

**“We Want to Get Our Voice Heard”:
Native Perspectives of Native American History Instruction**
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This chapter presents the thoughts of five Native parents living in an urban area of the Southwest United States on Arizona Native American history instruction. Two questions guided the research: What types of Native American history instruction did Native parents with children enrolled in urban public schools receive in their own schooling and what types of Native American history instruction do these parents believe should be taught in the urban public schools their children attend? These parents dispelled myths and stereotypes such as Native parents are inactive in their children’s education and debunked the notion of “living in two worlds” by seeking opportunities for their children to (re) claim their tribal practices and beliefs while simultaneously aspiring to gain a holistic education.

This chapter presents, from Native viewpoints, Native American history instruction policies. The two questions from a larger study (Benally, 2014) that examined two educational statutes mandating Native American history instruction serve as a guide: What types of Native American history instruction did Native parents with children enrolled in urban public schools receive in their own schooling and what types of Native American history instruction do these parents believe should be taught in the urban public schools where their children attend? Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) 15-341 and ARS 15-710 were passed, paradoxically, in the midst of the English-only, high-stakes testing, Eurocentric policy matrix in Arizona. The first statute mandates public school governing boards to “incorporate instruction on Native American history into appropriate existing curricula” and the second directs the state department of education to ensure “all schools shall give instruction...including the history of Native Americans in Arizona.”

Native Americans are increasingly migrating to urban areas for educational and occupational opportunities. For example, of the 332,129 enrolled Navajos, the 2010 census showed that only 169,321 tribal members lived on the Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), and it is projected that by 2050, three-fourths of the Navajo population will be living off the Navajo Reservation in pursuit of economic opportunities (Donovan, 2010). Similarly, the most recent census shows that 78% of all Native Americans live outside of tribally held lands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Although half of the Native American population lives in urban places (Fairchild & Tippeconnic, 2010), there is little literature regarding Native Americans in urban environments. Moving to urban areas, Natives encounter new problems; a primary obstacle has been the schooling experience. Native

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students enrolled in schools located within their ancestral lands have, relatively speaking, many opportunities to learn about their histories and to cultivate their cultural identities.

Native peoples are invisible minorities. In a qualitative study, Amerman (2007) examined the public schooling experiences of Native American students living in Phoenix, Arizona, between 1945 and 1975. One theme that emerged was that Native American people experienced invisibility (see also Bryant, 2008; Chaudhuri, 1974). Amerman noted, for example, that the mayor of Phoenix in 1968 was astonished to learn how many Native Americans resided in Phoenix at that time. According to Amerman, lack of acknowledgement by this city leader (and others) about the Native American presence resulted in stereotypes and Native Americans were mistaken as Mexicans. Teachers did not realize Native Americans were in their classes. One participant in the study described an experience when her teacher required her to dress up as a Pilgrim during a class activity because the teacher assumed she was not Indian (Amerman, 2007). Another study by Freng, et al (2007) found that the some Native Americans felt they were forgotten in American history.

Native American students experience invisibility in classrooms as well as in systemic accountability practices. Fairchild and Tippeconnic (2010, p. 7) postulated Native American students are invisible owing to “small numbers... [which results] in Native students being characterized as statistically insignificant.” According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act accountability, 50 Native American students at one grade level in a school would constitute a Native American subgroup. For the 2011 school year, Native American enrollment of Arizona’s largest urban school district, which consists of 106 schools, had the potential for Native American subgroups in six of the schools. Overall, according to 2012 Arizona Department of Education figures, the district had a Native American enrollment of 4.23%.

Teachers’ and administrations’ lack of knowledge of Native American demographics and presence led to and perpetuated racial prejudice. Amerman (2007) found out the Phoenix public schools encouraged stereotypical views of Indians, as demonstrated by school traditions. One high school promoted an annual ritual that encouraged students to dress up as cowboys and Indians. A page in a 1970 yearbook declared, “Sheriff Jim Christenson and his posse went after the paleface Indians that happened to be visiting our campus. And it came to pass that these officers of the law killed the Indians and placed those without proper dress in jail” (Amerman, 2007, p. 41). That year, there were 45 Native Americans enrolled in their school (Amerman, 2007).

Similarly, Deyhle (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of Navajos in a mainstream public school in a bordertown and discovered that racism was prevalent. The separatist community had segregated schools and argued against integration of Navajo students into their schools. Deyhle (2009, p. 83) wrote, “White parents fought hard to maintain their sons’ and daughters’ exclusionary white setting, arguing that the Navajo children would bring the diseases of glaucoma and tuberculosis into their healthy schools.” Deyhle (1995) stated,

“Racism frames the stage and remains a barrier for all Navajo youth, regardless of their academic success or social compliance” (p. 438). The committee and school officials lessened their objections to Navajo students attending that school once they received large amounts of money for enrolling them (Deyhle, 2009). It appears that the boundaries of what is safe and dangerous can be redrawn for a price.

Amerman (2010) also found that Native students in urban schools struggled to discover their cultural identity in the midst of neocolonial schooling. In his study, one participant’s son asked her, “My best friend, he’s a Mexican. And this other guy at my school is a colored boy. And this other guy is a White boy.... What am I? I’m brown, but what am I? I know I am not White” (p. 80). In an exploratory study examining cultural identity formation of Native Americans in urban areas, Lucero (2010, p. 334) similarly found that urban youth encounter a stage of struggle, a phase to describe “a source of difficulty and confusion that usually led to rebellion or rejection of ethnic group membership.” Deyhle (1995, p. 408) believed, “Youth who have little identity as Navajos and who are not accepted by Anglos because they are not White face the greatest risk of school failure and unemployment.” Accurate portrayals of Native Americans in school curricula can help establish a healthy cultural identity.

Method

In this phenomenological study conducted in 2012-2013, five Native parents, including one child, living in a metropolitan area participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. I utilized the safety zone theory (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006) to analyze the interview transcripts. The safety zone is the degree of Indianness that the dominant society deems as safe or nonthreatening, and therefore acceptable. I utilized the safety zone theory to reveal “how the boundaries of safe and dangerous cultural difference have been constructed, contested, stretched, and moved over time” (Lomawaima, 2012, p. 6). The article examines how Native parents who live in urban areas experienced restrictive practices in their childhood and how they are challenging those oppressive practices for their own children.

Writing about the experiences my participants had with schooling was an emotional experience for me owing to our similar stories; not only was I trying to make sense of their experiences, but I also had to confront my own repressed experiences. As I read and reread the interview transcripts, I relived how some of the parents and I wept together as they recalled their oppressive schooling experiences. Past emotional distress experienced in Indian boarding schools has been written about, but these emotions and experiences still persist in rural and urban public schools through formal curricula and everyday in school-to-students, teachers-to-students, and students-to-students interactions.

Native parent participants were recruited from each of the five urban area school districts participating in the larger study. The participants self-identify as Natives. I recruited two participants through Native American program directors and three through a snowball method. Each participant lived within the metro-

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politan area in which the study took place and had children enrolled at one of the five districts. Pseudonyms are used. The study's findings are presented through participant profiles (Seidman, 2006) and themes. Using the words and stories shared by the parents, I intend to create a complete story about the implementation, present, and possible future of the two state statutes. Participant profiles are introduced first, then themes.

Participant profiles

Catalina. Catalina advocates for Native American populations. She defies the stereotypical image that Native Americans are shy and reserved. A moment after introducing myself, she candidly spoke about her life. She identified herself as follows, "I'm both Hispanic and [Native]. I didn't really associate much with the tribe" (Catalina, interview, Feb. 20, 2013). She explained:

It wasn't something I was raised into. The whole religion that encompassed into our culture, it's more of a thing that gets passed on to the men, but my dad didn't feel he needed to because I wasn't a man. And my mom, I learned everything that I could from the Hispanic side. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 20, 2013)

Catalina and I share similar experiences of growing up among non-Natives and having limited opportunities to learn about our Native cultures. We gained in-depth knowledge about our Native cultures as adults. She said, "It wasn't until I got older that I started to experience [my Native side]. I think I was a senior in college; it took that long [laughing] for me to get involved with my community" (Catalina, interview, Feb. 20, 2013). A mentor at the university introduced her to her tribal community. Later, she sought other mentors within her tribal community. Literature was an important aspect to learning about her tribe and ancestry while developing her cultural identity. She now encourages her son to buy and read books about their tribal ancestry. However, there was a scarcity of literature about their tribal nation at his reading level.

Catalina is a 30-something, single mother who is actively involved in her son's education. She participates in the school district's Native American education program and, at one time, served as the parent committee president. Catalina also tries to involve herself in her child's day-to-day school activities in his public elementary school. However, she encounters opposition. She explained:

I feel that there's a big disconnect with his teacher. I go in and talk to her. I'm pretty sure she hates every time she sees an email from me [laughing], but I'm not complaining about anything. It's more, "How did he do today? How was it today?" Because I follow up on a daily basis. And I tell her, "Please, email me for anything, any reason, I just want to make sure you have that support from me as a parent." But [the teacher responded], "I have so much to do, so many kids to deal with." (Catalina, interview, Feb. 20, 2013)

Because of her frequent efforts to communicate with the teacher, she believes the teacher sometimes retaliates against her child. She communicated her concerns about students who may be experiencing bullying based on Native stereotypes. However, the teacher retorted with instances that implied her son was a bully. Catalina believed the teacher’s lack of knowledge about the Native community where the school was located prevented her from understanding the student demographics and complex dynamics. Stereotypes and incomplete knowledge of the community caused the teacher to view the community in binary terms of good and bad.

Catalina has lived in this city for most of her life, except for a few years to attend a nearby university. After earning a bachelor’s degree, her tribe recruited her to work for the town. Although she assisted with community development such as obtaining funds to erect a community center, she was not accepted. She recalled the responses from the tribal members:

It was hard for the tribal members to accept me. There was a big battle because one of the people was, “Oh, you have a Mexican on your committee and it should be [Indian] only.” They were, “Don’t you know who her dad is?” There’s that kind of thing. I’m still not kind of accepted in the community because I am half. I don’t have the same skin tone as a lot of [them]. And so I have that battle. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 20, 2013)

Although she no longer works for the town or the tribe, she maintains a relationship with them. While working full-time, she also was taking courses to obtain a Master’s degree.

Eloise. Like Catalina, Eloise counters the stereotypical silent and stoic Indian image. Before I could ask a question, she began telling about herself. Hesitantly, I interrupted her to inform her of the participatory rights. After the formalities, Eloise restarted her story, “I am Native American. I would say that I am urbanized and traditional. I’m [from five different tribes]. That’s all on my enrollment [documents], too” (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013).

Eloise has extensive knowledge of her family history. She was able to trace her lineage back to the 1800s. She recalled:

We traced our family all the way back to my oldest great, great grandma, [she] was...a descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre. She’s one of the kids that survived. I come from a long, strong history of people that delegated a lot. They were either a chief or they were either a leader or a real good fighter. (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

As she spoke confidently and with pride about her ancestors and their leadership, I recognized they informed her being. She also recalled stories her grandparents told about the boarding schools. They witnessed policy changes from restrictive Native language use to when they were eased. Her grandparents, who are from different tribes, met in boarding school, which explains Eloise’s multiple tribal lineages.

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As a child, Eloise attended many different schools because her parents migrated in search of or following work opportunities. She lived with either her mother or father depending on their employment. She described the experience:

I've lived on and off the Res[ervation] all my life. I was always being passed back and forth between my mom and my dad. My mom is from [Indian country] but she has never really lived on the Res[ervation] either. When I got finally settled down, my grandmother said, "No more moving, you have to have stability, a stable home." So I stayed on the Res[ervation] up there. But they always sent me to school off the Res[ervation]. They never really let me go to [the Reservation] school over there. (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

Her children also attended many different schools, because she also relocated for employment opportunities. In the larger study that this article stems from, the issue of Native American students being transient was a concern among urban area school district personnel and a state education department official.

Like three of the other urban Native parent participants, Eloise viewed pow wows as cultural practice. She indicated, "I've grown up mostly around the [local tribe], but traditional-wise, I was always in the pow wows around the Sioux and the Cheyennes and family from Oklahoma" (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). The pow wow culture remains a part of her life. When her children were younger, they traveled to various pow wows throughout the country to participate. In Fixico's (2000) study of urban Indians, he described the use of pow wows as socialization activities for Indians relocated to urban areas.

Eloise takes pride in being employed and having raised her four children. Now that they are older, she returned to school. At the time of the interview, she was studying dual majors and working full time; one of her majors was American Indian Studies.

Jonathon. Eloise invited her teenage son, Jonathon, to participate in the interview. Much like his mother, Jonathon attended numerous schools; however, unlike his mother, he attended a tribal school. He recalled one particular public school, "When I was in [that school], they were all Spanish. Some of the [classes] didn't have English-speaking teachers there. In math class, can you imagine that? [I] didn't know what they were talking about" (Jonathon, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). His misplacement informed what he later reiterated with conviction several times throughout the interview; the idea to "recognize" Native peoples and their contributions.

Jonathan shared one of his mother's traits: talkativity. Eloise proclaimed, "I'm just a talker. You notice so is my son [laughing]. He is ten times worse" (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). They both spoke passionately about Native American issues and the injustices that they experienced. For example, Jonathon addressed erasure of Native peoples, "[White people] know what they did to us, they know what their founding fathers did to us. They don't question it. We don't question it either. Unless we want to get our voice heard, and then they

are going to start [seeing] us” (Jonathon, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). Jonathon, despite his young age, was beginning to understand what the other participants and myself didn’t understand at his age. He inspired a hope for a future that overcomes hegemony.

Mary. Although Eloise’s friend, Mary, agreed to participate in the interview session with Eloise, Mary replied with short sentences at the beginning of the interview. I could have construed her as unreceptive, but I took into account that I was a stranger and she was unsure of me. After she became comfortable with me, she was quick to laugh at Eloise’s stories. She agreed with many of the points Eloise and Jonathon made. Mary described herself, “I’m from [the local area]. I’m [Indian]. I have two children. They are nine and eleven. I’m an at-home mom. I was mostly raised with my grandmother. My uncles and mom was out and about doing their own thing” (Mary, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). She has lived in the metropolitan area most of her adult life. The places she has lived were based on the availability of jobs. The search for employment leading to migration became a recurring theme. Mary, as well as the other participants, despite their current residences in this urban setting named their tribal lands as home. Their aspirations for economic stability required constant relocation.

Mary engages in her children’s education by attending events at their school. She ensures her children complete their homework and strives to know what happens in their classrooms.

Garrick. Garrick is a Navajo single father of a son in high school. He has lived in the city since 1994. He came to the area to attend college, and upon graduation, stayed. His job involves extensive traveling to Native communities to work with Native populations.

To remain connected to his Native background and socialize with other Natives in the city, he remains in contact with family members and “just attending the [Native] Museum or stuff going on at [the local Native focused] Park or at [another Native museum], if they have stuff going on and just different pow wows and events of that nature” (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012).

Garrick actively participates in his child’s education. He attends district Native American program parent meetings, volunteers for committees to raise funds for his son’s clubs and sport teams, and communicates regularly with his son’s teachers. He also finds opportunities for his son to access higher education while still in high school.

Betty. When I parked in front of Betty’s house, I thought whether to walk across the well-manicured lawn. The landscape was atypical of stereotypical images of how inner city or Indian owned houses should look. As we sat down at the kitchen table, she called her children to introduce them. I presented myself in the traditional Navajo way by stating my clans and the area where my mother lives. Betty told me her clans as well. We laughed over whether we were related since we were not sure. We decided we were related because all Navajos seem to be. Betty readily laughed and it was contagious. She introduced herself, “I’m originally from [Northern] Arizona. To tell you the truth, there is no Native influence from my tribe prospectively. My family, my mom was not all that

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Native as well. She went to school in [a bordertown]" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012). Similar to Carolina and myself, she is trying to learn more about her tribal culture as an adult. However, unlike us, Betty does not have a connection to her ancestral land.

Comparable to some of the other participants, Betty's family moved away from their tribal lands for occupational opportunities. She stated, "There were no jobs, nothing out on the Res[ervation]. My mom's husband found a job in [a bordertown] so everyone just picked up and moved" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012). Her family has resided in one place so her children can attend the same school since they were in kindergarten.

Betty's children do not qualify to participate in a supplemental pullout instruction program provided through the Native American program because they were academically advanced. She feels her children miss out on the Native American content provided in the remedial reading program. Betty volunteers at her children's school, but is most comfortable volunteering with the Native American program. Betty values the Native American program director because she sees the director as her only connection to the Navajo culture.

Themes

I identified interesting quotes from the interview transcripts and sorted the excerpts into similar categories. After creating folders for them and following Seidman's (2006) recommendation, I read each folder one at a time to determine whether the category and excerpts were compelling enough to keep. In the next step, I identified the themes. After reading and rereading the folders, I identified the themes of schooling, Native American history, stereotypes and turning away.

Schooling. Four participants attended off reservation schools and one participant attended public schools within tribal borders. Three of the participants lived within their tribal lands that are located within or adjacent to the metropolitan area; however, they attended schools in the city. Mary recalled, "The bus used to pick us up at 6 o'clock in the morning. It would be cold and dark. We would have to sit out there and wait. It was dark when they would pick us up" (Mary, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). Although there was a tribal school within the community, Mary chose to attend mainstream public schools. However, some of the other participants' parents chose their schools.

For Catalina, the choice of schools was determined by district desegregation policies. These policies currently continue to determine where and which schools Native students from Catalina's tribal community attend. Catalina explained the policy:

I grew up in the community and all the kids there are bussed out. So the kids that live in that community attend [schools in other communities]. The kids on this side [of town] attend the [neighboring school district]. From my understanding, it's to desegregate the kids. But in that desegregation, they are also losing the community portion of it. So,

I was bussed out. And my brothers were bussed out. They wanted all the [children] to be separated and to be sent out to surrounding schools so they are not stuck in this one square mile. I think that is also a good thing because it lets us see other things. But in that, it’s also where we lost touch with, that’s why I didn’t get to see a brown person until third grade. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

Students from outside of the community are bussed into the tribal community to attend the neighborhood public school. Catalina practiced self-determination and choice to enroll her child at the community public school so he can remain in the neighborhood. Although the school is blocks from their house, bureaucracy requires he enroll under open enrollment guidelines.

The participants recalled limited or not any Native American history instruction. Eloise remembered:

In my elementary and high school years, I didn’t learn anything. I just learned that they were the Indians and that they were nice and they gave you food on Thanksgiving Day. That’s all I learned. Even in high school, I never learned anything about [Native Americans], I may have learned about a massacre or a massacre for this and a massacre for that. (Eloise, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

The content and amount of Native American history instruction the parent participants received was similar to current practices of the five districts that participated in this study. Betty described how the instruction seemed rushed and the content was not relevant to the local tribal nations. She recalled the curriculum she experienced in a bordertown:

The only Native American history I learned was in American history. But it was like a chapter. “They roamed around. They killed buffalo.” It told mainly about the Plains Indians rather than the [local tribes]. Of course, there was just the general history class and then they had the Arizona history class which it just had the basic “Yes, Navajos have the most populated reservation and it’s over there. This little part is Hopiland; they’re in the middle of Navajo reservation is Hopi.” It covers four corners and that was pretty much it. So it was pretty much it, “Okay, so you are here. Let’s move on.” (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012)

Although ARS 15-710 specifically stipulated history instruction on Native Americans in Arizona, the social studies standards that the urban school districts are utilizing do not support instruction on the 22 tribes in Arizona. Despite the change in legislation since these Native parents attended school, the curriculum Betty remembered receiving is indicative of the type of instruction students are receiving in the urban public school districts today.

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Native American history and culture. A theme emerged around the definitions of history versus culture. The parents' understanding of tribal history was intertwined with the cultural stories and practices. When I asked about Native American history, their responses were inevitably linked to culture. For example, when I asked Garrick about the Native history he learned in school, he stated, "In elementary school [on the Reservation], it was a huge emphasis. We always had different cultural events we could participate in. We had a lot of more emphasis on singing songs, dances, and different things of that nature in the school" (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2013). When I asked the same question to Catalina, she recalled an event that occurred in school:

The only thing I can say, I don't even consider it being taught culture was, I remember in junior high, they pulled [the Native students] into a room and said, "You guys are going to do art today, Native American art." I was like, "Oh! What is that?" There's a White woman and she says, "We are going to blend paper with glue and you guys are going to dye it, paint it, and do whatever you want to do with it. And then just make whatever image you consider culture." That stuck with me only because [I asked myself], "What do I consider culture? Our Easter ceremonies." So I drew a picture of the churches and this other stuff because I was into art. That was the only thing. And they said, "These are going to hang at the Heard Museum." I was a junior high student, but that's all that the junior high exposed me to and as far as high school, not even in the history books. I don't remember them saying, "Okay, this is Native stuff." (Catalina, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

Because Catalina had limited cultural teachings related to her Native heritage at home, she struggled with the idea of what her Native American culture was. That coupled with what her mainstream peers thought of Native Americans led her to question her Native identity.

When I asked the participants what Native American history their parent told them, their responses also focused mainly on culture. For example, Mary indicated she learned about traditional stories and songs. Garrick also responded:

My parents, relatives, we always talked about the creation stories, different things that happened throughout the year, things involving the significance of the four seasons, four different clans. So a lot of those, the four cardinal directions, that has encompassed a lot of what we do and learn. And then just how nature impacts our lives. (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012)

Betty, like Catalina, indicated she did not learn about her Native history and culture from her parents. Betty answered, "I don't even know how to make tortillas, that's how bad it is" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012).

Eloise was the only participant did not respond with a cultural reference. She retold stories that her grandparents divulged about their boarding school experiences. Her grandparents on both sides of her family attended boarding schools so she learned directly from them about the complex boarding school experiences that include positive and negative perspectives.

Stereotypes. All of the parent participants voiced concerns about how stereotypes about Native Americans informed their childhoods and continue to influence their lives as adults. Stereotypes were, and continued to be, hurtful. The stereotypes these participants addressed were those associated with gaming, alcoholism and welfare at a personal level. These topics are similar to what Representative (and former Navajo Nation President) Albert Hale wanted to address at a macro level: sovereignty rights and historical injustices, when he was interviewed for my larger study.

The participants were well aware of the stereotypes associated with Native peoples. Eloise recalled an assignment in her American Indian Studies:

We had to write three stereotypes...about Whites, Blacks, Mexicans, Native Americans, and Chinese, and 80% of [the students] put drunks [for the Natives]. Another put lazy. [The professor] had tests from a long time ago from when he started teaching. The top three things wasn't drunks, wasn't lazy. (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

Jonathon also stated, “People today look at us like we are drunks or this and that” (Jonathon, Interview, Feb., 15, 2013). Overall, four of the participants spoke about how Natives are viewed as alcoholics.

Another stereotype connected to Natives was they do not work or are lazy because they receive gaming revenue and welfare. Garrick said his son's teammates assumed his college education was free because he is Native American. However, in addition to his required classes at his regular high school, his son is taking supplementary coursework at several community colleges and an online high school so he can qualify for college scholarships. Eloise indicated, “I've always been just providing for my family. I always had, always been employed” (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). The fact that so many of these participants and their parents moved a great deal through their lives to find employment and work is in opposition to this lazy, unemployed stereotype, yet it persists.

Stereotypes around gaming revenues were also prevalent. Some of the participants received payments, but not enough as a sole source of income. Mary explained, “People I meet...say, ‘Well, you've got all the casinos. You got all that money.’ I wish” (Mary, interview, Feb. 13, 2013). Even though various tribes may have casinos, not all tribal members receive individual payments. Garrick explained:

Some of the tribes here in Arizona do get per capita [tribal casino revenues distributed to tribal members] that we don't as Navajos. And so even though we have casinos . . . the State takes a good portion of that

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and that gets filtered into different programs, but a lot of people aren't aware of those things. (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012)

Gaming revenues contribute to the numerous state functions and communities for education, healthcare and other programs (Arizona Department of Gaming, 2013.). Arizona public schools also benefit from gaming revenue through the Instructional Improvement Funds. These are specifically earmarked for teachers and instruction. From 2004 to 2013, Arizona school districts received \$374,660,430 (Arizona Department of Gaming, 2013). Half of the funds may be used for teacher pay increases and the reduction of class sizes. The remaining amount to be used for dropout prevention and other instructional improvement programs.

At times, there are minutiae and small details of Native lives that are perceived as common knowledge, but are in actuality misconceptions about Native culture or daily life. One example is the way non-Natives misunderstand or think they have knowledge of where Natives live. Eloise conveyed a conversation with a colleague in her college class. She said, "I had a friend that said, 'I know where you live.' I go, 'Where?' I thought she would say where at, which Res[ervation] [but] she said, 'You live where there are no trees that grow over there, huh?'" (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). Another classmate asked what time the reservation opened and closed so they could determine when to visit. Eloise, Mary, and I laughed at the ludicrousness.

At times, these misconceptions or beliefs are "willful ignorance" (Lomawaima, 2012) and are meant to be malicious. Betty remembered being teased when she first enrolled at the bordertown high school:

I've found it very offensive when I was a kid, when I first went to [a bordertown. They asked me] "Where's your teepee?" [I answered] "Ahh, my people don't live in a teepee." [They responded] "What did you live in?" I'm like, "Ahh, what do you live in?" [They answered] "A house." [I responded] "What? I can't live in a house too?" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012)

These types of interactions used stereotypes as goading tools to create tensions and conflicts. As a result of the teasing and indifference from her classmates, Betty felt like an outsider.

As a young student in a predominantly White school, I recall similar hurtful moments. Those moments framed how I conceptualized myself. Writing about these accounts were difficult because long repressed emotions and experiences from my childhood escaped from buried spaces within me. In recollecting the racism the parents encountered as children, many of them wept. As adults they still felt the pain created by stereotypes.

Betty, who had laughed so easily during the interview, changed her demeanor when I asked what Native American history should be taught to all students. She paused and stated:

Just because [Natives] are not mentioned, doesn't mean we weren't there. And we are not as savagely as they think we are. You know, that is one of the hurtful things they used to say to me, that “you are a savage.” I didn't do anything that would require me to be a savage. You know, I'm like everybody else. You know, if you think of savages, [it's] not definitely [related] to Natives. (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012)

As she recalled being viewed as a savage, she cried. The pain was still fresh. We both cried at that moment. I cried for the little girl I was. We cried for the little girls we once were.

Turning away. A majority of the parent participants disassociated themselves from their Native cultures or were rejected by other tribal members. Catalina recalled the tensions of being biracial in a community where friction existed between her two races. She stated:

My [Indian] friends would make fun of me because they were like, “Oh, you're a Mexican. You're a Mexican.” Up until junior high, they would make fun of me. And then my Mexican friends were, “Why are you friends with those people?” But I thought, “Oh, that's bad. I shouldn't [pause] I shouldn't live like that. I shouldn't [pause] I have a nice clean house and my mom keeps up,” and that kind of thing. So there was that whole negative connotation that was attached to it. But I didn't know better at the time. But like I said, when the kids would make fun of the other [Indian] kids, I didn't stop it. But I didn't engage in it. You know, I didn't say, “Leave them alone.” I just kind of sat back and watched it happen. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

As a result of the teasing and stereotypes, Catalina rejected her Native heritage as a child. She aimed for a different experience for her child and his classmates. She advocated against bullying by teaching her child about bullying and what he could do to prevent it and to not be a part of it.

Betty did not characterize her high school experiences as being bullied; however, as a consequence of how her peers at school alienated her, she felt like an outsider. Her family moved to a bordertown when she was in high school. She recalled:

Everybody has known each other from kindergarten. And if you did not go to school [there] from kindergarten until you graduated high school, you were pretty much an outsider. All the White kids didn't treat all the Native kids the same way and so [pause] but, since all the Natives knew each other from like the eighth grade or something like that, I was the new kid. So when I came in, they kind of shunned me because I did not speak the Res[ervation] talk, the way everybody else does. I wasn't [Indian] enough for them. I was too [Indian] for the White kids. (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012)

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Like Catalina, Betty wanted a different experience for her children. Her children have attended the same school since kindergarten. She believed her children's indigeneity is not a hindrance to their education because "they don't see color" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012). They forged friendships with other children regardless of their ethnicities.

Two of the participants indicated they chose not to participate in activities that were Native-centric. Mary, who attended an off reservation high school, stated:

I didn't really join the Indian club, because at that time I was just being myself and I just didn't want to be with people when I went to school with them—the people from the reservation. I just didn't want to be with them. I would just be with other people. (Mary, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

Garrick, who attended a high school on the reservation, intentionally avoided Native American courses that were offered, saying:

There were classes offered but I just, at the time, that wasn't for me. It wasn't an interest I wanted to learn about because I was already getting it at home so I didn't feel, at the time, I didn't feel like I was going to benefit from it as much as I probably would have. Thinking in hindsight, you know, it probably would have been nice to still keep, you know, obviously different instructors' perspectives and other students' perspectives on, you know, Navajo culture and so forth. (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012)

Both Garrick and Mary encouraged their children to participate in Native American related activities. Mary's son was a member of the Native American club at school. Garrick sought Navajo history and language classes for his son. In addition to the mandatory high school course load, as has already been mentioned, his son is enrolled at a community college and an online high school so he can enroll in Navajo history and language classes. Another participant, Betty, said forthrightly, "I don't want her to go through the same thing I did" (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012). Based on their personal experiences, the parent participants in this study desired alternative realities for their children. They did not want their children to live the same experiences that they lived.

Suggested content

The second question that guides this chapter is what types of Native American history instruction these parents believe should be taught in the urban public schools where their children attend. The parents' responses were rooted in their personal childhood experiences, education, and the day-to-day interactions they encountered as adults living in an urban area. The main theme that arose was one of recognition for Native peoples and their contributions to mainstream society.

Betty summarized the importance of Native American history instruction by explaining that students had the opportunity to learn about:

Other histories—that way you don’t misconstrue what the other cultures are like. [White students] should know that what else is outside of their block. Like the White kids need to know something other than what’s dealt to them. It would be nice for them to get the broad perspectives. They only know the four or five main [Native] people mentioned in the history books. And just because we are not mentioned, doesn’t mean we weren’t there. (Betty, interview, Dec. 6, 2012)

All the parent participants shared Betty’s sentiments; accurate and meaningful instruction of Native American history is important and necessary to emancipate Native Americans from the stereotypical Indian image.

The curricula used in the five school districts that participated in this study were based off the Arizona Social Studies Standards. The majority of the standards that incorporated Native American history focused on ancient Native civilizations that no longer exist. Not only does curriculum impact non-Natives, but the parent participants indicated their inadequate instruction of Native American history impacted their identities as Natives as well. Catalina’s lack of knowledge about her Native culture resulted in her lack of understanding of other Indigenous cultures, and she understood Native Americans as a monolithic homogenized group. She explained how she confronted her misconception:

It’s kind of a funny story, but not really. But in high school, I participated in a program. They [took] us to a retreat up north. It was a bunch of kids from our high school. I went to this program with a bunch of students from [school]. We met up with students from Chinle and that was my first exposure ever to a Navajo person, ever. And so my tribe—we speak Spanish—I was speaking Spanish to them and they were, “We don’t speak Spanish.” I go, “What kind of Native doesn’t speak Spanish?” You know? [Laughs] They were like, “No, our tribe doesn’t speak Spanish.” I was like, “Really?” So I sat there and I spoke to them and they were telling me about the different times for storytelling, when you can tell certain stories and when you can’t. They were using string. It was really interesting. I thought it was funny, because I didn’t have any other exposure—like I said—to any other tribe. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

Not all students have access to these kinds of opportunities that recognize and highlight individual tribal nations so they grow up believing Native Americans belong to one cultural group, speak a common language, and practice one set of beliefs.

Another consequence of inadequate history instruction is the erasure or dehumanization of Native peoples. A general belief among the participants was that Native presence is needed in their children’s schools. Jonathon stated, “They for-

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got about Natives. Everybody's opinions about Natives is that we know that they are there but they are not really there. We were there but we are basically forgotten" (Jonathon, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). In this instance, Jonathon was speaking beyond the schools but addressing mainstream society. He continued, "Nobody asks about us. Nobody says anything about us." His mother, Eloise added:

We need an identity. We know more of Mussolini and Genghis Khan than we do of how [Peter Porter from Gila River] run all the way down to Tucson and just to get [his] vote in. They couldn't even do that. We didn't even have a vote. Things like that need to be identified in history the right way. Even though it was a bad history, they still need to learn it. I think all of us need to learn it. (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

In the larger study, the district curriculum experts considered what Eloise called "bad history" as negative history that should be avoided during classroom instruction. However, the Native American program directors who were Native referred to these same historical accounts as truths that should be taught.

The participants desired their local tribal histories to be a part of the school curriculum. Jonathon recommended that the curriculum incorporate the local history of his people and the impact of Western contact and policies; he suggested the content include:

Our way of life, I guess, the way we lived in the desert, how we lived back in the day and why we lived there [and] now today. They put us on reservations where there's nothing that happens. We're broke. There's nothing out there for us to survive. We had to live like that. We had no choice but to go off the reservation. (Jonathon, interview, Feb. 15, 2013)

Eloise agreed that relocation policies should be taught. She contributed, "You don't know how tribes were. You need to know where this land really came from and who lived on it and why they are the way they are today" (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013).

Catalina also believed learning about the local history was important, not solely for the students but for the teachers as well. Her son's school had a large turnover of teachers and principals every year. She imagined the turnover was because the school personnel lacked knowledge about the Native community, which created difficulties for the teachers. She thought:

I think if the teachers knew more and had more buy-in about the community, maybe there would be less turnaround, because that's the issue that little school has. Yes, they want to teach in a low-income school [pause] but they are just there to teach at a low-income school. They aren't really getting a grasp of who are these kids who are here from the community and what are they about? Maybe if they did teach about

the one square mile, they can get the buy-in and these teachers would be there for five years, six years versus one year. But [they hear] the negative portion of it. “Oh, there’s drug deals. There’s a drug bust. Oh, there’s a shooting. There’s a gang fight. Oh, there was a stabbing. Don’t be here after dark. Don’t because of this”.... [They know] that part of the one square mile. [They don’t] see the good side about it, you know? It’s a small community. . . and everybody knows everybody. (Catalina, interview, Feb. 12, 2013)

Catalina wanted the opportunity to choose her son’s teacher for the year following the interview, but was disappointed in the choices of teachers. However, she thought even if she had a teacher in mind, he or she probably would not be teaching at the school the following year.

A major goal of ARS 15-341 and ARS 15-710 was to include Native American history instruction in classrooms in order to overcome misconceptions about Native history and culture, including stereotypes. Participants believed negative stereotypes about Natives are in the forefront when mainstream society visualizes Native American peoples. They also believed alternative views that exemplify Native Americans should be stressed in schools. Garrick stated:

Native Americans have contributed to the state and society. I think it’s underrepresented. I think from that perspective, I think as Native people, we can be very articulate, very thoughtful and give a lot of information and insight. I think we are underrepresented, and there needs to be more value placed on our contributions. (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012)

Stereotypes and misconceptions overwhelmingly shape the image of Native peoples and mainstream society overlooks the contributions made by American Indian peoples. Eloise said, “We take for granted that [what] we think the White people invented, [they] didn’t really do it. We weren’t just Natives frolicking in the desert or in the woods” (Eloise, interview, Feb. 15, 2013). Garrick conveyed the same sentiment when he said, “I think our contribution to society and the betterment of society gets overlooked or either, not overlooked, but marginalized” (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012). Participants cited examples of potential content to teach that were at local and national levels and included current and past contributions. Some of the suggested contributions Native Americans have made are listed below.

- Cherokee alphabet
- Idea of the government system
- Medicines
- Healing practices
- Revenues from gaming
- Revenues from natural resources

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- Language use during wartime (e.g., the Navajo, Hopi, and Lakota Code Talkers)
- Current Native leaders
- Past Native American leaders
- Foods
- Environmental sustainability

This list is not all-inclusive, only what the parent participants recalled and suggested during the time of the interviews.

Another recommendation by the parent participants was the idea of teaching about sustained and consistent Native American history instead of piecemeal or as an aside, as if it is a footnote of history. Garrick urged:

This policy could help if more of the information was taught in earnest in the classrooms, not just spent in one week but maybe over a semester of really teaching about Native culture and history and the different tribes that do live in the state of Arizona. I think it needs to be more in earnest, taught by the instructors for it to have meaning and value. Other than just touching on it one day, two days and moving on. (Garrick, interview, Dec. 10, 2012)

While writing this section about teaching with sincerity about Native American history, in a nearby suburban neighborhood, Native parents (not those that participated in this study) were urging their child's high school to abolish the Cowboys Versus Indians Spirit Day they had scheduled for their Homecoming Week. The event was allowed to occur. Schools have not made considerable progress since the 1970s when school districts were fostering events to promote students to dress up like Indians (Amerman, 2010).

Discussion

The parent participants received limited education about Native American history in their own primary and secondary education. The Native parents believed because of seemingly disingenuous instruction of Native American related topics, they desired instructional practices that were earnest for their children—pedagogy that emancipates.

Most of the parents enacted choice as described by Lomawaima and McCarty (2012): although most of participants had lived on their tribal lands, they attended off-reservations schools. The parents also dispelled myths that Native American parents are inactive in their children's education, because they volunteered in classrooms, attended parent meetings sponsored by the districts' Native American programs and school, ensured their children complete their homework, and attended parent conferences.

Culture and history are intrinsically linked; in learning about tribal histories, one naturally learns about the tribal cultures. Since tribal histories are not taught in schools and, in some instances, at home, the participants acknowledged lim-

ited tribal cultural understandings. The parents’ awareness of their Indigeneity was shaped by the boundaries established by their family members, friends, and school personnel. Beliefs about Native Americans that are based in stereotypes informed some of the participants’ self-identities as youths. However, as parents, all of the participants wanted cultural experiences unlike their own. The parents were expanding on the safety zone by intentionally seeking opportunities that would allow their children to be immersed in their tribal cultures. Recent census data show that a majority of Native Americans live outside their tribal lands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

They buy houses and build careers in urban areas. I considered and valued the perspectives and insights of Native American parents who reside in urban areas. The study thus addresses the dearth of research and understanding of educational experiences (including Indian education) of urban Indians. I hope this study will stimulate other research that centers on Native knowledges in urban contexts.

This study also disrupts the presumptions that Native American parents are uninvolved with their children’s education. The experiences of Native parents in this study debunk the notion of “living in two worlds” by seeking opportunities for their children to (re)claim their tribal practices and beliefs while simultaneously aspiring to gain a holistic education. Through active involvement in their children’s education, these parents are ensuring a synergy of the Native and non-Native planes of existence by providing lived realities absent of opposing dualities.

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