic analysis, grounded theory, and narrative analysis because of the large number of stories available and the complexities found within each story. I first used thematic analysis to view particular patterns within the stories. Second, I used grounded theory (GT) to assist me in seeing how those patterns connect. Finally, I used narrative analysis because it aids in my understanding the temporality and plot lines in the stories (Floersch et al. 2010). This eclectic methodological approach helped develop a strong conceptual framework for understanding how Native Americans experience and make meaning of their world. Moreover, these three qualitative methods are the most frequently employed methodologies used when analyzing and reporting qualitative data (Charmaz 2006; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Floersch et al. 2010; Riessman 2008). Combining these three techniques enables me to reach more robust findings than I could reach using only one method. Moreover, triangulation of techniques reinforces the solidarity of my interpretations of the stories.

I used the thematic analysis and GT approaches because Native American storytellers use abstract ideas and concepts in their stories. If I did not use this approach, I believe many of the meanings and subtleties in their stories would have been lost. To put simply, the aim of thematic analysis is to make sense out of a large amount of qualitative data by simply looking at data as a whole and counting how many times a descriptive pattern arises in the stories (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The aim of GT is to generate hypotheses that theoretically *describe* the constructs that arise in every sentence of the stories told (Charmaz 2008; Glaser and Strauss 1965). I use this approach because it made sense to take the large amount of data and describe the stories with a broad theme during my first reading. Then, I looked at the stories line by line and coded particular themes in their own words during my second reading. This allowed me to take a top down bottom up approach to understanding hidden nuances in their stories. I used narrative analysis on the final reading of these stories because it enables me to locate any temporal sequencing that is occurring in the stories and to present my findings in story form (Charmaz 2008).

Although philosophical distinctions among these methods do exist, I find it helpful to borrow particular analytic techniques from each approach to combine them in such a way that enables triangulation. Prior research demonstrates this eclectic approach produces an esoteric understanding of qualitative data and the theoretical contributions this form of analysis makes possible (Floresch et al. 2010).

### **Understanding Reality and the Purpose of the Research**

I take the interpretive approach to human social life. The interpretive approach to social life is based upon social interaction and is socially constructed by meaning

systems (Loseke 2009). The goal of research in this stance is to understand the complexity of the human experience. At the same time, I do embrace the critical stance on human social life which means that subjective meaning is important, but the meaning is shaped by real and objective social, political, and cultural factors. My personal milieu unavoidably filters how I code, perceive, and document my data; therefore, I must consider how my own values and background shape this research (Charmaz 2008; Saldaña 2009).

Qualitative researchers must put themselves and their understandings about reality into the study because their interpretations of the data and their findings reflect how they view the world. Saldaña (2009) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) all agree that researchers' interpretations and findings reflect the constructs, concepts, language, and theories of the researcher. In fact, "all coding [and findings] is a judgment call since we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks to the process" (Sipe and Ghiso 2004:482-3).

### **The Researcher's Ancestral and Cultural Milieu**

In selecting my research topic, I explored my values, beliefs, cultural background, ancestral heritage, and theoretical stances. When writing about my history and beliefs as a person, the words of Ruth Behar incessantly echoed in my mind – "As a anthropologist, I had an obligation to give voice to others. To give myself voice was narcissistic, indulgent; even now, I still feel the weight of this view" (Behar 2003: 331). But, in later chapters in her book *Translated Woman*, Behar (2003) enticed and challenged me to write candidly about my history when she asserted:

Those whose nationality, racial, ethnic, or class position make them uneasy insiders in the academic world often feel as if they are donning and removing masks in trying to form a bridge between the homes they have left and the new locations of privileged class identity they now occupy ... you become an ethnographer [researcher] but refuse to speak from a position of unsituated authority; instead, you try and speak from that very *ajiaco de contradiccions* that makes you a *halfie*... and realizing that you continually slip in and out of a shadow for purposes of inclusion and purposes of exclusion...The dilemma will remain; the *mestiza* [mixed] still speaks, in large part, to the *gringos* and *gringas* [foreigners], whose homes and academic settings she has moved into (Behar 2003:338-9) [emphasis mine].

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to give a voice to Native Americans and have been plagued with “keeping my voice” out of this thesis. I felt a profound need to be very watchful in my interpretations and labeling of their words because of that incessant self-imposed requirement to “get it right” and have their voices heard. This is one reason why I rely heavily upon in-vivo coding; I made use of their-own words and avoided imposing my own words upon them. While I am offering a glimpse of the many voices that are largely silenced by the dominant culture – in so doing, I am also showing their own agency. I am not attempting to “help” Native Americans in the sense of acting for them because Native American’s are taking action to help themselves. One of those actions is storytelling. I focused on what Native Americans say about themselves rather than what others have to say about them (Fine 1998).

Even with this realization, I needed to come to terms with my voice and identity in this thesis. I held true to my catch phrase when asked why I wanted to conduct this research – “I grew up with the profound awareness that Native Americans are relentlessly silenced and marginalized by the dominant culture. I want

to bring Native Americans into the sociological discussion because I think their voices have much to teach us about society.” However, when I started to reflect further on that question and my background, I diminished the distance between the voices within my thesis and my own. I strongly empathize with Native American cultures and their identities for a multitude of reasons.

Principally, this culture is part of my own ancestral heritage. My paternal grandmother was a member of the Apache tribe in New Mexico and the Mohawk tribe in New York. Her father was Apache and her mother was Mohawk. My maternal grandfather lived upon the Lake Traverse Indian reservation in South Dakota. He was a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe, a branch of the Dakota Sioux. I did not grow up listening to their stories, learning about our culture, or hearing tribal language spoken in the home. Unfortunately, they both passed away when I was very young. What is more, I was geographically isolated from these members of my extended family.

I have always tried to answer that most profound question - “Who am I?” I do not carry a tribal affiliation card nor do I claim a Native American identity for a multitude of reasons. But, in fact, I am Native American. I find it rather strange, even when stating my ethnic identity that feelings of internal guilt and suspicion surround my claim. I do not know of any other ethnic group in the United States that has to produce a “card” to declare who they are. I ask myself, do first or second generation Mexican, Asian, or Colombian immigrants have to produce a card when they proclaim their ethnic identity?

An additional reason why I empathize with Native Americans is because my childhood home was located in an isolated and rural location, four miles from Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. Pine Ridge is the poorest county in the United States (US Census 2010). More than half of its 40,000 inhabitants live below the poverty line (VillageEarth 2010; U.S. Census, 2010). Pine Ridge and its residents experience severe social problems that often accompany extreme poverty such as alcoholism, homelessness, domestic abuse, drug addictions, and substandard housing. I have been a part of and a witness to the consequences of these social injustices.

Lastly, one distinct memory arises from these reflections – while driving in the badlands of South Dakota near Pine Ridge in 2008, I noticed a sign hanging above the door of a bar. It read, “No dogs or Indians allowed.” This example highlights that race and discrimination is currently an omnipresent “dilemma” in the culture and geographical location where I grew up. While listening to the voices of storytellers for this thesis, I did have to “step back” and ask colleagues for their opinions because particular word choices used in their stories was something that I had become accustomed to hearing from my friends, family members, and community members. However, my affiliation with and understandings of this culture and its people have allowed me to discover particular findings that might be overlooked by others who do not have this particular background. Living in proximity to Native communities, and connecting in a personal way to Native identities gives me insights that may be missed by someone with a less personal interest in this topic.

My life has been lived largely at the borderline between Native communities and the dominant culture. My identity exists in a liminal space – not quite Native

American and not quite a member of the dominant culture. I am positioned as an “outsider within” which yields insights unavailable to those researchers who are not positioned at the borderline (Collins 1990). The epistemological benefits stem from my ability to understand the situation and cultural logics of Native people while also understanding the position and logics of the dominant culture. Like the storytellers I study, I too am a kind of mediator, capable of moving between two worlds.

### **Three Phase Data Analysis**

I focus upon understanding how Native American storytellers construct their identity through the stories they tell. In this thesis, I am not attempting to impose or test a priori theories or conceptual models. Rather, I aim to comprehend how Native American storytellers understand and make sense of the world. However, before you understand the present, you must understand the past. I turned to the extensive history of Native American people. I began my analysis from an extensive literature review that focused upon Native American cultures and their identities. I then proceeded with an inductive approach where I conducted a three phase analysis of the one-hundred and three stories chosen for this thesis.

In the first phase, I utilized the thematic coding technique to locate the most frequently occurring themes. This allowed me to start making sense of the large amount of data provided by these websites. The main themes emerging from the data related to an understanding of Nature and Knowledge. After establishing the predominant themes, I used the constant comparison technique to see how sub-themes were being constructed within the stories. In the second phase, I conducted three additional readings where I employed grounded theory methodologies – in-vivo



coding, constant comparison, and memo-writing. I used in-vivo coding to assign codes to the data by using the participants' own words; I used constant comparison to compare units of text and sort them into categories and subthemes; in the reflective memo-writing process, I created relationships between categories and elaborated upon those relationships to organize it into a theoretical paradigm (Charmaz 2008; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Floresch et al. 2010:2; Saldaña 2009). All themes were linked to an emerging theoretical paradigm. In the final phase, I employed the narrative method to link the results of the thematic and GT analysis into one story about the Native American experience through plot and temporality (Floresch et al. 2010).

The triangulation that occurs in using these three analytical techniques enabled me to develop a strong conceptual framework for understanding how Native Americans experience and make meaning of the world. In my analysis I produced a total of eighty-six pages of coding notes and a whole host of analytical memos during the process of interpreting this data. I put forth a tremendous effort during the coding, analytic memo, and overall writing process to present issues and topics that arose in the data in the voices of these storytellers.

In the stories I'm examining, I find a tension between the objective of inventing new tools for building honorable identities and of borrowing existing hegemonic power tools and using them in subversive ways. Both methods are in use. By creating subversive stories, they energize their own notions to find a way to persevere, feel good about themselves, and their history. Native American storytellers take an oppositional stance against the myths, stereotypes, and formula stories. They

actualize a double consciousness because they are able to see how the dominant culture constructs their identities, while at the same time, realizing their sense of self and their lived experiences. These stories do not match the hegemonic constructions, but they do use the dominant culture's misrepresentations in the subversive stories that they tell and in doing so, lift the veil. They use the "master's tools" to recreate their identities, thus, finding liberation in their quest of an authentic identity. This leads to a new way of being a Native American in the "master's house".

A few of the master's tools that are used by Natives American storytellers include: using the English language, following western literary standards, documenting traditionally oral stories into written form, creating websites on the Internet that enables access and exposure to their written and oral renderings, publishing and circulating Native "perspective" newspapers, and reconstructing or challenging the formula stories and mythologies. The tools of their own creation are – the Native American worldview, Native language, songs, ceremonies, cultural artifacts/objects, and the oral storytelling tradition. I focus upon three key Native American "tools" that are dissimilar from the master's tropes: understandings about Nature, and Native cultural perceptiveness about Knowledge.

**CHAPTER FOUR:  
Bi-CULTURAL AWARENESS OF NATURE**

Listen to the trees, here's what they say  
The land's becoming dangerous  
Newborn child, here's what we must do...  
Teach the old ways, share the knowledge...  
Jackie Bird, "Buffalo Boy"

Early in this research, I realized every Native American storyteller comments upon or references nature and the environment in their narratives. As highlighted by the foregoing lyrics, storytellers let audiences know that they live by, believe in, and find modern value within the Native American nature centered worldview. Their worldview is inseparable from nature because their identities and lives are the result of their historically close associations to and interdependence with nature (Magoulick 2000). My analysis reveals how these storytellers inform audience members that they are cognizant of the differences between the cultural logics of the dominant culture and of the Native American culture.

These Native American storytellers are reinventing traditional stories to involve a mixture of facets from both cultures. Their subversive stories function as a means to retain their traditional nature-centered worldview, while at the same time, challenging the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the dominant culture's mythologies, formula stories, and stereotypes.

I find that Native Americans express double-consciousness through storytelling in two ways. The first technique is to emphasize a contrast between a way of living harmoniously with nature and a way of controlling or dominating nature. This contrast signifies an “us” (Native Americans) and a “them” (dominant culture). The second method is to persistently contrast the present with the past. I refer to this process as temporal shifting. This temporal shifting between the past and the present enables them to weave together traditional stories with contemporary accounts to display their own double-consciousness. The past signifies a time before Native cultures were contaminated by the imposition of the dominant cultures mindset – an “us.” The present signifies a time period when native voices were marginalized by the hegemony of the dominant culture – “them.” This chapter shows how the us/them and past/present divisions weave their way into the substance of the stories told. Their storytelling techniques reflect the tension they feel as people caught between the two cultures, the Native American and the dominant culture. For this reason, this is fertile ground for exploring DuBois’ idea of “double-consciousness” in a new context.

I begin this chapter by introducing the idea that nature is a social construct. This allows me to subsequently introduce two understandings about nature – the dominant Western understanding and the Native American understanding. I present both worldviews so we can see how both are invoked by these storytellers thus, revealing the double-consciousness in their subversive stories. I delve further into my analysis by presenting three prevalent subthemes – sophistication, sustainability, and spirituality. First, the “sophistication” subtheme appears whenever these storytellers counter the dominant culture’s misconceptions that Native cultures are crude and

primitive in their thinking. Second, the “sustainability” subtheme is reflected when they teach their audiences about the importance of living sustainable lives with nature – a core tenet located in their worldview. Quite often, they push the argument further to show that the dominant culture has culturally appropriated and misrepresented their core tenet. Lastly, the subtheme “spirituality” interlaces the entire data set and becomes most apparent when storytellers refer to their spiritual connections and responsibilities to nature and also when they challenge the dominant culture’s distorted image of the “Native American.”

These themes help demonstrate how Native American storytellers actualize a double-consciousness and create subversive stories. Their subversive stories challenge and renegotiate the distortive formula stories, mythologies, and stereotypes that envelop their identities and culture in American society. All of these themes help answer the following questions: What do Native Americans perceive to be the dominant culture’s misunderstandings of their culture and identities? How do they challenge these misunderstandings? Which “tools” do they use? How do they actualize a double consciousness and attempt to construct a more authentic identity for themselves?

### **Nature as a Social Construct**

Nature is a social construct: that is, what we understand nature to be is the outcome of social processes. “Cultural groups transform the natural environment into landscapes through the use of different symbols that bestow different meanings on the same physical objects or conditions” (Greider and Garkovitch 1994:2). “Meanings and symbols are sociocultural phenomena – they are social constructions” (Burger

and Luckman 1967). Storytelling is one important body of social practices used by Native people to socially construct nature.

An example of social construction is illustrated by storyteller Victor Mandan. He offers his philosophy as to why snakes are feared today.

But these things [snakes] are not evil. They just are what they are. "This is good. That is bad." How do we know that? There is no evil, except maybe in my mind or somebody else's. But that is the thing that sometimes we must overcome. A lot of times we say things and it comes from the European point of view. And we have had it for so long we don't realize it's not ours.

Victor explains how two divergent cultures socially construct the same phenomena – snakes – in different ways. Native cultures do not see snakes as good or bad, but the dominant culture has imposed its own mythologies of snakes as evil things upon Native people for a very long time, so long that Native people have forgotten that the idea was once alien to them.

At its foundation, the social construction concept holds the idea that the meaning of things reflects the uses that people have for those things. For example, nature can be considered as a resource to be exploited for the sake of economic expansion. Or, nature can be considered an honorable realm which humans must respect and work with rather than exploit. Classical economist, Adam Smith (1776/1927), asserted that the capitalist system explicitly designed “nature” as a “free gift,” and the power of this idea in our current economic thinking has been profound: nature is still viewed as a commodity useful primarily for production and the expansion of capital (Foster 2009). Indigenous people’s economic systems, on the other hand, construct nature as communal property that is used for subsistence

production within a barter system (Magoulick 1995:275). Indigenous peoples are polytheistic – they believe that objects such as plants and animals found within the environment contain a spiritual element. Each element found in nature (humans, plants, animals) plays a role in the natural rhythms and cycles of life (Magoulick 1995). Because everything in the environment is part of this cycle, objects are understood as having a force, or a spirit. It is clear that the Native American and Western cultures define and interact with the environment in drastically different ways. As we will see, these two cultures have two divergent, and some would say, opposing worldviews about nature.

### **Western Worldview of Nature**

First, the dominant Western worldview is human-centered (Marx 1844). This was something that Karl Marx (1844) understood very well: nature exists to meet human needs; human happiness is achieved through material wealth, and the pursuit of it is the divine right of every individual; human interests and happiness are best served by the pursuit of economic growth and the accumulation of wealth – Marx understood that this was the formula for modern capitalism (Foster 2010). Because human interest is paramount, the natural environment is viewed as a resource that is to be exploited, manipulated, and consumed for the sole purpose of the accumulation of wealth. Modern science and technology support this worldview by devising more efficient ways to exploit the environment and by enabling more rapid economic growth (McKibben 2007). Efficiency, enhanced by scientific and technological progress, is the engine for exploiting the earth's resources in order to achieve greater material wealth and advance human progress (McKibben 2007). This worldview has

little confidence in traditional, sustainable practices because tradition is assumed to be the opposite of technological advancements and, by extension, detrimental to economic growth.

The Western worldview is “dualistic” because it positions humankind against nature, with humankind in a position of “dominance” over nature (McKibben 2007). It sees humans as fundamentally different from all other creatures on Earth, and it sees the world as a vast resource for the sole purpose of human gain. We can contrast this worldview with the statements of storyteller Nakia Williamson from Idaho.

we believe... the land forces you to do what it wants. The earth forces you to act in a certain way. The foods that you eat are dictated by what's here and what's placed here. We don't change it to conform to our needs.

Williamson expresses a Native American worldview that is the polar opposite of the “dominance over nature” Western worldview.

### **Native American Worldview of Nature**

While it is impractical to cover each tribe’s worldview, there is agreement in academia that all North American indigenous worldviews display parallel tenets about nature (Magoulick 2000). First, Native Americans acquire their meanings of nature from their close associations to and interdependence with the physical environments in which they they live(d) (Magoulick 2000). The rivers, hills, animals, forests, and vegetation represent a way of life that they were dependent upon for survival (Garrett and Pichette 2000). Those who continue to preserve traditions and live in the traditional ways continue to be immediately dependent upon local ecosystems and natural resources. Second, the Native American worldview holds that



the land and all the living and non-living objects in the environment were entrusted to them by the Creator, therefore, all living and non-living things have an essence or a “spirit” (Bol 1998). They believe they uphold the trust that was bestowed upon them by not taking more than what is needed for their survival (Magoullick 2000; Bol 1998). Therefore, their worldview acknowledges the need for a balanced and sustainable connection between humans and the environment. This emphasis on sustainable relationships can also be contrasted with the Western worldview.

All of the above tenets found within the Native American worldview and the forthcoming subthemes (sophistication, sustainability, and spirituality) are adeptly introduced in the following quote by storyteller Agnes Baker-Piligrim from Oregon.

Without the animal kingdom we are gone so we need to be the caretakers of our Mother Earth and to try to preserve the beautiful path that the Creator gave us to walk upon her. She sustains your life and we need to reciprocate by doing a better thing and keeping the beauty that we have here today so that our seven generations ahead can be able to have what we have here now. We need to work diligent, as I say, I will continue to keep on keeping on until my heart is on the ground, to try to get people to hear, and to try to do a better thing with our Earth Mother, for she sustains our lives.

We need to be able to do all things. We need to be able to walk our path and be able to understand that this was a gift of our Creator to put us on this earth and to breathe into us, each breath, we need to give thanks for our lives. We need to watch out for our animal kingdom that was created before us two-leggeds, and we need to take care of them and be the voice for the voices, for they don't have a voice, as well as the green upon our Mother Earth. We need to be that voice.

We need to stop spiritual blindness. Our sacred grounds are being destroyed all over the continent. Because we don't have a steeple in a building called a church, they don't think

these are spiritual places. We need to stop the spiritual blindness and to stand up and be that voice, and to try to preserve the things that the Mother Earth has left here for us, and to walk a better path.

The Native American nature-centered worldview and its tenets are evident in Agnes's narrative – nature is survival, humans are interdependent with nature, people must live in a sustainable way with their environments, they must honor the Creator and, they must be respectful of all spiritual things on this earth.

### **Challenging Mythologies, Formula Stories, and Stereotypes**

While the cultural logics in this narrative are distinctly “Native American” this quote invokes stereotypical images that the dominant culture has of Native peoples. The stereotypical image of the silent environmentally conscious Iron Eyes Cody “shedding a tear” comes to mind. Agnes, however, powerfully vocalizes the complexity and depth of the Native American nature-centered worldview when she speaks of the reciprocity Native Americans have with nature. Most Americans do not understand this complexity. Myths, stereotypes, and formula stories that exist in the dominant culture simplify and silence the Native American nature-centered worldview. As Agnes asserts, she and other Native Americans are a *voice* for the planet and for the creatures who cannot speak; they *must* speak for them to promote preservation.

Agnes does use one of the master's tools comfortably, the English language. Her use of the word “we” creates boundaries between the dominant culture and the Native American culture. Agnes recognizes the differences between the two cultures and her double-consciousness feeds into her advocacy for nature. She speaks out,

creating a subversive story. In so doing, she strongly asserts that her people preserved the environment while outsiders came and turned it into a means to an end. Agnes believes Native Americans should destabilize the dominant culture's worldview because it is destructive and has placed the planet and all living things in jeopardy.

In this narrative, Agnes draws another distinct boundary between the two cultures when she states, "because we don't have a steeple in a building called a *church*, they don't think these are spiritual places" (emphasis mine). Her use of the word "they" creates the boundaries between the Native American group and the dominant culture. By the creation of this boundary and by provoking audience members to understand the differences between the Judeo-Christian religion and the Native polytheistic belief system, Agnes displays her double-consciousness. At this juncture, Agnes indirectly references another master's tool – the Christian religion.

It is clear from this passage that Native Americans associate their own identities with nature – it is a part of who they are. What is even more evident is that Native American storytellers believe they must be the "voice" that protects the environment by challenging the dominant culture's treatment of nature. It is their spiritual obligation to do so. They invoke the master's tools of the English language, stereotypes, and the Christian belief system when constructing their subversive stories that challenge the dominant culture's system.

Nakia Williamson from Idaho also emphasizes his advocacy for nature in his subversive story.

The focus of my work is [to] basically perpetuate ideas and thoughts of the Nez Perce people of my own family and the elders that I've been able to be around, which is sometimes

counter to what the outside culture sees. The function of what art [storytelling] does is to perpetuate a way of life, to perpetuate a way of seeing the world and relating to the land that we still live on. The rivers and the mountains are still important to us. As a people, as all people, we depend on those resources...”

Nakia contrasts the two worldviews when he explicitly asserts this is “counter to what the outside culture sees.” At this point in his narrative, we become aware of his double-consciousness – he is momentarily able to see himself and the Native American cultural logics through the eyes of the “other.” His aim is to “perpetuate [the] ideas and thoughts” found within the Native culture. Therefore, Nakia is not only actualizing a double-consciousness, he is enlisting his double-consciousness to create a subversive story that challenges hegemony.

His subversive story challenges the cultural logics of the dominant culture in two ways. First, he advises his audience who he and his family are as Native Americans. At this moment in his narrative he is challenging what the dominant culture believes a Native American to be, thus, challenging stereotypes. Second, he challenges the dominant culture’s understandings and uses of the environment. The storyteller’s narratives function to contrast the two cultures and to challenge the dominant culture’s worldview, while reviving their ecological worldview and sustainable way of life.

Almost every storyteller in my sample asserts that they “carry” a great responsibility when telling their stories. They are carriers of traditional cultural logics of the Native American nature-centered worldview. They believe that their stories should challenge the dominant culture because they find the dominant culture to be

destructive not only to the environment, but also to their identity and way of life. In undermining the dominant culture's mythologies about nature and themselves, they position themselves and, Native Americans in general, in opposition to the dominant culture. They are the "oppositional identities" in the subversive stories they tell.

### **Sophistication in Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

While the previous findings reveal that the storytellers purposefully create subversive stories that counter the dominant culture, it is important to note that their stories contain much more than counter-hegemonic messages. Storytellers inform people about the "roles" of trees, the "roles" of medicinal plants, and the "behaviors" of animals and people when they speak about nature. While the dominant culture understands these stories to be "folklore" that have little to no "value" in the contemporary world, the following narrative expresses how important these stories are in the present day to Native Americans.

Children learn about the landscape and why it's shaped the way it is, why animals are shaped the way they are and why they behave the way they do. The children also learn about the plants; what plants can be used at what time of the year, how they can be used and how much you could use at one time. The children also learn about how they are supposed to behave with nature... When they grow older they interpret these things with a deeper understanding. So these stories are very very important to our people. (James Spencer, Idaho)

First, James Spencer asserts that these stories are "very very important to our people" – he lets his audience understand that these stories have important present day value. He constructs boundaries between the two cultures when he states "our people." James tells us that these stories are packed with Native American cultural

logics about the natural world, its uses, and its meanings. These informative stories are not kept private but shared, told over and over again, as they function to socialize youth and reinforce this worldview to adults (Berkes 1999; Cruikshank 1997).

James's narrative, like many others within this sample, indicates that Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) continues to be present and valued within the stories that they tell. TEK refers to the complex scientific study that Native Americans practiced long before they were exposed to the dominant culture's scientific methodology (Berkes 1999). Generally speaking, TEK uses a classification system that is based upon the *uses and roles* of a plant or animal. Whereas, today's chemists, zoologists, anthropologists, and botanists use a classification system based upon the characteristics of a plant or animal. For example, Native Americans make observations about the ecosystems; make hypothesis based upon their observations; conduct experiments that either support or do not support the hypothesis; and change methods of gathering, hunting, fishing, medicine, and harvesting based upon the results of their experiments – interactions with the environment. Storytelling reports the findings of these experiments. Stories convey the uses and roles of objects found within the environment to the next generation (Berkes 1999). TEK is the sum of thousands of years of "scientific study." As James and others declare, these stories and the knowledge that the stories contain have modern day value. Most importantly, these stories contain knowledge about the environment and their identities, which are inseparable.

Storytellers assert that the knowledge found within their stories has created a "sophisticated" culture. Largely, they reference time and again how these lessons

helped communities maintain sustainable relationships with the environment for generations. While the dominant culture constructs Native Americans who practice and believe in “traditions” as being anti-modern and less advanced, these storytellers assert that, in fact, traditions create a sophisticated and environmentally conscious culture.

Vi Hilbert further comments upon the “sophistication” that is found within the traditions of the Native American nature-centered worldview. She voices:

It was a very sophisticated society that my people were a part of because they knew how to use the land and they knew what was available for medicine, for food, for health, for sedatives because there were no drug stores. They had to know how to use the things that were part of the gift from the land and they had known this for centuries because this was all there was. The Creator gave that information from one generation to another... So we knew how to use each of these things and to not waste them. The things that were given to us were not wasted. That's what I grew up knowing about and I still see that surviving. That lesson continues to be taught. You don't waste. You respect and use the things that are gifted to us by our Creator.

Vi Hilbert expresses that the Native American culture is a “sophisticated” society because Native Americans “knew how to use the land.” Their knowledge of the environment provided them with medicinal remedies and sufficient food supplies for survival for generations. This way of life maintains balance with nature because they traditionally would only take as much as necessary for survival, unlike the dominant culture’s use of nature. Therefore, the theme of sophistication creates a strain between the two cultures’ understandings about nature. Storytellers see nature as a “gift” that is to be appreciated, where they do not “ask for more” and understand its finite limitations. Whereas, the capitalistic system is the exact opposite.

Environmentalists in the dominant culture have culturally appropriated some Native American philosophies, specifically, the cultural logics of a sustainable relationship with the environment. Environmental movements that endorse activities such as recycling, respecting the earth, finding balance with “Mother Nature,” and various other “green movement” and “seventh generation” programs are a few examples.

Environmentalists, however, appropriate what they want to appropriate from Native culture without necessarily respecting actual “Native Americans” and their traditional systems of meaning. It is a very utilitarian process: borrow the symbols, the slogans, the imagery, but without lending credence to the forms of knowledge Native people have depended upon for thousands of years. Shanley (1997) states that “Indian cultural capital (which, ironically, is one of the few marketable resources Indians consistently have) historically invites chicanery and fraud. The cultural appropriation of some Native American cultural logics, this theft of cultural property, leaves Native people without a specific history, without their language, and without any cultural knowledge about these people (Shanley 1997). In essence, this process denies Native Americans a human wholeness because their unique experiences, cultural knowledge, and connection to the environment are not taken into account or understood in the dominant culture.

However, Native Americans, specifically the storytellers in this thesis, “understand clearly they are part of today’s world [and] that their tribal traditions, languages, ceremonies, and stories create a relationship to this land that is unmatched by others” (Trafzer 1993:21). The storytellers understand that the dominant culture



has taken only what they want, therefore, they do challenge and educate audiences about their culture. At the same time, they preserve their TEK in the subversive stories that they construct.

### **Temporal Shifting: Two Sides of the Double-Self**

Vi's narrative, showcased above, demonstrates the switching between the past tense, "my people *were* a part of" [emphasis mine] and the present day "that's how I grew up knowing about and *I still see* it surviving." I find these types of structures in the stories indicate a temporal shift. In essence, the temporal shift indicates the two sides of the double self. Shifting between the past and the present provides a framework for Native Americans to see themselves in a past tense context, where they understand themselves and their culture's worldview before European contact. They shift to the present day context to merge their past identities and culture with the dominant culture that marginalizes them. Thus, they are merging two cultures together in a way that highlights the double identity they now live. Their authentic identity that arises from double-consciousness challenges the dominant culture's mythologies, stereotypes, and formula stories by way of the subversive stories that they tell.

For example, Dark Rain Thom from Ohio begins her narrative speaking about her ancestors and their migration to a different land:

We have a tradition that we migrated out of there and part of us went around the land mass and part of us went across the Caribbean in boats.

In this passage, Dark Rain states "we" have a tradition, meaning her tribe from long ago. She involves herself in an event that happened thousands of years ago.

In the next section of her narrative she shifts to a present day context.

We do have a rich history, we know who we are, we know where we come from, we know where we were, and we know where our ancestors are.

There is such richness of story and conflict, and loss, and good things. My western friends will never know about my people, or other Algonquians, or the Iroquois nation who have tried to find every way they could think of to make things work between the different cultures and to find ways of peace amongst us.

In this segment of her narrative, Dark Rain transitions between a historical context to the present day in her narrative – temporal shifting. She draws attention to the effects that the dominant culture has had upon her people. She explicitly states that her people’s “history” will never “be known” by her “western friends.” She asserts that her history, her entire tribal people’s history, is misrepresented and silenced in the dominant culture. Drawing attention to these injustices and to the differences that exist between “western” and “Native” peoples, she is explicitly displaying her double-consciousness. Dark Rain utilizes the lens of her double-consciousness to create a subversive story that challenges the dominant culture’s treatment of Native people and the earth.

We're few in number now because we've been so decimated with diseases and intermarrying and loss of culture because of these other things, but we can still teach. We can still teach the dominant culture to respect what they have, what we all share [respect the earth and Native peoples]...after 200 years the scars have healed enough that we can talk. We can listen without either side being on the defensive now. The tribal people still have things they taught Lewis and Clark that this generation needs to be taught. We have things we never had a chance to teach and share and now we have a chance.

Dark Rain Thom's storyline demonstrates the temporal shifting that occurs many times in these storytellers' narratives. Double-consciousness is apparent during the process of temporal shifting. Dark Rain's bi-cultural understandings allows her to draw upon the Lewis and Clark narrative familiar to any American school child in order to show how the lessons of her people now must be taught again: the master's tools have failed the master, and now it must turn to the Native cultures' understanding of nature in order to prevent further damage.

Temporal shifting functions as a means for Native Americans to "remember a time," a past identity, where no one they knew ever questioned the sophistication of their culture. Their identities and culture survived for thousands of years by means of a sustainable relationship with the environment. The present day shift tells of traumas and tragedies that can be overcome by looking back into the past. This extends Du-Boise's idea of double-consciousness by "seeing yourself through the eyes of the other." But, double-consciousness is also a way of seeing yourself and your culture during a time of high status, before the colonizer arrived. Temporal shifting enables Native Americans to retain their ties to honorable identities of past ancestors. At the same time, they are creating an authentic identity for themselves because they are honoring their histories while currently living by the Native American nature-centered worldview.

### **Bi-Cultural Understandings about "Sustainability"**

In this thesis I find that the storytellers' narratives greatly counter the dominant culture's mythologies that construct the Native American culture as being "primitive," "savage," anti-modern, stoic, and "inferior." The dominant culture has

little confidence in traditional practices and traditional forms of knowledge. Tradition presumably stands in the way of scientific and technological advancements. In their stories, storytellers assert that the dominant culture's worldview is not healthy or sustainable. Marie Randall from South Dakota speaks about tradition and the dominant culture:

The hide of the buffalo was our shelter. Everything on Mother Earth was medicine and something to survive on, but today we don't have that and we have to live in a different world. Man-made laws are hurting us much more than the spirituality way of life that we have, and the tearing up of the earth. Mother Earth was given to us for the plants to grow and use. Today we live in a chemical world. This is not helping the health of our families and our relatives because the chemicals are not really the medication that we need.

Similar to Dark Rain Thom and Vi Hilbert, Marie contrasts the past to the present. She begins her narrative "when buffalo was our shelter" then switches to a current time of "man-made laws." She states that these newer ways (modern mainstream lifestyles) are "hurting us much more than the spirituality way of life that we have." Marie is speaking about the spiritual and sustainable relationships with the environment. She contrasts the Native American worldview to the dominant cultures "man made" relationship with the environment. Marie's temporal shifting and her contrasting of the two different cultures indicates her double-consciousness. She declares that a healthy self-sustaining way of life is found in the cultural logics of the Native American worldview.

While many of these beliefs are currently being co-opted by the dominant culture, the aspect of a self-sustaining system gets lost. "Americans pretend to be

Indian and believe that they “know” what a “Native American” is but, particular beliefs and images do not come forward when these images and beliefs are being co-opted” (Shanley 1997:98). In her article “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances,”

Lisa Aldred states:

Ultimately, their [dominant culture members] search for spiritual and cultural meaning through material acquisition leaves them feeling unsatisfied. The community they seek is only imagined, a world conjured up by the promises of advertised products, but with no history, social relations, or contextualized culture that would make for a sense of real belonging. (Aldred 2000:329-30)

Aldred (2000) address the surface “false connection” that the dominant culture has with Native Americans. This is not unlike the false connections between urban youth living in poverty who gave birth to hip-hop and the white suburban teens who spend millions of dollars buying hip hop music and commodities each year (Kotlowitz 1999). The dominant culture’s preoccupation with Native Americans on the surface level does not lead to genuine insight or any dialogue opening up between Native people and members of the dominant culture.

While Deloria (1998) believes purchasing “authenticity” through Native American objects and belief systems is positive because this forces the dominant culture to recognize there are ‘real’ Native Americans, Vizenor (1999) disagrees. He asserts that co-opting partial understandings and beliefs is a form of oppression. This view is similar to Shanley’s (1997), who states “such hypocrisy in the love and fascination that Americans proclaim that they have for Native Americans, take[s] shape around a core American identity that in an unconsciously configured way links with dominance” (678-9). Dominance creates a victim. Dominance combined with

affection, through the act of cultural appropriation and the purchasing of these surface beliefs and objects, “produces a pet” (Shanley 1997:679).

### **Spirituality and Authentic Identities**

Another area where these storytellers show “double-consciousness” is through their comments about the spiritual. The dominant culture depicts Native Americans as worshipping natural objects such as the sun, animals, trees, and spirits. This is an incomplete and, therefore, false understanding of Native Americans. In actuality, Native traditions focus not so much on these objects as they do on a “force” that created the environment where these objects are found. Native spirituality, in its many forms, tends to regard all objects in the environment as having a living spirit (force) within them. They honor and respect these objects but do not worship them. Ester Shutzman from Oregon challenges the stereotypes and misconceptions.

I love to speak to non-Indian groups. It's a way to tell the truth about the tribal culture and also to get the true story to the public rather than rely on stereotypes. Other topics I may consider using involve contemporary issues, treaties, and environment and how the Indians took care of the land, and health and wellness. I try to present a balanced overview to give a good background of what the Indian people were really all about.

In this narrative, Ester overtly states that she challenges the stereotypes found within the dominant culture. She displays her double-consciousness – I understand myself and my culture to be different than what is depicted in the dominant culture. In her narrative she explicitly states that she uses her double-consciousness to create subversive stories that attempt to dismantle the “master’s house.”

Vi Hilbert, in the following narrative, explains why the dominant culture has a difficult time understanding the “spirit” or “force” found in the environment. She elucidates:

Spirits exist wherever there is life. Water is alive. The river is alive, the rocks on a river bed, the sand along the banks of a river. Everything that's contained in a river has life and because it has life, it also has spirit. I have repeated that several times. If it has life, it also has spirit. *My people also know this.* When they are sent for spiritual help, they know that if they are successful, they will be recognized by the spirits that are part of the water, a part of the rocks, a part of the movement, a part of anything that lives and breathes with the water.

So these are *things that our people have always been taught in a very subtle form, never in the words that I've been using to talk to you* who haven't had the advantage of being taught from birth that these things exist and can be used. For instance, the subtlety of information that is *known to us* is so abstract sometimes that the abstractness *gets lost to people* who don't have minds who are able to accommodate the abstract.

Do you know that sound is a spirit? The sound of something happening is a spirit. *It's too abstract for most of our minds to accept.* The sound of two trees rubbing together is a spirit. It's too abstract for us to really accept as a source of spirit. The sounds of a hurricane, these things are part of the abstractness of the culture... about our beliefs about nature. (emphasis mine)

In this narrative, Vi educates the audience about the Native American worldview. She asserts that the Native American “religion” (a word used by the dominant culture) is not a belief system. Rather, it is a worldview that centers upon the spiritual connections of all objects in the environment. She shows her double-consciousness by creating boundaries, a “we” understand and “they” don’t understand distinction. She utilizes the master’s tools – the English language – when she

explicitly states “our people have always been taught in a very subtle form, never in the words that I've been using to talk to you.”

The cultural appropriation of the “spiritual” element that Native Americans have with nature gets lost in the dominant culture. Vi believes that this lack of understanding is due to the Native American worldview being too abstract for the dominant culture to understand. She does recognize that one culture views nature as something to be dominated, while the other culture sees the spiritual interconnectedness to nature. Therefore, she is stating that these two worldviews are in direct conflict with one another. The cultural appropriation of this cultural logic simplifies its meaning; therefore, it loses its essence, making it easier for the dominant culture to understand.

Dark Rain Thom’s narrative further asserts that the dominant culture has difficulty in understanding the “spiritual responsibility” that Native Americans have with nature. She poignantly states:

We all feel that we were given a spiritual responsibility for this earth. Even though we don't live on the same parcel of land that our ancestors did, none of us have ever been told by the Creator that we are free of that obligation. We are still responsible for protecting and preserving the earth. When you see a lot of Native Americans on both sides of that Mississippi River, fighting for environmental causes, or logging and things of this sort, it's because they are filling their spiritual responsibility.

In this passage, Dark Rain once again draws attention to the conflict between the two cultures. By doing this she is speaking about acts of colonization and creating a “we” and “they” boundary. She is displaying her double-consciousness in doing so. Interestingly, Dark Rain asserts that acts of colonization and the misrepresentations



found in the dominant culture do not change or diminish her people's spiritual responsibility or beliefs about the environment. Dark Rain asserts that Native American spirituality comes from a profound and astute understanding of the relatedness of all beings. Their worldview does not focus upon individual salvation, like that of the dominant culture, rather expresses the morality of caring interactions with all beings on this earth (Magoulick 1995). Their stories reflect a de-emphasis on institutionalized religions and the knowledge that arises from fixed dogmas. They believe that spirituality/religiousness "seeks a path of life," in peace, harmony, and balance with nature and with fellow human beings. This core belief lies at the heart of the Native American worldview.

### **Conclusion**

In the beginning, critical race theorists applied double-consciousness to African Americans. This chapter has shown the concept can illuminate the lived experience and narratives of Native Americans as well. This extension of double-consciousness also leads us to a deeper understanding of this concept. In particular, double-consciousness can be located in these narratives in two distinct ways – temporal shifting and the contrasting of two worldviews' understandings about nature. I find that double-consciousness leads to agency and advocacy for the person and for the environment. These Native American storytellers create subversive stories that undermine the dominant culture's worldview. They challenge the western cultural logics about the environment, stereotypes, mythologies, and formula stories. These findings reveal storytellers themselves are the mediators negotiating what it is the dominant society should learn from Native cultures and its people.

Storytellers use the master's tools to undermine the dominant culture's cultural logics and system of oppressive dominance. They use their own tools to challenge the dominant culture. Indeed, the storytellers are creating oppositional identities during the process of telling their subversive stories. At the same time, they are creating a more authentic identity for themselves.

**CHAPTER FIVE:  
Bi-CULTURAL AWARENESS OF KNOWLESGE SYSTEMS**

Stories are told for the knowledge they impart and for the wisdom they reveal.  
(Rose High Bear, Founder of WOTE)

Stories provide a vehicle for the expression of ideas and the diffusion of knowledge, particularly in cultures that rely upon oral traditions (Cruikshank 2000). In this chapter, I focus upon extending our understandings of Native American storytellers' stories. My analysis unearths the ways storytellers disseminate Native American traditional knowledge in the stories that they tell. I also discover they speak about a tension between the Native American and the dominant cultural understandings of knowledge. In the following pages, I show how they account for the intersection between these knowledge systems in a way that reveals their double-consciousness and begins to lift the veil.

**Native Americans and Nature Mythologies**

Most people regard Native American traditional knowledge as information that was relevant and useful only to historical Native Americans due to their special relationships to the land and animals (Eglash 2002). This everyday view creates an illusion of a culture that is frozen in time (Deloria 2000; Eglash 2002). What is more, this mythology constructs Native Americans knowledge makers as passive, primitive, or, at the very worst, "vanishing" (Eglash 2002). Deloria (2004) asserts that the

the dominant culture “need[s] the primitive so that we can distinguish Western civilization from it and congratulate ourselves on the progress that we have made.” Deloria (2002) further argues, the primitive peoples’ stereotypes and mythologies anchor the whole house of Western thought and science.

Another obstacle hampering the dominant culture from fully understanding the Native American traditional knowledge system is the Western tendency to make contrasts between traditional Native American knowledge and Western knowledge. When people hear culturally unfamiliar accounts of Native “truths” about the world, they oftentimes find validity in their own culture’s observations (Cruickshank 1990). People generally find Native truths to be folklorish or see them as a challenge to the dominant paradigm (LaDuke 2010). In fact, LaDuke (2010) asserts that the dominant culture recoils from Native traditional knowledge because Native truths about the world challenge the structural and cultural deficiencies found within the dominant culture. Collins (2000) further asserts that because of the danger presented by alternative knowledge systems, they are often discredited or simply absorbed and marginalized by existing dominant paradigms. Therefore, to interpret the stories that follow, we need some background on the speaker’s cultural framework. For that reason, I will briefly explain the basis of each culture’s knowledge system.

I begin by introducing the Western ‘received view’ of knowledge. After that, I will introduce Native American traditional knowledge. I do this so I can draw upon the juxtaposition of truths that these storytellers create. Through this juxtaposition, they illuminate double-consciousness to locate a more satisfactory identity than the stigmatized identity offered them by dominant culture myths.

## **The Western Approach to Epistemology**

Epistemology, generally speaking, is the study of how we know something (Delora 2000; Ogilvy 2000; Waters 2000). In particular terms, epistemology is the study of what constitutes valid and truthful forms of knowledge (Ogilvy 2000). In recent centuries, mainstream Western society has privileged the epistemological rules of the scientific paradigm (Ogilvy 2000; Delora 2000; Fixico 2003). The scientific paradigm considers “objective” third person observational data as capable of producing the only valid, reliable, and truthful forms of knowledge (Harding 1993; Ogilvy 2000). Most scientific techniques sharply separate the subject matter from lived experiences. Through this objectivity, researchers are able to research phenomena, acquire new knowledge, and correct or integrate previous knowledge (Fixico 2003; Harding 1993). “Western science emphasizes compartmentalized knowledge which is often de-contextualized” (Ogilvy 2000). Ultimately, the scientific method teaches us to suppress our own lived experience and to rely instead on hard data.

Only recently have scientists begun to take the human experience and differing cultural contexts into account purposefully when creating knowledge and truths about the world (Harding 1993). Deconstructing the most common legitimation strategy for scientific methods, numerous scholars assert that “European sciences progressed primarily because of the military, economic, and political power of European cultures, not because of the alleged commitment of their science or to the pursuit of disinterested truths” (Harding 1993:8). Knowledge, therefore, is a vitally important part of the social relations of domination and resistance (Collins 1990;

Harding 1993). Scientists increasingly recognize that the economics and politics of science as well as the worldview of the scientists shape the knowledge that is produced (Harding 1993). Many agree that scientists need “to enlarge and transform their goals and methods of research if they are to seriously confront the fact that ‘only that which is true to culture is true to nature’” (Harding 1993:6).

### **The Native American Approach to Epistemology**

In contrast, Indigenous peoples have traditionally acquired their knowledge through direct experiences and transmitted this knowledge through storytelling (Cruikshank 2000; Fixico 2003; Ogilvy 2000). While the Western knowledge system depends upon objective scientific findings, Native American traditional knowledge depends upon the oral tradition which stresses a “sociocultural kinship of relationships and experiences” (Fixico 2003:15).

Competency in the knowledge found in stories has an unequivocal relationship to the survival or extinction of the culture and the livelihoods of indigenous peoples (Cruikshank 1990; Fixico 2003; Ogilvy 2000). This is evident by looking at the mission statement of one of the websites I examine in this research – “The Wisdom of the Elders community recognizes the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge, oral tradition and storytelling” because storytelling preserves the knowledge, identities, and communities of Native people.

Native science honors and “continually deals in systems of relationships and their application to the life of the community” (Cajete 2004:51-52). Therefore, native science is integrated into the whole of life and provides a basic plan and basis for human actions (Cajete 2004; Deloria 2004). Native science prioritizes the goal of

understanding the world over the goals of prediction and control. Understanding allows Native people to work with nature, to comprehend how one action ricochets throughout the ecosystem. The goal is not to control, but to work sustainably within existing ecosystems. This differs drastically from Western scientific thought where prediction and control are the ultimate objectives (Cajete 2004).

In the following narratives, we will see that people in Native American cultures are concerned with finding the proper ethical and moral paths upon which human beings should walk (Waters 2004). This is because of their inherited knowledge about the world and human interactions (Cruikshank 1990; Deloria 2004; Fixico 2003; Waters 2004;). Meaningful relationships and understandings of one's responsibilities to other entities in the natural world are at the core of Native science (Cajete 2004). Native scholars assert that "information gained through experience is considered interpreting our relationship with the natural world, thereby pointing to the kind of "story" that might contain and communicate information" (Cajete 2004:52; Fixico 2003; Waters 2000).

In this thesis, I find support for the idea that storytellers are the agents of knowledge and their community and natural environment are the sources of such knowledge. This philosophical approach to knowledge is very similar to Black Feminist Thought, which finds African American women producing knowledge through their experience within their communities (Collins 1990). While Black feminist and Native forms of thought are seldom compared, there are many parallels to be found. The experiential basis of both forms of knowledge is perhaps the most striking comparison.

In the following pages, we shall see how Native American storytellers stress that their traditional knowledge system can comprehend not just the distant past, but also the features of modern Native American life. Their stories convey that their traditional knowledge is anything but primitive or vanishing. They assert that it continues to be valued and used within their communities. In fact, I find that they construct subversive stories that teach traditional knowledge which they believe holds the secret to a more sustainable future. Their traditional knowledge system contains information that enables them to create an authentic identity for themselves.

I organize Native traditional knowledge temporally into three categories: grandparents' teachings from the past, present-day traditional practices, and the training of future Native American teachers. First, grandparents' teachings from the past are the result of observed and applied lessons. Their grandparents' lessons and the resulting knowledge are understood as being the truth. Second, acquiring traditional knowledge from grandparents enables individuals to participate in present-day traditional practices. The present-day traditional practices include songs, language, and ceremonies. These cultural practices provide Native Americans a social location where they experiences feelings of respect and honor in their identities. Finally, I organize the third category, future Native American teachers, into the locations where the knowledge of their grandparents is communicated: the school and the community.

### **Grandparents' Teachings from the Past**

At the beginning of my research it became evident that storytellers often talk about or refer to grandparents. Labels such as "traditional teachers," "elders,"



“mother’s parents,” “father’s parents” and “grandmother or grandfather” are heard in every story. The following quotes demonstrate this connection between their grandparents as the carriers and the teachers of traditional knowledge.

Traditional teachers, I had my Grandmother...(Dark Rain Thom, Ohio/Indiana).

We grew up watching our Elders...and learned cultural teachings (Gerald Primeaux, Oregon)

And I'm very fortunate to have grandparents who have taught me... (Carlos Calica, Oregon)

Most of what I've learned comes from studying, listening and watching the old people. (Josiah Pinkham, Idaho)

The teaching that they (grandparents) gave me and the understanding of that way of life... (Marie Randall, South Dakota)

A lot of the influence in my life came from my Shoshone grandfather... (Diane Mallick, Idaho)

The priority given to grandparent relationships suggests that grandparents have influenced the narratives being told. The grandparents’ teachings from the past link the present to centuries old wisdom. Grandparents are viewed as the location where people acquire information about a Native “us,” where Native people can come into direct contact with a traditional knowledge system that is stored within the oral traditions of their own communities. Through their stories of the past, grandparents provide a symbolic link to a time period when Native culture was the dominant culture for their people, free of colonization experiences. They contrast that wisdom with their present-day experiences. The present signifies a time when Native voices, identities, and traditional knowledge are marginalized by the dominant culture.

All of the narratives present a symbiotic relationship between storytellers and grandparents. As already mentioned, this narrative method shapes how the story is told, but it also influences how the listener interprets the story. Storytellers are legitimized as “true Native Americans” when they reference their grandparents’ experiences and knowledge system (Cruikshank 1997; Fixico 2003). It is a short-hand for revealing one’s Native heritage. Previous scholars find that storytellers who address mixed audiences tell clan history and information about their grandparents with the purpose of “bequeathing” a legacy that audiences can easily comprehend (Cruikshank 1997). The grandparents’ legacy legitimizes their identity as Native Americans. At the same time, this legacy anchors their ways of knowing about the world to traditional knowledge systems. Grandparent is a code word for traditional knowledge serving as a gateway into the traditional knowledge system.

### **Observed and Applied Lessons**

*How do grandparents teach traditional knowledge?*

Traditional teachers, I had my Grandmother. Every time she would see me, she would call my name and say, "Come with me and go take a walk. I have to show you this."  
(Dark Rain Thom, Ohio/Indian).

Dark Rain’s grandmother taught her traditional knowledge by “showing” her particular objects and explaining their uses in the environment. Numerous narratives in this sample assert that grandparents “show” their grandchildren objects in the natural environment, at rituals, and at powwows. Gerald Primeaux from Oregon further describes this teaching method in the following excerpt.

We grew up watching our Elders, like my grandfather, and the way they expressed themselves through songs, through this Native American Church style, through going into the sweat lodge, through the dance arbors, to pow wow and then sun dance.

It is in the presence of their elders/grandparents that the storytellers acquire traditional knowledge. Gerald's narrative specifically highlights his close association to and knowledge of ceremonial and community cultural practices. Through grandparents, storytellers are linked to the experiences of the community, which is the foundation of the traditional knowledge system. Grandparents then are a signifier for traditional knowledge.

Every narrative in my sample comments on some traditional knowledge that was obtained by observing grandparents interacting with the natural environment or within the community. These findings are consistent with House, Stiffman and Brown's (2008) research which states that adult relatives in the community pass traditional knowledge on to children by having them participate in ceremonies and traditions. Yet, these findings expose that *grandparents* are the specific individuals who teach traditional knowledge. Upon deeper analysis, I find that grandparents signify the traditional knowledge system, tie storytellers to Native American community experiences, legitimize an authentic Native American identity, and anchor them to a traditional knowledge system. Observational learning and applied lesson are the methods used to teach traditional knowledge.

### **Differing Truths In Knowledge Systems**

Another Black Feminist thought tenet found in the stories of Native Americans is that an unconventional and marginalized knowledge system offers an

alternative path to universal “truths” about the world (Collins 2000). In the following narratives, the storytellers assert that a *truthful* form of knowledge is found within their grandparents’ lessons. They construct subversive narratives that offer alternative “truths” about the world. This is illustrated by Diane Mallickan from Idaho who strongly disputes Western truths when she insists:

This is how I was raised and it's how I tell my grandchildren. I tell them the truth. I don't want them to grow up and study so-called Indian history in school and hear a whole different version. I want them to know and then when they go to school they can measure against that. In the 1950s it was very different. I'd come home from school and I'd say, "You know, either all my teachers are liars or my grandfather's a liar," because there was no connecting.

Diane blatantly states that institutions such as schools are not teaching the form of knowledge that her grandfather was teaching. Diane firmly believes that teaching her grandchildren traditional stories and cultural lessons will enable them to distinguish between fictional and truthful forms of knowledge. She especially believes this to be true when discussing truths about “Indian history.” In her narrative we are a witness to her double-consciousness. Her grandfather’s knowledge about the world and his story enables her to lift the veil that complicates her life. She contrasts the knowledge systems and realizes that the master’s house has failed to depict an accurate image of “Native history,” Native American identities, and Native traditional knowledge. Therefore, she refers to her grandfather’s knowledge as “the truth.”

Jim GoodTracks from Kansas reiterates the idea that truth is found within the teachings of his grandfather when he asserts “Yeah, and there's truth within these stories and lessons of my Grandfather.” Vi Hilbert from Washington further asserts

that truth is not found in the dominant culture's textbooks, but is found within the stories of her elders.

They can learn from the first textbooks that were prepared by our people and those were the stories. The literature of the culture is where everything is maintained, the history, the humor, the philosophy, the teachings are in the legends, in the old stories that were left by my people.

Vi uses the word "maintained," which, by definition is to keep in its original state and remain unaltered. Vi's narrative is clearly a subversive story that challenges the myths found within the dominant culture. She makes this point by juxtaposing the two knowledge systems. First, she states "they" signifying the dominant culture and she uses "our people" when referring to Native Americans. A boundary exists between the two cultures, with one culture presenting a false history of the other. She then tells the audience that information about Native Americans is not found in textbooks but rather in the stories "that were left by my people." Vi recognizes that the dominant culture is not telling the truth about Native Americans. She has actualized her double-consciousness and has created a subversive story.

Second, Vi declares that the dominant culture does not house a form of knowledge that she understands to be the truth. While the dominant culture believes truths are found in "textbooks," Vi asserts that "truths" are found within Native stories. Therefore, a grandparent is a "carrier of truth" who enables storytellers to lift the veil and expose structural and cultural systems of oppression. A subversive narrative arises; like Jim and Diane, she is challenging the dominant culture's "truths" in books that are created from Western scientific methods and systems of knowledge. Vi, Jim, and Diane all reject the dominant culture's way of knowing about the world.

They challenge those “truths.” Grandparents are the symbolic figures upon whom they ground their confidence in the Native knowledge forms.

W.E.B. DuBois’ (1903) concept of double-consciousness can be found at the heart of each narrative. Degradation and discrimination against Native Americans by the larger society remains an important dimension of their identities and culture today. Racial minority groups see themselves not only through their own opinions of who they are but through the opinions of the larger society. Double-consciousness imposes a tremendous burden upon the individual who must constantly negotiate between two cultures – this is the double-burden that DuBois speaks about. Racial minority group members who understand and embrace their own double-consciousness gain the ability to understand the minority culture and the larger culture because they are insiders in both.

I found interesting parallels between the words of DuBois and the words of one storyteller in particular, Marie Randall. Making this comparison allows us to deepen our understanding of the double-burden that Native Americans carry. DuBois:

I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards -- ten cents a package -- and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, - - refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (DuBois 1903)

Marie Randall from South Dakota states,

When we were hurt by the other society [at school] and when we ran home and told her [grandmother] what happened to us, she had us sit on her little rug that she usually sits on and talks to us. She put that out and she put my brother and me on that little rug. She had us reach over the rug and take a pinch of the dirt and put it on our skin to blend in. It blended in with the color of our skin. This little girl, what she said to us that hurt my brother so much, told us to go home and wash up because we were dirty. That was [the] color of our skin.

After we told Grandma that, she told us she was going to teach us a lesson of value that we would have to live with through our life. When we got through talking about the little girl and what she said to hurt our feelings, we took a pinch of dirt, put it on our skin, rubbed it in and it blended in with our skin. She said, "This is the color. This is where the Great Spirit created you from. This is where you're going to go back when the end of your life comes. Through life you'll be walking with this color of skin, the Mother Earth and there's going to be trials for you. There's going to be torments for you and there's going to be a lot of things that's going to make you cry and sad like today. You have to walk with that for the wopila; which means, Thank You, Thanksgiving. For the Creation of the world you have to walk with those prayers. There are a lot of things that's going to happen to you. You're going to cry and there's going to be so *much burden* at times for you, your shoulders are going hurt. You're going to be weak, but you have to get up pray and be strong to carry your people through life."

That was the understanding that gave me the life I'm leading today. That was the most beautiful teaching I ever had in my life. From the advice, I could've hated that little girl, but the way she taught me... That was my best valuable lesson I ever had in my life. I live that life. I always say my grandma is my best teacher in my life. (Marie Randall, SD, emphasis mine)

What we learn from this comparison is that DuBois did not have a grandmother to assist him in explaining issues of racism, discrimination, or the color

line. Marie did. Her grandmother not only taught her about these racial divisions, but she also taught Marie how to lift the veil to expose these “truths.”

Another comparison is that while Dubois believed a person of color overcame racism by educating himself in the dominant culture’s educational system, Randall’s grandmother, on the other hand, believes that overcoming racism occurs when Native Americans find alternative truths in the Native traditional knowledge system. Native knowledge frees and empowers Native Americans; therefore, we can understand why this knowledge system that is housed within their stories is so important to them.

### **Present-day Traditional Practices**

In the following narratives, each storyteller constructs his or her identity as someone who actively participates in cultural traditions because they have acquired traditional knowledge from their grandparents.

#### **Songs and language**

And I'm very fortunate to have grandparents who have taught me to be who I am today and the songs that I sing is for them for they have taught me to sing and provide music for, not only the children but for our elders and for the veterans and other people of the other communities. We're given songs such as the one that I sang and it does have a lotta meaning when you sing these songs to how important it is to teach our people to be who they are and be proud of who they are and what they do. (Carlos Calica, Oregon).

Carlos remarks that he is fortunate to have gained traditional knowledge from his grandparents because this taught him “who he is.” He sings these songs today, teaching them to be “proud of who they are and what they do.” Such “songs commemorate personal experiences” and disperse Native traditional knowledge to community members.



In the following narrative Gerald from Oregon reveals that his grandparents taught him traditional knowledge and tribal language through songs. For these lessons, he finds that he is “fortunate.”

I feel like a very fortunate person to be able to carry on something that they [grandparents] did before me and when I had no understanding of it but I think throughout the years, understanding comes with the knowledge and the know how. And then now feeling that, being strong in that, through song, through words, through our language, putting it through music, trying to learn like that the way they taught us.

Gerald says he “carries on” the traditions his grandparents taught him, enabling him to participate in these cultural practices today. He becomes “strong” and feels “fortunate” to be a Native American. Because of these cultural practices, Gerald and Carlos are telling us they are walking a road that is paved with wisdom and truths located within the Native traditional knowledge system. This path provides them an alternative knowledge system where they are able to construct a “strong” authentic Native American identity for themselves.

### **Ceremonies**

In fact, a considerable number of the storytellers assert that their grandparents’ traditional knowledge provides them with the resources necessary to participate in ceremonies today. These findings are consistent with House, Stiffman, and Brown (2006), Minderhout and Frantz (2008), and Weaver (2001) who have found that participating in ceremonies and rituals is an important aspect to asserting a Native American identity. My findings expand upon this and show that they participate in these activities because their grandparents were able to teach them traditional

knowledge. Participating in ceremonies, songs, and various other cultural performances enables them to reconstruct a less stigmatized and more authentic identity for themselves.

In the following narrative, Boyd Ladd from Ohio adeptly articulates this when he reveals:

And in much as tradition I am very fortunate being raised by my grandparents in the old way. And among the Ho Chunk people we still believe in the Medicine Lodge teaching and we're still functioning with our War Bundle societies, our traditional ways and quite an honor, very sacred among our people.

Participation in religious rituals connects the two social worlds. Boyd is letting audiences know that traditional knowledge and native communities are “still functioning.” Therefore, he challenges the dominant culture assumption that these cultures are dead and instead sees the Native cultures as reinvented and vibrant.

Traditional knowledge systems, ceremonies, and cultural practices, such as dancing in powwows, singing traditional songs, and participating in medicine lodges, provide a positive way of associating with their traditional knowledge system and identities. The “embodied experiences” of sacred rituals and experiential knowledge produces physical and emotional feelings that people in the communities share.

Maintaining these religious practices and traditions does what Michelle Lamont (2002) calls “boundary work.” In this research, Native Americans seek to draw a racialized “moral map” that differentiates them from “less desirable” identities depicted in stereotypes. In the particular case of Native Americans, I am not using boundary work to define how white Americans differentiate themselves from African

Americans like Lamont; rather, I am using it to show how Native Americans differentiate themselves from the stereotypes and mythologies in the dominant culture. I argue that boundary work draws the line that creates the “us and them” distinction – the us is the traditional knowledge system, the Native American community, cultural practices, and their authentic identities. The “them” is the Native American identity that is located in the dominant mythologies, formula stories, and stereotypes. Storytellers, in particular, create boundaries to differentiate themselves from a racially stigmatized identity. I explore this idea further in the following sub-theme.

### **Respect and Honor within Traditional Knowledge**

Interestingly, the above narratives of Boyd, Gerald, and Carlos establish that they are *fortunate* because they have acquired the needed traditional knowledge to participate in Native cultural practices today. Within this sample, the storytellers express being “fortunate,” “having gratitude,” and “appreciation” because they were able to be trained in the traditional knowledge system. As best said by Robert Four Star of Montana:

I was fortunate as a young man to be raised by my grandparents. I know the history of the ancient ceremony of the medicine lodge, the grass dance and I am involved in this.

Ron Pond of Washington also affirms that he is fortunate because he acquired traditional knowledge from his grandparents. He expresses that he *honors* the teachings of his grandparents by involving himself in traditional practices in the present day.

I was fortunate to have knowledge about our family's traditions that I got from my grandparents... I will try my best to honor it by carrying it on.

Weaver (2004) states that “knowing what we believe and how that came about is one of the methods through which humans can socially transform themselves” (Weaver 2004:24). Storytellers know how their knowledge came about – grandparents’ experiences and teachings. They believe in their traditional knowledge system and live their lives accordingly – ceremonies, rituals, songs. This enables them to socially transform their identities from the negative stereotypes to a positive identity that honors, respects, and believes in the Native traditional knowledge system.

This is similar to previous research findings that state identifying with and participating in Native American communities and religious practices increases emotional and physical health (House, Stiffman, and Brown 2006). My research expands upon those findings and reveals that individuals feel fortunate, respected, and honored because they have acquired Native traditional knowledge, which enables them to participate in cultural activities. Moreover, these narratives construct morally good identities because they honor the traditional knowledge system and Native way of life. A morally good identity strongly challenges the dominant culture’s formula stories about Native Americans.

### **Future Native American Teachers**

Further evidence of Native Americans wanting to distance themselves from the mythologies located within the dominant culture comes in the narrative of Pauline Hillare from Washington.

Today I'd like to share with everyone that I am a storyteller. I am a historian. I'm a genealogist and I tell legends in schools and teach Indian songs to the kids to pass it on. It's time for sharing. One of the things I do talk about in schools is the true stories.

Joyce asserts that she tells “true” stories. She is challenging the dominant culture’s myths. Her goal is to preserve true native traditional knowledge by passing it on to children. The narratives of storytellers have come full circle – the storytellers are telling their stories beyond the boundaries of their communities and the transmission of traditional knowledge is not just for their grandchildren but for all children. While Pauline’s narrative refers to elementary schools, many storytellers claim that they tell their stories to students in university settings and high schools.

Josiah Pinkham from Idaho asserts:

I share storytelling, history, culture, very early oral traditions that were learned from the elders to young children and college students... I'm always eager to share some of the things that I learned from our old people to show how important it is to our people.

Storytellers seek to communicate the importance of this knowledge system and “way of life” to children in schools. Angela Sobatta from Idaho states that telling stories to the dominant culture is “one way to try to gain support and just to let people really know who we are.” Dorrance Comes Last, whose “rap name” is Native Sioux-Per-Man, overtly declares that his music and presentations in schools give him the opportunity to “really talk about the way, you know, people think about Indians. And [what] they think Indians are. Kinda like stereotypes and just Indian humor I guess, you know.” Therefore, storytellers are entering dominant educational institutions and educating children alternative truths about the world and Native American identities.

They use subversive stories to challenge stereotypes, myths, and formula stories. Ultimately, their goal is to have their “truths” be carried on in the children’s minds resulting in a change in how the young generation will think about Native Americans’ identities and knowledge. Storytellers are displaying a transformative culture because their stories are used for those outside of their culture, where they hope to support Native Americans but others as well. Storytellers show how they are able to navigate between two different audiences, showing their storytelling skills when they transition between languages and cultural logics.

John Bevis from Oregon also avows that he wants people to understand that traditional knowledge has modern value and not to rely upon stereotypes. He asserts:

In today's society I kind of intermingle things with today's problems. I don't try to use the stoic cigar Indian talk like 'my heart soars like an eagle', I kind of talk more modern I guess is the way to say it.

John’s narrative highlights how storytellers are the mediators between the two cultures – they “intermingle” the past with the present. He tells the dominant culture about the “current issues” that society faces today, but he does not speak in the stereotypical “Indian talk” that is depicted in films or documentaries. He uses traditional knowledge to explore modern issues and presents alternative answers to these problems.

Another location where individuals relay their grandparent’s teachings and traditional knowledge is the Native American community. In fact, storytellers assert that teaching traditional knowledge and traditional practices is very much needed within their own communities. Anne from South Dakota expresses how she created a

community organization that aims to promote sharing of cultural knowledge. She states:

We went out and gathered with a group of women and community members from Rosebud. What we did was created a place for community members who were interested to come and learn a little bit, but more importantly to share knowledge that they have. Our project is really based on the fact that the knowledge is within our communities. What we're trying to do is create a place for people to come and share that knowledge. Why don't we learn from our elders rather than leaving our own communities and going to a university to learn about plants and herbs. Why don't we ask our own elders what that knowledge is and learn from our own people? That's what we started doing.

Anne believes that elders who are within the Native American community possess legitimate and truthful forms of knowledge. She distinguishes between valued forms of knowledge found within reservation communities and devalued forms of knowledge found within the dominant culture's universities. A counter-hegemonic theme of the storytellers speaking against the knowledge found in the dominant cultures institutions is a reoccurring.

Boye Ladd further articulates that the elders within the community possess valued and truthful forms of traditional knowledge. Like Anne, he also asserts that sharing these teachings and traditions within the Native American community enables people to learn from one another and helps to solve their most pressing concerns.

When I come to the communities it's quite an honor to work with a lot of the elders and learn from them. I sit down with many of them in discussing, share many of our concerns, share some of the teachings and traditions and also get back from a lot of them.

Storytelling and sharing traditional knowledge in Native communities enables them to explore concerns of specific importance to these communities. They collectively find solutions to social problems within the Native knowledge system instead of the dominant culture's knowledge system because it has failed them.

## **Conclusion**

In my research, I discover that storytellers are the agents of the Native traditional knowledge system. What Native American storytellers have discovered by means of their double-consciousness is that the Western knowledge system has attempted to trap Native people in a time warp of a racialized myth. The myth signifies to Native Americans that the past is all that they have – they have no present and no future in the dominant culture's paradigms. To believe in such a myth is to be dead (King 2003). The dominant culture maintains power over their knowledge system because it manipulates Native American symbols, images, and culture. Faced with this framework of knowledge, they look for an alternative way to see the world. They unpack hegemonic ideologies because they have acquired Native traditional knowledge from their grandparents' experiences, which lifts the veil. They are empowered by their double-consciousness. They realize that they are very much alive, physically and culturally. Accordingly, they participate in ceremonies, songs, and storytelling. These cultural practices create a more satisfyingly authentic identity for them. They experience feelings of honor, respect, and fortitude.

Storytellers create subversive stories that resurrect the Native past (grandparents' traditional knowledge) as a way to create a Native present (authentic identities). This enables them to imagine a Native future that utilizes traditional



knowledge as a means for solutions to problems within both worlds – the Native world and dominant culture’s world. Storytellers, therefore, are creating an alternative Native universe that is steeped within Native traditional knowledge truths about the world. The aim of their stories is social change. For effective change, ideologies that maintain oppression must be challenged in school curricula, community cultures, and family histories (Collins 2000). They are doing just that. Storytellers realize this and actively aim to dismantle the myths about their culture and identities in the master’s house, while at the same time, offering alternative truths about the world.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

Native American storytellers have spoken. We have heard their stories.

I wish to conclude this thesis by examining the larger implications of these findings; by understanding the broader context of redefining Native American identity, traditional knowledge systems, and a self-sustaining relationship with nature; and by cautioning readers of the limitations of this study. This thesis began with the premise that the limited research in sociology on Native Americans has, with few exceptions, presented them in a past tense context, or as passively silenced victims of larger social forces. My research reveals an incredibly different image. My study indicates that Native American storytellers are agents who aim for social change. Storytellers have creatively developed a new strategy in their storytelling that draws from their double-consciousness to lift a damaging veil imposed by the larger culture.

In this thesis, I have answered the following questions: How do Native people lift the veil and attempt to discover a more authentic and less troubling self identity? How do Native American storytellers struggle with the dominant narratives framing of Indian life and attempt to find authenticity in the traditional stories that they tell? They lift the veil by creating subversive stories that challenge hegemonic concepts of Nature, Knowledge, and Native American identities, where they find a more satisfying identity and worldview for themselves. In the findings, I was struck by the

importance of grandparents in shaping their worldviews and identities. The connectedness between grandparents and storytellers, I speculate, serves two functions. On one hand, this relationship provides storytellers access to a knowledge system that lifts the veil. They become aware of their pre-colonized identities while at the same time becoming aware of how the dominant culture depicts them, thus, displaying an innate tension between being Native and American, an insider and outsider in both cultures. On the other hand, temporal shifting enables them to draw boundaries between these myths, finding authenticity in the stories that they tell. One lifts the veil, while the other empowers their authentic agency. Both are used creatively in their stories to combat hegemonic beliefs that aim to keep them disempowered, silenced, and marginalized.

In order for a culture to survive, it must change. This is what is happening in Native American communities today. Stories housed within the traditional knowledge system have lived on and continue to be used today, incorporating both worlds. Native American storytellers preserve traditional stories, while at the same time, weaving in contemporary conflicts, showing the transformative nature of their stories. This turns out to be a form of survival for their oral traditions, knowledge systems, identities, and worldviews.

A subversive double-consciousness enables storytellers to creatively respond to forced colonization, assimilation attempts, acts of racialization, and targeted marginalization. Storytellers aim to keep the native knowledge system alive and honor their responsibilities to the environment. Their stories greatly challenge the western beliefs about knowledge and the environment. These findings have

tremendous economic, social, and political implications because Native American storytellers offer alternative “truths” and “ways of being,” which directly confront hegemony. Storytellers invite their dominant culture audiences in, wanting to have their stories heard. Storytellers purposefully enter the dominant culture’s institutions— schools, internet sites, radio channels, cable television, and storytelling festivals —where they benevolently provide people an alternative understanding of their identities, culture, and traditions showing the transformative nature of their culture. They offer alternative thoughts about Native Americans than those found in the myths and legends of the dominant culture.

Compared to various other applications of double-consciousness in prior studies, we learn in this thesis that stories themselves become the vehicle for mitigating the damages of double-consciousness, or for lifting the veil. Yet, their stories continue to be marginalized and struggle to find audiences in the larger culture. With the advent of communication technologies such as the radio, television, internet, facebook, and blogs, storytellers are finding creative ways to have their voices heard. They use the master’s tools such as linguistics tools and technology tools, but for the most part, they offer an original, grassroots version of history, nature, knowledge, and community. This version may offer valuable clues for creating sustainable communities and assisting with the severe social problems that this groups faces, as well as the Nation as a whole.

I believe that the data support the many theoretical constructs presented in this thesis. The data indicate that Native American storytellers have socially constructed a new definition of Native American identities, nature, and knowledge. Native

American storytellers also provide an alternative knowledge system and worldview that is more personally satisfying to them than the dominant culture's paradigms. Many of the greatest challenges on any reservation is to get the community involved, to preserve the traditional knowledge system, and to protect the environment. I believe storytellers do just that because they offer alternative wisdoms that are very much relevant in modern times. This is clearly reflected in the data of this thesis which is reiterated in the narrative of Ron Pond from Washington who avows:

I am a long-standing advocate for traditions for our young people and I spent most of my young life devoting myself to working with young people. I advocate traditions for them as much as possible. I think that's something that's important for the young people. We have no right to deny them, you know, the right to learn about who they are and their culture. This has been the aim of the federal government, which would take our traditions and our culture away from us. Now we're suffering the consequences of that by having all the social ills that we have today; that we can try and restore what we have with our traditions and how we relate to our Creator and this land as Indian people. That's so important for our young people and making sure that they're going to be the traditional bearers for the future, but it's up to us to teach them as much as we can.

My work also has broader implications. The present study indicates that the process of redefining Native American identities in the dominant culture is already under way. I believe that the social transformation of nature can be studied, if viewed with a broad enough theoretical lens that takes into account Native American knowledge systems and worldviews. Their knowledge system and worldviews offer clues for solving some of today's most pressing environmental concerns. Some solutions already in use within Native communities are alternative energy sources,

sustainable local communities, waste management, and local food production (LaDuke, 2010). Listening to their stories, while at the same time, seriously considering traditional knowledge systems as an approach to solving these pressing environmental issues, would then, be the next step for social change, which leads me to my final point.

There is a disquieting gap found within the field of Sociology on the topic of Native Americans (Davis-Delano 2008). And yet, Native Americans offer substantial alternative truths about the world that can be discovered through a sociological lens. Researching Native Americans' experiences in the field of sociology offers tremendous insights on common concepts, paradigms, and epistemologies. Native Americans present a view of this world that provides us with an insider/outsider perspective which creates new possibilities for discovering new knowledge and positive social change. I believe that this thesis begins the discovery of the knowledge that awaits in the lives and stories of Native Americans.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Wisdom of the Elders Transcript**

Rozina George

Audio 

### **Rozina George:**

My name is Rozina George. I'm honored and proud to be talking about Sacajawea, one of the most famous women in history. I'm a great, great, great, great niece of Sacajawea. I, like Sacajawea, I'm a Agaidika Shoshone. Originally I'm from Salmon, Idaho.

### **Arlie Neskahi:**

On today's Turtle Island Storytellers, Rozina George tells of her great great great great aunt, Sacajawea, who was captured as a child, and then reunited with her family as a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

### **Rozina George:**

Sacajawea was twelve years old in 1800, when her people were camped along the three forks of the Missouri River in their buffalo hunting territory when a band of Minnetaree Indians attacked them. They killed men, women and children. They captured all the female that were living and four boys. Sacajawea's mother was killed, and Sacajawea was one of the children captured and made prisoner by the Minnetarees. Now we know them as the Hidatsas. Because of this atrocity in her life, she ended up in the annals of history.

It was in the Hidatsa village that Sacajawea was held a captive and eventually purchased by a French trapper trader, Toussaint Charbonneau. It was for four years that she was held a captive. And in the winter of 1804, she had the opportunity to come home. A group of white men were going to her country. They hired, they hired Toussaint Charbonneau as an interpreter and she had no choice but to go along. And now we know it was an opportunity for her to come home.

So it was on August 11 th, 1805, these four men encountered Agaidika warrior, who was on a horse and he was dressed differently from the prior tribes they encountered. He had buckskin, and what was unique was that he had hair locks on his breech cloth.

So it was in august of 1805 that Sacajawea returned to her people with the Lewis and Clark expedition. She shared her cultural knowledge with Meriwether Lewis and three men that were proceeding ahead. She gave them advice on how to approach our people, the protocol you approach out people.

The first thing they did when they saw this warrior was to take a blanket and throw it up in the air three times. This meant "Were not here to harm you." They started approaching him and showing him gifts and all Native tribes do that gift giving.

During this time when Lewis and Clark were coming through, we were doing a transition to our buffalo hunting in present-day Montana we had to be very careful. Not only would we be there in that buffalo hunting territory. So would be the Blackfeet and the Hidatsas, other tribes, our traditional enemies. They were out there too, and they were willing to attack for our horses. And so during this time period, we would ally with the Flatheads, and sometimes the Nez Perces, to protect ourselves. And so that's why this scout, this Agaidika warrior, was sent ahead to do reconnaissance.

And eventually these four men proceeded on. They made contact with an elder woman and a young girl. They were on the ground digging. They were out getting roots. The young woman saw them and ran away.

And so what this elder did was, she got on her knees and bowed down. And then the young girl stayed with her and was willing to suffer the consequences with her grandma. So she bowed down, put her arms around her grandmother and was waiting for more likely their demise. And instead what Lewis did was take this elder by the hand, pick her up, and gave her gifts.

And then the next thing he did that was very important, very significant, was putting the sacred paint of our people on the elder's face. (1) it's a red, sacred red paint. It was put on her forehead, on the side of her face across her cheeks. I asked a elder what this meant and they told me it that it meant that person that was doing that was blessing that person. And so that was noted in the journals.

The chief, the leader of the people, with about sixty men, came riding up and the elder woman, the young woman, were able to tell them what happened, and most importantly was what they did to them, the sacred paint ceremony. You know, our people have never seen white men. Never.

Who were they? Spirit beings sent? Where are they from? So it was something unusual for them, for our people to encounter these people that were giving them items that they have never seen. And this prevented the demise of these four men. These guys would have been killed immediately had they not known what to do.

And so eventually, they had a pipe ceremony. And the pipe ceremony is also sacred. With pipe ceremonies you're determining if these people, you're testing their integrity. And they're committing their words to all the different beings of the mother earth. In the journals they mention a two feet circle they made on the floor of the lodge. And in the center they built a fire. And when they pray, our people pray to the four directions with the pipe. And then they put the pipe towards the mother earth and up to the heavens, praying to the creator.

What Lewis was doing when he was participating in the ceremony he was committing himself with a vow. They immediately put up a lodge when they encountered him. It is because they wanted to see this man's integrity, his heart, his trustworthiness, to see if he



was a worthy man. He was committing himself not only to these people, but to all the spirit beings and to the higher creator, and then to mother earth. And we know Lewis didn't understand what he was getting himself into.

That ceremony was done and right afterwards on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1805, Sacajawea was reunited with her people. In Montana across from Lemhi pass, where present-day Clark's reservoir is, this is where Sacajawea encountered her people. And this is what Clark had to say when she saw her people. She danced for a joyful site.

She couldn't speak English. So how she communicated to him was through sign, Indian sign language. She said, "I am a Agaidika Shoshone." And she said, "This is my nation." And she said, "These are my people."

When she was walking on Mother Earth, she was able to identify who she was. And then she was reunited with a childhood friend that escaped from the Minnatarees, or the Hidatsas, and came back to her people.

And on that same day, she was reunited with her brother. And this was documented in the journals too. It was written by Lewis. And this is what he had to say:

"Shortly after Captain Clark arrived with interpreter Charbonneau and Indian woman, who proved to be the sister of the chief, proved to be the brother of Sacajawea."

And that's the lineage that I come through.


**Arlie Neskahi:**

Special thanks to Sacajawea's descendent, Rozina George, who recently helped to initiate the Sacajawea interpretive, cultural and education center in Salmon, Idaho.

## Appendix B: Turtle Island Storyteller Transcript



### Turtle Island Storyteller Peter Bigstone

*Coming Back To My Life* [Audio](#) 

#### Peter Bigstone

My name is Peter Bigstone. I'm a full-blood Assiniboin from Stoutness, Saskatchewan.

My grandfather got shot as a little boy. His mother fell on top of him to guard him when he got shot on the buttocks. He got shot and my grandmother fell on top of him and they shot her. They shot him and he was underneath my grandma. I don't know how, but shot his finger right off. That's why Nabeksi, Nabemoksabe, you know. Nabemoksabe he got shot, blasted right off his little pinky finger

When he was a young man he was a very spiritual man because he was a lodge keeper. A lodge keeper that he made sun dances when he came back and he held ceremonies. He was a healer. He used a hand in the power of prayer in his native language, Assiniboine.

Grandfather taught me a lot of songs. They're songs that are passed on to me so I can pass them down to other people.

I lived with my grandfather since I was seven years old. Seven years old and I started to learn how to ride horseback, look after myself and hunt. He taught me how to hunt, eh? Taught me how to hunt and he taught me how to make a bow. He taught me how to shoot a bow and all those things about animals and their ways, and character, physical values in everyday living with the animal kingdom. He taught me a lot of that and I learned. I've learned a lot of things to live with nature. I've learned lots of things in the medicinal values in plants. I've learned lots of that. I've learned how to hunt. I've learned how to manage my life in a spiritual way and emotional way. You know to take care of myself in those four ways, you know. Spiritually, emotionally, and physically and mentally.

A lot of stories that come to mind is how my grandfather lived in the old ways. He was one of the that I looked up to after my mom and dad parted ways. Grandfather used to say, "My grandson, don't worry because they'll get back together." I never thought about it until after my mom and dad went their ways for thirty years. They got back together. That's true prophecy to hear that from an old man that knew it already.

I grew up chopping wood. I grew up around horses to go and get some wood. I grew up like that. I hunted for my dinner. I snared rabbits. I went fishing. I went and ringed ducks necks you know. Used a little dog to go and track to make them go in the weeds. When I make them go in the weeds my dog will sniff them out. He'll go and grab them and put them in his mouth. I take it from him and if I hear a duck squawking, quacking away someplace, I know he's got a hold of a duck. So I go running over there and I go pick up that duck..

I drowned gophers to eat and I snared partridges. I ate lots of wild turnips. I ate lots of wild onions. I ate a lot of bulrushes, bulrushes soup, choke cherries and raspberries.

I miss those days. Skating on the pond. skating around the evenings. Big bonfire on the side

I always remember Grandfather. He pushed me into my manhood and he taught me the values in life.

I was given a pipe when I was nine years old I feel I wasn't worthy of it, when I was young, but a little older. When I turned into a man, I couldn't, hang on to it. I started being wild after my grandfather passed away. It took a few years of my life, going to jail and trying to straighten out. Twenty years ago I started my life back on that same road that I had left before I started being drinking. When I came back to my life, I've been on it full force now.

He taught me, all the songs that had a meaning in life. I've learned lots of honor songs. I've learned lots of sun dance songs. I've learned lots of Gasnoha songs and ceremonial songs. I've learned how to beat the drum at a certain pace. Those things mean a lot to me, the prayer songs.

My grandfather said, "That's where you help people the most, is when you sing that in the lodge. "

### **Peter Bigstone**

Peter Bigstone, HOKSHINA WASTE (good boy) is a full-blooded Assiniboine from the Ocean Man Reservation in Stoughton, Saskatchewan. Canada. Another name that was given to him at birth. Which is, WIYAGA YAMNI, (Three Feathers). Born and raised at

the White Bear reservation. He grew up with his grandfather, Dick Nahbexie, GIYA DOBA HOKSHINA (Flying Four Boys) who taught him to share, teach and love the culture, spirituality and language of his people. He is now one of about ten other people on Ocean man, who can fluently speak the Assiniboine (Nakoda) language. English is his second language. He is married by the old customary style/way of the Nakoda culture. Both he and his wife (Renita) reside in Harlem, Montana and has five sons and four daughters. Five granddaughters and one grandson. (Many adopted children /grandchildren). Whom he had been teaching their tribal language and culture, like the grandfathers before him.

Peter Bigstone, being of Assiniboine descendency, Chief Jimmy Bigstone was the grandfather of Peter's mother. He was the last hereditary chief of the White Bear Reservation and also to mention Peter's mother's great Grandfather, Chief Pheasant Rump (SHIYO-NEE-DAY) was the last hereditary chief of the Pheasant Rump Reservation. On Peter's Father's side the last hereditary, Chief Ocean Man, (MNI-WAN-JA TANGA-WICHA) was his grandfather's uncle.

He is the last male who can claim of having three chiefs from three different reservations on his lineage of descendency. Peter has been teaching his children to be proud of whom they are and to thank the Creator for the good life He has given us.

Peter is a song carrier and is a member of the Moose Mountain Nakoda Singers, who were nominated for the Canadian Aboriginal Award and for Best Traditional Music in the historical category. Three volumes of their songs were recorded by Sunshine Records in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Teaching is another talent Peter enjoys. He possesses a class 7 Teaching license. For teaching the Nakoda language (Assiniboine). He teaches powwow songs, round (Gahomni) dance songs, honor songs, prayer songs and Sundance songs. He has been called to sing all over the country. He was also in a movie, a film entitled "Assiniboine Chief Rosebud Remembers Lewis and Clark," in the fall of 2003.

Peter is also a storyteller. He shares Inktome legends. Peter can relate ceremonies of the Assiniboine. Among them are feast of the dead, wake, memorial feast, moccasin/hand games, medicine lodge, quarterly singings, fasting, sweat lodge, reclamation of the spirit, healing, spirit calling, pipe ceremonies, naming, give away, taking the medicine, feeding the night spirits, feeding the little people, and first hunting/first kill. He tells one story of how smallpox wiped out all the Assiniboines in four reserves in the area he comes from. He is a whip man and whistle man at powwows, and a stickman for the round dance. He has been a pipe carrier since the age of nine and now carries four pipes. He is also a head ladle man at ceremonial feeds, Sweat lodge keeper and Sun dance lodge keeper (Assiniboine medicine lodge). Preserving and teaching the Assiniboine language and culture to the young are top priority with Peter. Peter doesn't want this way of life lost. He is comfortable presenting to any kind of group in any kind of atmosphere. He especially likes children to experience native culture. Singing and playing games is his way to teach people that life is too short and to have fun.