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Sexual Violence in a Native American Community:

Native American Women Speak Out

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Abstract

Sexual Violence in a Native American Community:
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Researchers utilizing quantitative methods have established that sexual violence against Native American women is a severe and persistent problem in Native American communities. Currently, Native American women suffer some of the highest and most violent rates of sexual victimization in the United States; experts estimate that between one-third and one-fourth of Native American women will be sexually victimized in their lifetimes. Researchers conducting qualitative research on sexual violence against Native American women have explained that, not only are Native American women outraged and highly critical of this issue, but that Native American women desire for their perspectives, knowledge, and experiences to be legitimized and validated. Additionally, scholars from a variety of disciplines have also demonstrated that sexual violence against Native American women must be contextualized within the historical and

intersecting legacies of colonialism, sexism, racism, and genocide. However, qualitative, interview-based research in the field of sexual violence against Native American women has not been widely pursued and has thus afforded the women whom this issue most affects extremely limited opportunities to speak out about sexual violence in their communities. This research, then, based on feminist methodology and practices, was an effort to fill this gap and prioritize the voices of Native American women. I conducted semi-structured interviews with three Native American women from a tribe in the greater Tacoma, Washington area about their perspectives and experiences regarding sexual violence against Native American women in their community. As a result of this research, the overarching argument I make is twofold. I contend that, as researchers, we must make a conscious effort to acknowledge, validate, and legitimize the knowledge Native American women have of colonialism and how it intersects with sexual violence and violent victimizations against Native American women and other community members. In doing so, we can support the activism that is already present in Native American communities and encourage the empowerment of Native American women and community members to continuously deconstruct intersecting oppressions and decolonize their communities.

Keywords: colonialism, feminism, interviews, Native American women, sexual violence, violent victimization

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I. Introduction

In November of 1998, Tjaden and Thoennes published their findings from the National Violence against Women Survey. For research within an academic and scholarly context, one particular finding seemed revelatory: Native American women were suffering sexual violence at alarmingly high rates. In fact, Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) estimated that one third of all Native American women had been sexually victimized in their lifetimes. Moreover, the research suggested that, not only were such a significant portion of Native American women enduring sexual violence, but they were experiencing sexual violence at rates twice that of the general United States [US] population (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). A year later, in 1999, Greenfeld and Smith's research echoed Tjaden and Thoennes' (1998) findings while pointing to additionally troubling information. Native American women were far more likely to be sexually victimized and their sexual victimizations were likely to be intraracial, not interracial. Many Native American women also perceived their attackers to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at increased rates (Greenfeld & Smith, 1999). These two studies sparked a noticeable academic interest in sexual violence against Native American women and appeared to be a launching pad for future quantitative studies.

Throughout the early 2000s, national surveys and smaller-scale surveys proliferated and focused on producing statistics in regards to Native American women and sexual violence. These included characteristics about the perpetrator; characteristics about the sexual assault and/or rape itself; characteristics about a survivor's willingness to disclose; and the characteristics of arrest, prosecution, and conviction rates for perpetrators. For instance, research found that Native American women were more likely than women in general to be sexually victimized by strangers (Bachman, Zaykowski, Lanier, Poteyeva, & Kallmyer, 2010; Perry, 2004). Research found that

perpetrators often used physical violence and weapons when sexually victimizing Native American women, as well (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004). In addition, Native American women were extremely unlikely to report their victimizations to the police (Bachman et al., 2010; Hamby, 2008). Furthermore, Native American women were three times less likely than white or African American women to see the perpetrators of their sexual victimizations arrested (Bachman et al., 2010). Quantitative studies with smaller sample sizes in this body of research presented rates of sexual victimization for Native American women that were nearly twice that of the national surveys (Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang, & Walters, 2006; Simoni, Sehgal, & Walters, 2004). As the scope of sexual violence against Native American women was explored quantitatively, two things became markedly clear. First, over a solid twenty years of research, Native American women were confirmed again and again to have some of the highest rates of sexual violence of any population in the US. Second, research revealed that the sexual violence perpetuated against Native American women was fundamentally different in many, problematic ways from sexual violence against other women.

While researchers were conducting these quantitative studies, Amnesty International (2007) published a piece entitled "Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Sexual Violence in the USA." Scholars have extensively cited this piece since its publication, perhaps because it called attention to what the contemporary quantitative studies did not. Apart from being one of the few sources to include direct quotes from interviews with Native American women and discuss sexual violence as a tool of colonization and conquest, Amnesty International (2007) examined the federal and tribal jurisdictional complications surrounding sexual violence against Native American women. Due to these complications, Amnesty International (2007) concluded that "Native American and Alaska Native women are

often denied access to justice" (p. 9). After looking critically at the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which was designed to address some of the jurisdictional issues Amnesty International (2007) had named, and Native American sovereignty, scholars asserted that sexual violence would continue to be a significant problem for Native American communities until their sovereignty and full criminal jurisdiction were restored to them (Cardick, 2012; Golden, 2012). Thus, it became apparent that jurisdictional complications must necessarily be included in conversations around sexual violence against Native American women.

However, Native American scholars and activists had been discussing sexism, violence against women, and jurisdictional complications for quite some time. They were also framing these discussions in regards to colonization and its effects on the social and gender, reproductive, political and judicial, and socioeconomic systems of indigenous peoples for many years prior to the publication of what academia might consider pivotal moments in the study of sexual violence against Native American women. Included in this body of research and theoretical development were the works of Jaimes and Halsey (1992), Deer (2004; 2005), Ralstin-Lewis (2005), and Smith (2003; 2005a; 2005b). With extreme effectiveness, these scholars demonstrated that sexual violence against Native American women continued to happen in endemic, pervasive proportions, but that it could not be removed from the historical context of colonization.

As recently as 2013, quantitative studies have produced data that still point to high rates of sexual violence against Native American women (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013). And Native American scholars, such as Bubar (2013) and Smith (2011/2012), continue to write extensively about the relationship between colonization, efforts towards decolonization, and sexual violence in their communities. Despite the wealth of surveys and theoretical developments that scholars and researchers alike have contributed to our body of knowledge

surrounding sexual violence against Native American women, there seems to be a critical lack of understanding about one thing. Where are the voices, perspectives, and experiences of Native American women?

This thesis is a scholarly effort to fill this gap in the available literature and is divided into nine chapters. The following chapter is an extensive review of the available literature concerning sexual violence against Native American women and consists of four large subsections. First, I present statistics from existing quantitative studies in terms of both national surveys and quantitative surveys with smaller sample sizes. Second, I provide an overview of the existing qualitative studies. Next, I move into a discussion of colonization as context for sexual violence and examine the colonization of the social and gender, reproductive, political and legal, and socioeconomic systems of Native American nations and communities. Finally, I state the problem and how I intend to fill the gap I identify in the body of available literature.

In the third and fourth chapters, I discuss feminist methodology and my methods as they pertain to my research. I include in this discussion an explanation of feminist research practices and feminist critiques of positivism. However, as this research is centered on the experiences of Native American women, it was necessary for me to explore how Native Americans have been represented in academic research and how Native American scholars have critiqued mainstream feminism. What follows is a presentation of Native feminism and how I used Alcoff's (2008) and Lorde's (2009) pieces to inform my research practices and the eventual design of the research methods.

The fifth chapter, "Reflections on the Research Process," is where I unpack and critically reflect on my experiences of being a white, upper-middle class, college-educated, feminist woman who engaged in conversation with Native American women about sexual violence. Here,

I provide a deeply personal insight on my journey through the research process, from the end of my undergraduate career, to my first quarters in the graduate program, and the beginning and ending stages of my research. These reflections were written over a period of two and a half years and compiled from a series of electronic journal entries, free writing, and memos. These demonstrate my commitment and efforts to being conscious and reflective of my positionality as a researcher and a person and how this impacted the research itself.

The sixth and seventh chapters contain the results of my research and the final analysis of the interviews. As a whole, chapter seven includes three subsections that address the major themes that emanated from the interview data. The first of these themes is "Who is Your Family?" where I describe how participants viewed community relationships among members of their Native American community. The second of these themes, "Sexual Violence in a Native American community," is comprised of three small sub-themes. To begin, I examine the prevalence of sexual violence in a Native American community and connect participants' observations about and experiences with sexual violence to the available literature. Then, I consider how participants framed sexual and violent victimizations in their Native American community within a context of colonization and the arrival of European settlers. I also address how participants perceived colonization and the arrival of European settlers to have transformed Native American social and gender systems, reproductive rights, and political and judicial systems and contributed to the prevalence of sexual violence and violent victimizations in their community. Finally, I explain how participants understood sexual violence as intersecting with other forms of violence and oppression in their community. The third theme, "Community Responses to Sexual Violence," explores how various segments of the community, including law enforcement, service providers and agencies, community members, and survivors of sexual

violence themselves respond to and talk about sexual violence. Above all, this theme draws attention to the prevalence of victim-blaming and victim-shaming and how they characterize community responses to sexual violence. Finally, in "Pathways to Empowerment and Social Change," I focus on three sub-themes that explain the areas participants' found to be in need of improvement in order to more fully address sexual violence and facilitate social change in their community. Together, these sub-themes illustrate the importance participants' placed on comprehensive sexual violence education for community members that challenge dominant discourses about sexual violence and victimization.

At the end, chapters eight and nine include a consideration of the limitations of my research and draw conclusions from the analysis of the interview data. Broadly, the limitations of this research can be reduced to the fact that it cannot be generalized, the sample size, and the snow-ball sampling procedure. Although I make arguments about the directions of future research in the field of sexual violence against Native American women, my overarching argument for this research is twofold. I contend that, as researchers, we must make a conscious effort to acknowledge, validate, and legitimize the knowledge Native American women have of colonialism and how it intersects with sexual violence and violent victimizations against Native American women and other community members. In doing so, we can support the activism that is already present in Native American communities and encourage the empowerment of Native American women and community members to continuously deconstruct intersecting oppressions and decolonize their communities.

II. Literature Review

Available Statistics

Currently, scholars implementing quantitative methodologies in national surveys are presenting evidence of a veritable crisis among Native American¹ women in the United States (US). When compared to women of different racial and ethnic groups, Native American women experience some of the highest rates of sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004; Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Furthermore, researchers have estimated that between one-fourth and one-third of Native American women will be sexually victimized in their lifetimes (Bachman et al., 2010; Black et al., 2011; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). These rates of sexual victimization are approximately 2 to 2.5 times greater than those of the general US population (Black et al., 2011; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004; Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013).

It is important to devote special attention to the characteristics of the perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women, as these characteristics are unique. While the sexual victimizations of the women in the US tend to be intraracial, the sexual victimizations of Native American women are more likely to be interracial. Overwhelmingly, quantitative data from national surveys identify whites and other non-Native Americans as the primary perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women (Bachman et al., 2010; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004). There is, however, some contention concerning the perpetrator's relationship to the victim. Perry (2004) identifies strangers or acquaintances as the most common perpetrators, while Bachman, Zaykowski, Lanier, Poeteyva, and Kallmyer (2010)

¹ Though I will be using the term Native American women exclusively for consistency, scholars, researchers, and activists from various fields have also used the terms Native, American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), and indigenous. This is not intended to discredit the numerous other and diverse ways that Native American women, peoples, and nations may describe themselves, and I recognize that this term may not be fully inclusive.

find that intimate partners, other known persons, and strangers commit sexual violence against Native American women in almost equal proportions. Despite this disagreement, what remains significant is that Native American women are likely to be sexually victimized by strangers, whereas women in general tend not to be (Bachman et al., 2010; Black et al., 2011).

Research has also documented the unique degrees of violence that often characterize the sexual victimizations of Native American women. Perpetrators routinely use physical violence, such as hitting, and weapons when sexually victimizing Native American women (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004). Many Native American women perceive their attackers to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at much higher rates than those of other women (Bachman et al., 2010; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004). Due to these degrees of violence, Native American women sustain injuries and almost half of them require medical care after the sexual victimization (Bachman et al., 2010). Roxanne Chinook, a tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and a survivor of multiple sexual victimizations, illustrates the severe violence Native American women may face during a sexual assault:

When I was living in Hawaii, I was abducted by a group of young Caucasian military men. They took me into a warehouse on a military base and repeatedly raped me. After they were done, they were concerned about letting me go so they inserted a tall, full bottle of beer inside me to flush out their semen. Throughout the gang rape, they called me derogatory names. One of the rapists asked what might happen if they broke the bottle inside me. An apathetic voice responded, "Who cares? She's nothing but a drunken Indian whore" (Chinook, 2004, p. 36).

Additionally, there are many circumstances that frame how and why Native American women choose to disclose their sexual victimizations to law enforcement. When it comes to reporting, nearly half of the sexual victimizations against Native American women are brought to the attention of law enforcement (Bachman et al., 2010). However, less than a quarter of Native

American women report their victimizations to the police themselves (Bachman et al., 2010; Hamby, 2008). Low-self reporting rates are common among all female victims of sexual violence but Native American women are almost twice as likely to indicate that fear of not being believed was a reason they did not report to police (Bachman et al., 2010; Hamby, 2008). More reasons Native American women provide for not reporting their sexual victimizations to law enforcement include fear of the offender, shame, being blamed for the rape, re-victimization, and loss of anonymity (Gebhart & Woody, 2012; Hamby, 2008; Renzetti et al., 2011; Wahab & Olson, 2004).

Given this trend of underreporting among Native American women, scholars and professionals in the field of sexual violence maintain that the actual number of sexual victimizations in this population is much higher than what has been documented in national surveys (Bubar, 2010; Deer, 2005). For example, Sarah Deer has said the following on the subject: "Many of the elders that I have spoken with in Indian country tell me that they do not know any women in their community who have not experienced sexual violence" (2005, p. 456). While Roe Bubar was speaking with a Native American professional in the field of violence, the professional said to Bubar, "I haven't been able to identify one woman in my family who has not been sexually assaulted, and I've been asking multiple generations of women, elders, and youth" (2010, p. 56). These excerpts exemplify that sexual violence may occur far more frequently in some Native American communities than what national quantitative surveys have documented. Thus, they illustrate the need for additional quantitative research in this field as well as research framed by a different methods approach.

Consistent with the trend of underreporting, research suggests that very few of the sexual victimizations of Native American women result in the arrest and conviction of the offender. In

fact, Bachman et al. (2010) find that Native American women are almost three times less likely to see the perpetrators of their sexual victimizations arrested than white or African-American women. Tippeconic Fox (2009) writes that Native American women do not get timely responses from police, if they get responses at all, and seldom see their cases prosecuted. For reasons that will be elaborated on in the next section, federal prosecutors decline to prosecute half of the crimes that are subject to federal jurisdiction, including sexual violence, committed on Indian reservations (Golden, 2012). This phenomenon becomes increasingly problematic because, as recently as 2002, there were just two US attorneys who regularly prosecuted rape cases on Indian reservations (Smith, 2011/2012). Of those Native American women who do see their cases go to trial and the perpetrator prosecuted, Norton and Manson (1995) report that over three-quarters were dissatisfied with court responses, intervention, and procedures.

Quantitative Data with Smaller Sample Sizes

Scholars conducting surveys with smaller sample sizes on sexual violence against Native American women have provided evidence that conflicts with the data presented in national surveys. One area of discrepancy is the rates of sexual violence against Native American women. In their quantitative study of sexual violence among six Native American tribes in the US, Yuan, Koss, Polacca, and Goldman (2006) find that the average rate of sexual victimization for Native American women in these tribes is 14%. Similarly, Malcoe, Duran, and Montgomery's (2004) survey of Native American women visiting a domestic violence clinic reports that 12% had experienced forced sexual activity. Both of these rates of sexual victimization are significantly lower than those in national surveys; they are actually more consistent with average rates of sexual victimization for US women, regardless of race or ethnicity. However, approximately half of the Native American women in Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang, and Walter's (2006) and

Norton and Manson's (1995) and over half in Simoni, Sehgal, and Walter's (2004) samples had experienced sexual violence. These rates of sexual victimization for Native American women are much higher than those in national surveys; they are nearly twice that.

Additional discrepancies between national survey data and localized survey data are various characteristics of the perpetrator. National surveys identify whites and other non-Native Americans as the primary perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women but other research contradicts this. In a previous quantitative study Bubar (2013) conducted with Native American program providers in the field of sexual violence, these providers identified Native American men as the primary perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women. Bubar (2013) suspects that this could possibly be contributing to the silence among Native American women because "it could present less of an internal conflict to report non-Native men and may become even more difficult for Native women to report Native men who assault them" (p. 536). In regards to the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, Yuan et al. (2006) report that Native American women are significantly more likely to be sexually victimized by a male relative or a romantic partner. Simoni et al. (2004), in contrast, report that non-partners are more likely to sexually victimize Native American women. What remains important here is that Native American women, despite the discrepancies between data from national and local surveys, are still more likely than US women in general to be assaulted by a stranger.

Qualitative Studies

Amnesty International's (2007) report is one of the few examples of qualitative research in the field of sexual violence against Native American women. The report is based on a review of the available literature and interviews with Native American and Alaska Native organizations

and individuals, including "survivors of sexual violence and their families, activists, support workers, service providers, and health workers" (p. ii). Throughout the report, Amnesty International (2007) includes excerpts from the interviews and consistently frames sexual violence against Native American women in regards to marginalization, discrimination, conquest and colonization, federal and tribal jurisdiction, and human rights violations. The inclusion of voices from Native American communities and their discussions of their experiences in their own words provides a rich, complex understanding of how Native American women navigate law enforcement and service providers, shame and victim-blaming, re-victimization, marginalization, and the jurisdictional complications that compose what Amnesty International (2007) coins a "maze of injustice."

If one thing becomes clear in Amnesty International's (2007) report, it is that Native American women are deeply outraged and critically conscious about the sexual violence in their communities. On the subject of disclosing sexual victimizations to law enforcement, Pauline Musgrove states, "women don't report because it doesn't make a difference. Why report when you are just going to be revictimized" (Amnesty International, 2007, p.4)? Other excerpts show the prejudice and discrimination Native American survivors of sexual violence encounter when seeking resources. For instance, a support worker says that the Sexual Assault response team treats one survivor "like a drunk Native woman first and a rape victim second" (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 1). Native American women also contextualize sexual violence within colonization. At the Alaska Native Women's Conference, Jaqueline Agtuca argued that "sexual assault rates and violence against Native American women did not just drop from the sky. They are a process of history" (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 15). Like many Native American women who spoke to Amnesty International, Juana Majel-Dixon's words evidence justified

anger and horror at the conditions in Native American communities, explaining, "the US government is not protecting Alaska Native women enough. What is wrong with the leadership of Alaska to allow this to happen? Shame on them" (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 38)!

Amnesty International's (2007) report provides necessary information that quantitative studies within the body of literature do not. It reinforces that sexual violence in Native American communities is a pervasive, systemic problem but also focuses on Native American women and service providers speaking out against sexual violence. The depth and richness it contributes to the available statistics call to attention the history of colonization and the maze of injustice that further complicate the problem of sexual violence against Native American women.

Like Amnesty International's (2007) report, Bubar's (2013) qualitative research with indigenous service providers in the fields of sexual assault, violence against women, and victimization demonstrates their desires to have their experiences and knowledge taken seriously. During a conference session, Bubar (2013) contextualized data on sexual assault against Native American women within a framework of colonization and then presented this data to participants. According to Bubar (2013), indigenous participants seemed validated and relieved when she presented the data in this manner. Furthermore, Bubar (2013) suggests that, for indigenous participants, her framing of sexual violence against Native American women as continued colonization was appreciated, validated their experiences and legitimized their knowledge, and answered their needs to be heard. Bubar (2013) concludes that the unique position Native American women occupy is central to understanding sexual violence against Native American women, especially in terms of speaking out, reporting, and the utilization of resources. Additionally, professional women in the field of sexual violence want their experiences to be validated and believe that sexual violence against Native American women

must be contextualized within colonization (Bubar, 2013). "Professional Native women tell us they know what is needed in their communities," Bubar (2013) writes, "perhaps we should listen to what they are telling us and seek to fund and support their efforts adequately" (p. 539). Doing so, Bubar (2013) argues, incorporates colonization into our discussions surrounding sexual violence and therefore engages with the decolonization process and ultimately encourages the empowerment of Native American women.

Conclusions from existing quantitative and qualitative studies. The available quantitative data has demonstrated that the sexual victimizations of Native American women are not only pervasive, but are also increasingly problematic in numerous respects. First, while the sexual victimizations of women in the US tend to be intraracial, the sexual victimizations of Native American women are more likely to be interracial. Second, although there is debate about the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, Native American women are significantly more likely than other women to be sexually victimized by strangers. Third, high degrees of violence often characterize the sexual victimizations of Native American women, resulting in an elevated risk for injury and need for medical attention. Like other women, Native American survivors of sexual violence are extremely hesitant to disclose their sexual victimizations to law enforcement. However, fourth, Native American women are twice as likely as other women to not report because they fear that they will not be believed. Finally, Native American women are less likely than other women to see the perpetrators of their sexual victimizations arrested and prosecuted; this is in part due to the complications surrounding federal and tribal jurisdiction.

Qualitative studies have demonstrated that Native American women, including service providers, activists, and professionals in the field of sexual violence, are aware and critical of the historical circumstances, marginalization, and discrimination that influence how Native

American women experience sexual violence. They have also called attention to the jurisdictional issues that determine which government, federal or tribal, can legally prosecute the sexual victimizations of Native American women and how Native American women navigate the legal system. Such research suggests that colonization may serve as an appropriate context with which to understand and analyze sexual violence against Native American women, as it can potentially validate Native American women's knowledge and experiences. The proceeding section will address how scholars have used colonization and its ties to the historical oppression of Native American peoples and nations in order to contextualize the sexual victimizations of Native American women, particularly in the areas of social and gender systems, reproductive rights, political and judicial systems, and socioeconomic systems.

Colonization as Context for Sexual Violence against Native American Women

In addition to collecting statistics from quantitative surveys, scholars have also identified colonization as a context with which to frame sexual violence against Native American. Here, I will first cover European colonization of Native American peoples' social and gender systems through the implementation of patriarchy, sexism, racism, and commodification. Second, I will address the US government's colonization of Native American women's reproductive rights. Third, I will explore how European colonization of Native American nations' political and judicial systems, the resulting jurisdictional confusion, and sentencing limitations imposed on present-day tribal governments impede Native American peoples' abilities to address sexual violence in their communities. Finally, I will discuss European colonization of indigenous socioeconomic systems and how it has contributed to the proliferation of socioeconomic issues, such as poverty and dependence on the federal government, that render Native American women

more vulnerable to sexual violence. Colonization as a context makes plain the intersections that create the unique conditions within which Native American women experience sexual violence.

Colonization of social and gender systems. Before contact with Europeans, Native American social systems were often sexually egalitarian and balanced (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Bubar, 2013; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2005b; Weaver, 2009). Particularly, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) note that women were never subordinate to men, and men were never subordinate to women. Rather, Native American gender relations were based on mutual dependence; equality was derived not in terms of sex, but in terms of the dignity of individuals and their agency (Bubar, 2013; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). Native American women commonly held positions of power, reverence, and great esteem in their communities as political, social, spiritual, and religious leaders (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Cardick, 2012; Holzman, 1996; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ramirez, 2004; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2005b; Weaver, 2009). Apart from valuing women for their strength, their ability to bear, rear, and socialize children, and their roles as socioeconomic decision makers, Native American communities recognized women's rights to sexual choice (Deer, 2005; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Ramirez, 2004). It follows then that, within these social and gender systems, a Native American woman's sexuality was respected; she could choose her sexual partners, and if a women did report a rape, she was believed and the perpetrator was severely punished (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a).

However, these sexually egalitarian systems and the status of the Native American women within them were opposite to the patriarchal and sexist system of the European colonizers who came to the Americas (Cardick, 2012; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2003). Colonialism uses patriarchy and oppressive gender systems as mechanisms to institute and

naturalize hierarchies (Smith, 2003; Bubar, 2013). Furthermore, patriarchy is characterized by the normalization of gender violence (Smith, 2003; Bubar, 2013). Thus, in order to effectively colonize Native Americans and their social and gender systems, European colonizers had to institute patriarchy and gender oppression in Native American communities, eliminating the traditions that had protected Native American women from violence (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005a; Tippeconic Fox, 2009; Weaver, 2009). According to Smith (2003), patriarchal society survives on the condition that it appears to be the only available option with which to organize society. In the colonial narrative, the sexually egalitarian and non-hierarchical gender systems of Native American peoples are viewed as direct threats to the maintenance of patriarchy and sexism.

If the social and gender systems of indigenous societies were threats to the institution of patriarchy, then individual Native Americans become threats to the successful colonization of their nations. Smith (2003; 2005a; 2011/2012) has written extensively on how the European colonization of indigenous nations not only utilized patriarchy and sexism but also racism. In the racist ideologies of European colonizers, Native Americans are considered enemies of the state (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2011/2012). As a result, the colonial state has to be purified through the eradication and erasure of Native American peoples (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a). European colonizers justified acts of genocide by likening Native Americans to dirt and filth (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a). When colonialism is explicitly tied to racism, we can understand how Native American peoples became a metaphorical pollutant that warranted literal ethnic cleansing and mass extermination.

The effectiveness of colonization relies on the implementation of patriarchy and ideologies of racism; it also depends on the extent to which the targets of colonization are

transformed from human beings into commodities. Césaire (1955/2009) equates the process of colonization to "thingification". As commodities, Smith (2003; 2005a) asserts that Native Americans lost both their bodily integrity and their humanity in colonialist discourses. Historically, the bodies of deceased Native Americans became commodities for white consumption. For example, white persons skinned Native Americans, and the strips of flesh were later turned into razor straps, tobacco pouches, and bridle reins (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a; Smith & Ross, 2004).

Patriarchy, sexism, racism, and commodification serve the broader project of colonizing Native American social and gender systems simultaneously. In regards to Native American women, sexual violence becomes another process that achieves these colonialist goals. European colonizers used sexual violence as a political tool and weapon of cultural and physical genocide to subjugate Native American women and to demoralize and decimate their communities (Bubar, 2013; Chinook, 2004; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a). In the colonial imagination, Native Americans are sexually perverse and their bodies polluted with sexual sin and inherently dirty (Smith, 2003; Smith & Ross, 2004; Smith, 2005a). Smith (2003) argues that the rape of bodies that are impure or dirty does not constitute legitimate rape, and Native American bodies, especially those of women, become sexually violable. To illustrate this point, the following examples speak to how patriarchy, sexism, racism, commodification, and the sexual violation, mutilation, and extermination of Native American women intersect to further colonization.

Two of the best looking of the squaws were lying in such a position, and from the appearance of the genital organs and of their wounds, there can be no doubt that they were first ravished and then shot dead (Wrone & Nelson, 1982, p. 97 as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 75).

One woman, big with child, rushed into the church, clasping the altar and crying for mercy for herself and unborn babe. She was followed, and fell pierced with a dozen lances...the child was

torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed out against a wall (Wrone & Nelson, 1982, p. 97 as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 75).

I heard one man say that he had cut a woman's private parts out, and had them for exhibition on a stick...I also heard of numerous instances in which men had cut out the private parts of females, and stretched them over their saddle bows and some of them over their hats (Sand Creek, 1973, p. 129-130 as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 75).

Scholars have said that the historical and interlocking legacies of colonialism, patriarchy, sexism, racism, and commodification continue to dangerously intersect for Native American women (Smith, 2003; Chinook, 2004; Smith & Ross, 2004; Smith, 2005a; Tippeconic Fox, 2009; Bubar, 2010). Specifically, Smith contends that when a "Native woman suffers, abuse, this abuse is an attack on her identity as a woman and an attack on her identity as Native" (2005a, p. 7). Through framing sexual violence in the broader context of colonialism and how patriarchy, sexism, racism, and commodification operate within it to colonize indigenous social and gender systems, sexual violence against Native American women becomes both gender violence and racial violence. It is only within a discussion of colonialism that the intersection of gender, race, and nationhood in sexual violence against Native American women becomes salient.

In fact, scholars have used frameworks that acknowledge colonialism to understand instances where Native American men have sexually victimized Native American women. Since colonization used patriarchy and sexism to institute hierarchies, Native Americans were robbed of their traditional roles within non-hierarchical gender systems and required to assume a stance of domination over Native American women (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Weaver, 2009). In fact, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) note that Native American male leadership became intrinsically tied to their willingness to cooperate with their oppressors. As patriarchy normalized the devaluing of and violence against Native American women in the colonizers' communities, this process also

resulted in internalized sexism and gender oppression in indigenous communities (Holzman, 1996; Poupart, 2003; Wahab & Olson, 2004; Weaver, 2009). Scholars attribute intraracial violence in Native American communities to internalized oppression and internalized violence (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Poupart, 2003). Particularly, Poupart (2003) writes that "when marginalized Others internalize the dominant subject position, we become our own oppressors as we carry our abjection within" (p. 90). Therefore, when Native American men commit acts of sexual violence against Native American women, we can understand it through the lens of colonization. The colonization of Native American social and gender systems stripped Native American women and men alike of their traditional roles and legitimized gender violence.

Conclusions for the colonization of social and gender systems. Scholars who write about the colonization of Native American social and gender systems and its relationship to sexual violence against Native American women have demonstrated four things. First, these scholars draw attention to how implementing patriarchy was necessary in the colonization of Native American nations precisely because their sexually egalitarian and non-hierarchical social and gender systems were threats to the emergence of the European's patriarchal and sexist nation. Second, these scholars detail how patriarchy, along with colonialist discourses of racism and commodification, marked the bodies of Native American women as sexually violable. Thus, sexual violence against Native American women became a political tool of colonization, designed to demoralize Native American communities and legitimize the atrocities perpetuated against them. Ultimately, some scholars argue that Native American communities have internalized this oppression and the racist, sexist, and colonialist discourses of the colonizers, resulting in internalized oppression and intraracial violence among community members.

Colonization of reproductive rights. It is important to include involuntary sterilization in this discussion of sexual violence against Native American women because involuntary sterilization constitutes sexual violence against Native American women and the colonization of Native American women's reproductive rights. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services, performed thousands of involuntary and unnecessary permanent sterilization procedures, such as tubal ligation and hysterectomy, on Native American women without their informed consent. For example, IHS personnel asked Native American women to sign consent forms while they were in labor; did not tell Native American women that the procedures would result in sterilization; and told Native American women that the procedures were not permanent (Ralstin-Lewis, 2005). Repeatedly, the IHS threatened Native American women that they would lose welfare benefits, health benefits, and/or their children if they did not cooperate with the procedure (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005). What is most troubling about this sterilization campaign and its coercive practices is that it was fully funded by the federal government and has continued long past its original inception. According to Smith (2003), one woman she knew received a hysterectomy without her knowledge or consent when she went to the IHS for back surgery.

It is, therefore, difficult to deny that the mass sterilization of Native American women and the continued colonization of Native American peoples were goals of this sterilization campaign that were achieved through a blatant abuse of ethics and an obvious disregard for the bodily integrity of Native American women. As a direct consequence of these practices, the IHS sterilized between 25% and 42% of Native American women of childbearing age; some reservations experienced sterilization rates as high as 80% (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2003; Vicenti Carpio, 2004). In fact, Ralstin-Lewis (2005) connects the

sterilization campaign to racist eugenics policies. For Smith (2003) in particular, Native American women are targeted for involuntary sterilization precisely because they have the ability to reproduce the next generation of Native Americans. Although the above mentioned sterilization campaign officially began in the latter half of the 20th century, Smith (2003) argues that it has historical roots in the colonization of Native American peoples. "Indeed," Smith (2003) writes, "colonizers such as Andrew Jackson recommended that troops kill Indian women and children after massacres in order to complete the extermination" (p. 80). Thus, Native American women's ability to reproduce impedes the historical and continued colonization process, including the conquest of Native American lands and the physical and cultural genocide of Native American peoples (Smith, 2003).

Scholars have argued that these questionable sterilization practices against Native American women presently exist in the forms of dangerous birth control medications. In the last twenty years, the IHS has widely offered DepoProvera and Norplant to Native American women (Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2003). While these medications are effective contraceptives, they pose significant health risks to Native American women. For instance, Norplant is exceedingly risky for women who have diabetes, high blood pressure, liver disease, and who smoke; these conditions occur at increased rates on most reservations and in Native American communities (Ralstin-Lewis, 2005). On the other hand, DepoProvera has been linked to cervical and breast cancer (Smith, 2003). In addition, both Norplant and DepoProvera can cause excessive vaginal bleeding, with some bleeding episodes lasting 80 consecutive days, the cessation of the menstrual cycle, and complete infertility (Ralstin-Lewis, 2005).

Conclusions for the colonization of reproductive rights. Involuntary sterilization can be considered gender and sexual violence for five reasons. First, involuntary sterilization has dire

consequences for Native American women's sexual and reproductive health. Second, the IHS utilized threats and other coercive practices when performing these procedures on Native American women. Third, the IHS performed these procedures without Native American women's informed consent or obtained their consent while they were under emotional and/or physical duress. Fourth, the IHS repeatedly deceived Native American women about the permanent nature of the procedures. Finally, framing the involuntary sterilization of Native American women within colonization demonstrates how the targeting of Native American women's reproductive systems and the continued control over their access to safe birth control have been part of the ongoing colonization and destruction of Native American peoples. Similar to the colonization of Native American social and gender systems, the colonization of Native American women's reproductive rights has legitimized sexual and gender violence against them.

Colonization of political and judicial systems. Next, the political and legal realities affecting indigenous communities within reservations have to be addressed in terms of colonization and their relationship to the continued sexual victimization of Native American women. It is important to discuss these political and legal realities because colonization has made possible the jurisdictional confusion that limits Native American women's access to justice. Specifically, this section will address three components. First, I will explore how indigenous governments were colonized and how the US government's paternalistic attitudes towards Native American nations resulted in their forced assimilation into US legal systems. Second, I will outline how the Major Crimes Act (MCA, 1885), Public Law 280 (1953), *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978), the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA, 1968), their resulting jurisdictional confusion, and sentencing limitations imposed on indigenous governments make Native American women living on reservations more vulnerable to sexual violence. Lastly, I will

analyze the effectiveness of the recently passed Tribal Law and Order Act (TLO, 2010) and the reauthorization of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA, 2013) in regards to protecting Native women legally from sexual violence. These points demonstrate how the colonization of Native American political and judicial systems served both the emerging US government's goals of seizing Native American land for expansion and also created a context within which Native American women are likely to be more vulnerable to sexual violence.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in what would become the United States, many indigenous political and judicial systems operated on restorative justice rather than the retributive model found in most Anglo-American legal systems (Deer, 2004; Lujan & Adams, 2004). Where the retributive model is based on revenge by concerning itself mainly with offenders, their punishment, and their removal from society through incarceration, the restorative model aims to heal. Tribal governments sought not only to provide spiritual and emotional recovery from crime for victims but to renew damaged personal and community relationships (Deer, 2004; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2003; Smith, 2011/2012). Through a combination of restitution and compensation, perpetrators were held accountable for their behaviors and victims were offered protection and compassion (Deer, 2004; Lujan & Adams, 2004).

While we cannot be certain of the frequency of violent crime in indigenous communities prior to European contact and colonization, scholars have argued that the available historical evidence indicates that sexual violence was a rare occurrence. Violence against women was sanctioned and resulted in severe punishment when it did occur (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2011/2012; Tippeconic Fox, 2009; Weaver, 2009). For example, offenders committing rape were often banished from the tribal community,

sentenced to death, or publically humiliated (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a).

In addition, indigenous justice systems were victim-centered (Deer, 2005; Hamby, 2008). While researching her own tribe's laws, Sarah Deer (2005) found the following written Muscogee (Creek) Nation rape law from 1824: "And be it farther enacted if any person or persons should undertake by force a woman and did it by force, it shall be left to the woman what punishment she should satisfied with to whip or pay what she say it be law" (p. 464). The language clearly indicates that sexual violence against women is a crime that carries distinct levels of either physical or monetary punishment for the perpetrator. Moreover, due to the victim-centered values associated with restorative justice, the perpetrator's punishment is left to the discretion of the woman. Under this law, there is an important degree of power and agency conferred upon the victims of sexual violence.

Historically, colonialism and paternalism on the part of the US government has characterized its political relationship with indigenous nations. The US, as a nation and as a government, was made possible through the subjugation, mass rape, and extermination of Native American women legitimated through federal policy (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2011/2012; Weaver, 2009). Often, undertones of this sexualization and objectification of Native America women emerge in dominant, colonialist discourses about land. Scholars note that the physical and metaphorical colonization of Native American women through sexual violence is directly related to such colonial language. For instance, European colonizers feminized indigenous occupied lands as something virgin, wild, and mysterious that required taming and civilizing through seizure, conquest, and possession; these words all have oppressively sexual connotations (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2005; Ramirez, 2004; Smith, 2003). In order to control

indigenous land, their resources, and their peoples, the US government implemented policies and laws that weakened the power of tribal governments (Lujan & Adams, 2004; Smith, 2003). As a result, colonialism and its racist ideologies about the savagery and hence, inherent inferiority, of Native Americans provided legal rationale for the US government's dominion over and the extermination of indigenous nations (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Weaver, 2009).

Before the 1800s, the US Constitution acknowledged indigenous nations as separate and distinct nations over which the US Congress had limited authority (Lujan & Adams, 2004). In the late 1800s, however, various US court rulings and discovery doctrines like Manifest Destiny transformed indigenous nations into domestic, dependent nations and wards of the federal government (Lujan & Adams, 2004; Golden, 2012). This transformation marked an era of forced assimilation and forced relocation of indigenous communities into white culture, reservations, and boarding schools. It also provided legal rationale and sanction for the US government to perpetuate culturally genocidal activities and thus severely weaken the power of indigenous governments (Golden, 2012; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002).

Therefore, the evidence suggests that, prior to contact with Europeans and colonization, Native American legal systems had powerful, effective, and culturally appropriate means with which to address crimes in their communities. However, criminal jurisdiction over perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women is now determined by the US government's passing of certain acts, laws, and court rulings. The Major Crimes Act (MCA), Public Law 280, and *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe (Oliphant)* have greatly limited indigenous justice systems in their ability to legally arrest and prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women.

At present, the MCA and Public Law 280 restrict Native American justice systems' abilities to prosecute sexual violence. First, the MCA triggers federal, not tribal, jurisdiction for major crimes, including rape, committed on Indian land (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002). Tribal governments may exercise jurisdiction over such crimes only when the federal government has declined to prosecute (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004). Second, Public Law 280 enables state governments in California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin to assume jurisdiction over all criminal and civil matters in Indian country (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004). This is problematic because federal and state governments are burdened with high case loads; sufficiently overwhelmed, they may fail to prosecute a vast number of crimes, including sexual violence, committed on Indian land (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Tippeconic Fox, 2009). From the evidence, it is difficult to determine if high case loads are the sole reasons that federal prosecutors do not take these cases to trial.

Next, *Oliphant* presents another complication in determining which government, Native American or federal, has criminal jurisdiction for sexual violence committed on reservations. That complication arises based on the race of the perpetrator. In *Oliphant*, the US Supreme Court ruled that all indigenous governments did not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who committed crimes on reservations (Bubar, 2010; Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Golden, 2012; Holcomb, 1999; Lujan & Adams, 2004). Given this ruling, the inability of Native American justice systems to legally prosecute non-Native Americans for sexual violence committed on reservations is a pressing problem. Statistical data indicates that non-Native American men are the primary perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women. Additionally, research has documented that Native American women are likely to be sexually victimized by

spouses an intimate partners. Cardick (2012) explains that interracial marriage and intimate relationships are common among Native American women.

For tribal governments, their abilities to sentence perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women are greatly restricted due to the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA). Tribal governments seeking to impose prison sentences or fines on perpetrators of violent crime must adhere to the tenets of the ICRA. Under the original version of the ICRA, Native American courts could sentence perpetrators of crimes to a maximum of six months in prison per offense and/or a \$500 fine (Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012). The ICRA has since been amended and the sentencing abilities of tribal courts were increased; tribal courts are now legally permitted to sentence perpetrators to a maximum of one year in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004).

Under the MCA, Public Law 280, the ICRA, and the ruling of *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, the US government has made it almost impossible for Native American governments to prosecute sexual violence occurring on reservations. The MCA, Public Law 280, and *Oliphant* render Indian nations nearly entirely dependent on the US government to prosecute sexual violence. For scholars, these political and legal components contribute to the continued sexual victimization of Native American women. First, these laws have inhibited tribal governments from addressing sexual violence in culturally appropriate manners (Deer, 2004; Smith & Ross, 2004). Second, many tribes themselves lack the resources to develop measures to protect their communities from violence (Deer, 2009; Smith, 2011/2012). Third, scholars have speculated that non-Native American perpetrators may actually target Native American women living on reservations for sexual victimization. Knowing that tribal governments cannot prosecute them and that cases referred to the federal government are rarely prosecuted, non-

Native American offenders can easily cross into Indian country and sexually victimize Native women without fear of legal recourse (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2011/2012).

In 2010 and 2013 respectively, the US Congress attempted to address these sentencing and jurisdictional issues with the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLO) and the reauthorization of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA). The TLO, the first of these acts, aimed to reduce the prevalence of violence crime against Native American women in Indian country (Cardick, 2012; Golden, 2012). However, legal scholars question the effectiveness of the TLO. According to Cardick (2012) and Golden (2012), the US government persists in failing Native American women who have been sexually victimized because the TLO does not restore criminal jurisdiction over sexual violence to Indian nations. Although the TLO has marginally increased the sentencing abilities of tribal governments under the ICRA and has increased cross-deputization among state and tribal police, Smith (2011/2012) views the concurrent increase in the presence of the federal government on reservations as neocolonialism.

More recently, the reauthorization of VAWA attended to the prevalence of sexual violence against Native American in Indian Country by attempting to address the jurisdictional issues *Oliphant* presents for indigenous governments. Under Title IX, participating tribes can exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction over defendants who commit domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and stalking against Native American women in Indian country (U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2013). However, participating tribes can only assume such jurisdiction if the defendant "resides in the Indian country of the participating tribe", "is employed in the Indian country of the participating tribe" or "is a spouse, intimate partner, or dating partner of (I) a member of the participating tribe; or (II) an Indian who resides in the Indian country" (GPO, 2013, p. 69). Although the VAWA has

improved criminal jurisdiction for tribal governments in sexual violence cases meeting these criteria, tribal jurisdiction can still not legally be assumed over non-Native American strangers or acquaintances who do not meet the above outlined parameters. Research has documented that these perpetrators commit a considerable percentage of the sexual victimizations of Native American women who live in Indian country. Even prior to the reauthorization of the VAWA, many scholars have argued that sexual violence will remain a significant problem for Native American communities until sovereignty and full criminal jurisdiction are restored to indigenous nations and governments (Cardick, 2012; Golden, 2012; Deer, 2004; Hamby, 2005).

Conclusions for the colonization of political and judicial systems. Colonization destroyed the political and judicial protections that Native American nations had prior to contact with Europeans to protect Native American women and children from violence. In the US government's later efforts to colonize Native American nations, these acts and court cases, such as the ICRA, the MCA, and *Oliphant*, have resulted in jurisdictional confusions and complications that make it significantly difficult for Native American women to navigate the justice system and for tribal governments to prosecute and punish perpetrators in culturally appropriate ways. Despite recent amendments to the TLO and the VAWA have been designed to alleviate these jurisdictional confusions and complications, some scholars argue that Native American communities will continue to see elevated levels of sexual violence in their communities until full criminal jurisdiction is returned to tribal governments.

Colonization of socioeconomic systems. The colonization of Native American socioeconomic systems has been an ongoing issue since the arrival of Europeans. According to Churchill (1992), control of Native American lands and resources was a central conflict between the settler population and Native American nations during this time. In fact, political leaders

during the Revolutionary War promised to reward soldiers with grants of Indian land once the war had been won (Churchill, 1992). Although the extensive history of land and resource seizures are beyond the scope of this literature review, it is important to discuss Chief Justice Marshall's court decisions and the "Doctrine of Discovery", the General Allotment Act, and the Indian Citizenship Act to outline how these seizures serve as the foundation for the current socioeconomic circumstances in Native American communities.

To begin, Chief Justice Marshall's court decisions in the early 1800s legitimized the US seizure of Native American lands through his interpretation of the "Doctrine of Discovery". In Chief Justice Marshall's interpretation of the "Doctrine of Discovery", it "imparted preeminent title over North America to Europeans...mainly because Indian lands were effectively 'vacant' when Europeans found them" (Churchill, 1992, p. 42). As previously addressed in the section on the colonization of Native American political and judicial systems, these court decisions effectively transformed Native American nations into domestic, dependent nations of the US. Therefore, Native American nations were entitled to keep their lands only as far as the US government permitted them to do so (Churchill, 1992). In order to maintain formality, Chief Justice Marshall suggested that the US government should obtain land through treaties, purchase, and Native American "consent" whenever possible (Churchill, 1992, p. 142). However, since the US government's goal was the seizure of Native American land and resources, the US government resorted to a series of acts that bypassed Chief Justice Marshall's recommendations and ensured their control.

Such an act designed to control Native American land and resources was the General Allotment Act of 1887. The General Allotment Act legally granted the US government a "huge windfall" of land (Jaimes, 1992, p. 127). Effectively, the General Allotment act constricted the

size of Native American populations, and by doing so, the US government could create artificial surpluses and implement quotas (Jaimes, 1992). For example, fishing quotas in the Pacific Northwest resulted in a lucrative fishing industry whose profits did not benefit Native American nations, peoples, and communities (Jaimes, 1992).

By the early 20th century, the US government was beginning to realize that the supposedly worthless land they had left to Native Americans after allotment was quite the contrary. Native American land was found to be rich in natural resources, like coal, copper, oil, and eventually, uranium deposits (Jaimes, 1992). Again, to bypass treaties and ensure the control of Native American resources, the US government passed the Indian Citizenship Act (Jaimes, 1992). This legislation unilaterally extended the citizenship requirements for all Native Americans within the US (Jaimes, 1992). Already facing approximately 5,000 more laws than other citizens of the US, this put Native Americans in a precarious situation and directly limited their ability to participate in resource negotiations with the US government (Jaimes, 1992). The Indian Citizenship Act declared that resource negotiations had to be conducted between American citizens, not representatives of separate nations (Jaimes, 1992). It can be concluded that Chief Justice Marshall's court decisions, the General Allotment Act, and the Indian Citizenship Act are some of the many factors that serve as a foundation to the present economic deprivation in Native American communities. The US government's systematic seizure of Native American lands and resources have had disastrous socioeconomic repercussions for Native Americans, which will be seen below. Sexual violence against Native American women may be connected to this socioeconomic deprivation.

Other researchers have addressed the colonization of Native American socioeconomic systems and the socioeconomic disparity it created for Native Americans in relation to the

prevalence of high rates of sexual violence against Native American women (Bubar, 2010; Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Norton & Manson, 1995; Poupart, 2002). Among these disparities, poverty has been considered an important risk factor for sexual violence and evidence suggests that women from lower socioeconomic groups experience disproportionate levels of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Norton & Manson, 1995; Wahab & Olson, 2004). In the United States, Native American communities are home to some of the worst economic deprivation and impoverishment (Bubar, 2010; Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Poupart, 2003; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Norton & Manson, 1996; United States Census Bureau, 2011). Where the median income of households in the US is around \$50,000, the median income of American Indian and Alaskan Native households is approximately \$35,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2011). Nearly a third of the Native American population lives in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

High levels of unemployment and low educational achievement among Native Americans further compounds this situation. The most recent statistics available indicate that, as of 2011, 14.6% of Native Americans were unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). While 86% of the general US population have acquired their high school diploma, GED certificate or alternative credential, 78% of Native Americans have done so (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

However, quantitative research with smaller sample sizes again suggests that the socioeconomic, lived-experience of Native American women who have suffered sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence may be far more dire than what is represented in national data and statistics. For example, some studies reveal that over 70% of Native American women

sampled live at or below the federal poverty level and another third live in severe poverty, which is less than or equal to 50% of the federal poverty threshold (Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004). In other samples, three-quarters of Native American women live on incomes of less than \$10,000 annually (Norton & Manson, 1995). Furthermore, Malcoe, Duran, and Montgomery (2004) found that nearly a quarter of Native American women in their samples received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or welfare, and almost half received food-stamps. Unemployment rates in more localized surveys are also higher than those presented in national data. Specifically, research has shown that Native American women can have unemployment rates that are between three and five times higher than the rates reported in national statistics (Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Norton & Manson, 1995). When it comes to education, 44% of Native American women in localized samples reported having some high school education but only 19% reported obtaining their high school diploma (Norton & Manson, 1995). According to Malcoe, Duran and Montgomery (2004), increased risk of intimate partner violence for Native American women is strongly correlated with socioeconomic disadvantage, such as poverty and not graduating high school. The lowest intimate partner violence rates occur among Native American women with the least dire socioeconomic conditions (Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004).

Due to these socioeconomic conditions, many Native Americans depend on the federal government for income assistance, services, and health care. Here, two main issues arise for Native American women who have been sexually victimized. First, the US government has systematically underfunded the IHS, which is the main provider of health care to Native Americans (Bubar, 2010). In addition, there are nearly 1,700 rape crisis centers within the 50 states but there are less than five such programs located in tribal communities (Bubar, 2010). The

second issue for Native American women is that they are extremely vulnerable to abuse from the IHS and government agencies (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Poupart, 2002). Usually having no other health care options, thousands of Native women must turn to the IHS, which has a long history of performing involuntary sterilizations on and recommending dangerous birth control medications to Native American women.

Conclusions for the colonization of socioeconomic systems. Scholars have detailed how the US governments' goals of seizing Native American land and resources were part of a larger colonial project. As a result, Native American communities today have typically experienced economic destitution and are some to some of the worst unemployment and poverty rates in the US. That being said, scholars and researchers alike have argued that socioeconomic deprivation has contributed to Native American women being at elevated risk for sexual violence. Limited access to healthcare and the reliance on IHS has also rendered Native American women more vulnerable to sterilization abuse and dangerous birth control medications.

Statement of the Problem

Clearly, as the above literature review conducted on sexual violence against Native American women indicates, sexual violence against Native American women is a pervasive problem of alarming proportions in Native American communities. Native American women have suffered and continue to suffer some of the highest rates of sexual violence in the US. The study of sexual violence against Native American women becomes increasingly problematic when one considers especially the intersections of race, gender, class, and colonization. While quantitative studies and scholarly works have supplied us with the scope and depth to increase and nuance our understandings of this problem, there have been very few qualitative, interview-based studies in the field of sexual violence against Native American women. That being the

case, the women whom this problem most affects have been offered extremely limited opportunities to speak out about their experiences.

This research, then, used qualitative, interview-based research grounded in feminist methodology and research practices in order to investigate sexual violence against Native American women. The data came from semi-structured interviews with women in the greater Tacoma, Washington area who had ties to Native American communities. The results of this study will enhance, influence, and possibly change the manner in which we talk about, think about, and understand sexual violence and how we focus services and resources in this community. Additionally, this research aimed to empower Native American women through centering their voices and validating their knowledge and perspectives about sexual violence against the Native American women in their community.

III. Methodology

Feminist Research Practices and Critiques of Positivism

For the past several decades, feminists have critiqued quantitative research, and in particular, the positivism paradigm traditionally associated with such research (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008; Smith, 2008). However, scholars make an important distinction between these critiques, noting that what feminists find problematic is not necessarily the research methods in and of themselves (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Rather, these critiques are centered in a discussion of epistemology, methodology, and how these determine what qualifies as feminist research practice (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008).

Methods, in academic and scientific research, whether characterized as quantitative or qualitative, are the tools that researchers implement to collect data, such as interviews, surveys,

or ethnography. Therefore, there is no method that is innately more feminist than another (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). What makes a particular research project feminist is its methodology, its theory of how the research should be conducted (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Feminist research aligns itself with feminist ideologies and goals, treats research participants with agency and respect, and seeks to explore the lived-experiences of marginalized and oppressed peoples, often women (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Frequently too, feminists ascribe to a political and social commitment to critically assessing objective truth and privileged knowledge claims (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Due to positivism's emphasis on objectivity, feminists have been especially critical of the process of positivist knowledge production. Feminist critiques of positivism are broadly concerned with the epistemological claims of and methodological implications for research conducted within it. Namely, feminists critique the philosophical underpinnings of and the politics of power, domination, and representation in positivism's epistemology and methodology. Feminists critique positivism because, philosophically, it originates from Cartesian dualism. In this scheme, objectivity and rationality are associated with the mind, and subjectivity and irrationality are associated with the body (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008; Smith, 2008). Epistemologically, positivists claim that an objective reality composed of universal truth does indeed exist, and that we can discover and know that truth through the utilization of the scientific method (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Methodologically, the scientific method becomes the tool that acquires value-free, neutral facts; scientists must strive to themselves become objective through the systematic elimination of subjectivity and the emphasis on empiricism, distance, control, and operational definitions

(Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008; Smith, 2008). As a result, positivists find subjectivity and the acknowledgement of the researcher's positionality detrimental to scientific knowledge production.

While positivism both argues for the existence of universal truth independent of our observations of it and for objectivity as the standard of science, feminists assert that research and the researcher can never be truly objective (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Knowledge, feminists contend, is not value-free and the society and worlds in which we live are not static, compartmentalized entities that can be studied objectively (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). The researcher, by virtue of her humanity, experiences all aspects of the research project, from selecting a research topic to how she analyzes the data to sharing her results, subjectively (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Far from ignoring the researcher's subjectivity, feminist research requires the researcher to be aware, reflective, and critical of her own positionality, and encourages the production of multiple, plural, and situated knowledges that do not falsely universalize diverse experiences (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). The denial of the researcher's subjectivity may contribute to the maintenance and legitimization of privilege.

When truth and knowledge are presented as reflecting an objective reality, the production of knowledge within positivism becomes a political enterprise. Feminists find these political implications highly problematic due to their capacity for maintaining sexism, racism, elitism, and privileged positions of power; they can also contribute to the misrepresentation of historically marginalized peoples (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008; Smith, 2008). For instance, Jayaratne and Stewart (2007) provide the following examples to illustrate how traditional, positivist, quantitative research can be epistemologically and methodologically unjust. These examples include, but are not limited to: "the selection of sexist and elitist research

topics," the "absence of research questions of central importance to women," "biased research design," "exploitative relationships between the researcher and the subject," and the "improper interpretation and overgeneralization of findings" (pp. 44-45). These tendencies, whether unconscious or not, can exploit economic, power, race, class, and gender relations (Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). Such practices can either unintentionally or deliberately be used to justify the continued marginalization, exclusion, and exploitation of disempowered peoples.

Additionally, the notion that knowledge produced within the Western, positivist, quantitative tradition is the only legitimate, fact-based knowledge is inherent in positivism (Smith, 2008). All other knowledge production is regarded as subjective, and therefore, biased. And knowledge production that seeks to present alternative truths or knowledge that emanates from the lived-experiences of oppressed peoples becomes delegitimized and denied. Consequently, hierarchies of oppression are not questioned and taken as reflecting an objective reality. Here, it becomes apparent how positivist epistemology and methodology may either misrepresent or completely silence the voices of women and other oppressed peoples. Thus, representation and exploring the lived-experience of these people is of a central concern, politically and socially, for feminists (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008; Smith, 2008). "Instead of viewing these aspects [lived experience, interpretations, subjectivities, and emotions] as contaminants or barriers to uncovering *the objective truth*," Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) write, "feminist researchers explain how paying attention to the specific experiences and situated perspectives of human beings, both researchers and respondents alike, may actually become a *tool* for knowledge building and rich understanding" (p. 13). Feminist research utilizing feminist methodology and qualitative methods provides oppressed groups the opportunity to disclose their experiences candidly and as active subjects, not passive objects

(Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008). In fact, Sandra Harding states that the experiences and voices of marginalized others should constitute a starting point in research to deconstruct privileged knowledge claims (as cited in Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Native Americans, Representations in Research, and Native Feminism

Because this research project itself is feminist research and looks to engage in dialogue with women with ties to Native American communities as participants, issues associated with feminism, representation, and continued colonization are of crucial importance. Feminists of color and women of color have often critiqued feminism for its neglect of, and even deliberately exclusion and marginalization of, the voices, perspectives, and experiences of women of color, working-class women, poor and impoverished women, and lesbian, queer, and transgender women (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Davis, 1981; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2008). Specifically, Native American scholars too have raised similar objections to mainstream feminism for its lack of attention to racism, classism, and heterosexism (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005b).

According to Native American scholars, Native American women are skeptical of mainstream feminism precisely because it is white-dominated and middle-class dominated (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ross, 2009). Black feminist scholars, such as bell hooks, have argued that, rather than being about common oppressions and strategies for politicization, feminism has often been utilized to promote the class interests of white women (as cited in Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). If feminism confines itself to such an analysis, there is no incentive for white women to understand white supremacy as a racial politic, and instead, leads white feminists to generalize their political analysis as only a sexual analysis (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). Consequently, Native American women may frame feminism as a white women's movement that, were they to

participate in it, would compromise their identities as Indian and betray their communities (Ross, 2009). In Ross's (2009) own activism, she finds that feminism is an "F" word in Native American communities.

But Native American scholars' critiques of mainstream feminism are not easily reduced to the pervasiveness of racism, classism, and heterosexism within its discourses. For Native American scholars, mainstream feminism additionally fails to analyze colonialism and how decolonization is imperative for Native American sovereignty (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005b). Mainstream feminism does not require white, middle-class women to be critical of their complicity in colonialism and the material benefits it affords them (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). As a result, many Native American scholars and activists see feminism as imperialistic and inundated with European supremacist ideology that undermines Native American sovereignty (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Smith, 2005b). Thus, mainstream feminism becomes a tool that legitimizes and maintains imperialism, not a paradigm that seeks to deconstruct it.

Some Native American scholars are adamant that Native American women refrain from engaging with feminism indefinitely. Rather than combating sexism, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) explain that the core agenda of Native Americans must be framed in terms of the recovery of land and resources, the fight for self-governance and sovereignty, and the reconstruction of traditional social relations. Jaimes and Halsey (1992) contend that "there is little, if anything, to be gained by Indian women making a direct link-up with feminism" (p. 344). Native American women are oppressed as American Indians and colonized peoples first, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) write, not as women. Therefore, decolonization is prioritized in order to ensure the

survival of Native American women and peoples (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). Within this scheme, oppressions linked to sexism and classism are given a second-status.

Additionally, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) assert that Native American women who readily identify as feminists are generally more assimilated into the dominant culture. By virtue of their assimilation, Native American women who align themselves with feminism are likely to accept the colonial ideology that indigenous nations are sub-parts of the United States, not their own distinct nations. This colonial ideology goes on to view Native Americans as a minority group within the context of the general population of the United States, not as citizens of distinct nations (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992). Finally, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) find feminism problematic because it focuses solely on civil rights, not the liberation of Native American peoples and nations. Jaimes and Halsey (1992) remain firm in their conviction that the priorities of Native American women and nations are "radically and irrevocably different from those espoused by the mainstream women's movement" (p. 335).

However, other Native American scholars urge us to remember that feminism is a diverse and varied project (Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005b). In other words, mainstream feminism is not the *only* feminism available to Native American women, and certainly not to women in general. Perspectives like those of Jaimes and Halsey (1992) falsely reduce Native American concerns about sexism to a dichotomy of feminist versus non-feminist (Smith, 2005b). This dichotomy then prevents Native American women from participating in political projects that work to simultaneously dismantle sexism and restore sovereignty (Smith, 2005b). Despite the recent emergence of sexism in Native American communities, it has become a critical problem regardless and not one to be ignored (Smith, 2005b). Smith (2005b) argues that full decolonization is impossible if we fail to address sexism; doing so maintains the patriarchal

gender systems of the colonizers. Furthermore, the survival of Native American women is essential to the survival of Native American nations (Smith, 2005b). As previously demonstrated in the literature review, the use of gender violence and the imposition of European, patriarchal gender relationships on Native American nations served both to advance colonization and to forcibly remove indigenous peoples from their lands. Considering the disproportionately high rates of violence, including sexual violence, that continue to be perpetrated against Native American women, Smith (2005b) emphasizes that "they [Native American women] are clearly not surviving as long as issues of gender violence go unaddressed" (p. 122).

It is possible to include the survival of Native American women, the survival of Native American peoples and nations, decolonization, and sexism in the same discourse. Issues of sovereignty and efforts to decolonize are tied to issues of gender and sexism (Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005b). For Smith (2005b), the health and wellbeing of Native American women is intrinsically related to the health and wellbeing of Native American nations and their sovereignty. Instead of viewing women's status as a threat to sovereignty, Smith (2005b) states that attacks on Native American women's status as Native American, as women, and as colonized peoples simultaneously are attacks on sovereignty.

Essentially, Native American scholars like Smith (2005b) and Ross (2009) articulate feminism as an intersectional framework that not only addresses colonialism and sexism but that also connects the wellbeing of Native American women to indigenous sovereignty and decolonization. In this framework, gender violence, sexual violence, racial violence, colonial violence, and state violence are deeply interconnected. Intersectional frameworks put into perspective that the state itself has been a perpetrator of violence and human rights violations against Native American peoples and women (Smith, 2005b). Intersectional frameworks also

provide an analysis that addresses the internalization of sexual and gender violence within Native American communities as products of colonialism and its legacies (Smith, 2005b). Adopting an intersectional framework such as this when it comes to sexual violence against Native American women is imperative because:

Women of color have for too long been presented with the choices of either prioritizing racial justice or gender justice. This dualistic analysis fails to recognize that it is precisely through sexism and gender violence that colonialism and white supremacy have been successful (Smith, 2005b, p. 127).

Therefore, racial justice and gender justice for Native American women are inextricably linked to decolonization. Sexism and sexual violence against Native American women must be understood within the context of colonization. Colonization of Native American nations could not have been achieved without the use of sexual violence as a political weapon of mass terror and the racism that justified and normalized these atrocities against Native American women.

Native Americans and Western Research

In addition to understanding feminist critiques of the philosophy, epistemology, and methodology of the positivist tradition, it is imperative to also examine the relationship between positivism, research practices, and the West. Smith (2008) reminds us that Western research practices, apart from being grounded in the positivist tradition, contain values and cultural orientations that influence how we conceptualize our realities and our research. Specifically, Smith (2008) argues that what we consider to be Western research "draws from an 'archive' of knowledge and systems, rules and values which stretch beyond the boundaries of Western science to the system referred to as the West" (p. 58). More simply, this means that Western research and research practices, including the positivist tradition, are shaped by and representative of the philosophical and cultural West.

Through a process of characterization, classification, and systems of representation, the West becomes the standard for comparison against which other societies are evaluated (Smith, 2008). This serves three purposes. First, it ensures that the West's conceptions of categories, such as race, gender, space, time, and the individual and society, act as the proverbial yardstick that measures the rationality and credibility of other societies' conceptions of the same categories (Smith, 2008). Second, once measured, it either distorts or denies these different ways of being in the world. Finally, it creates the contexts necessary to purport that Western knowledge is the only legitimate source of knowledge and that Western research is the only legitimate source of knowledge production. In the name of progress, the West then indulges in imperialistic courses of action that seek to improve the spiritual, intellectual, social, and economic backwardness of other societies (Smith, 2008). For these reasons, indigenous peoples especially have often experienced Western research as exploitative and inherently inundated with racialized and colonialist discourses (Smith, 2008).

When it comes to Native American knowledge, worldviews, and perspectives, the West and its academic and scientific institutions have typically regarded them not only as inferior but also as unreliable, unscientific, and irrational. After Rousseau's romanticized notion of the "noble savage" lost popularity as the West continued to encounter indigenous peoples and pursue colonialist goals, Smith (2008) writes that indigenous beliefs came to be seen as "shocking, abhorrent, and barbaric" (p. 59). At best, Western science and academia have considered Native American knowledge to be mythology or folklore (DeLoria, 1997). It is in this manner that Western science and academia have effectively silenced Native American voices and perspectives and rendered their knowledge production illegitimate while simultaneously ensuring the legitimacy of the West's cultural and scientific projects.

However, there is an argument to be made for the inclusion of Native American perspectives, stories, and voices in scientific research and academia. For DeLoria (1997), racism within Western science and academia has marginalized and excluded Native American knowledge from their analyses. Science, DeLoria (1997) explains, is more frequently rooted in bias and the maintenance of privilege than objective fact. Although DeLoria (2007) writes mainly from geological and anthropological orientations in his book *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, his observations are appropriate here. DeLoria (1997) presents several Western theories taken to be absolute fact by the scientific community and, using logic and alternative explanations from Native American elders and their communities, systematically deconstructs these theories. Strategically, DeLoria's (1997) inclusion of Native American discourses in the knowledge production process of the West reveals inconsistencies, logical errors, and the ineffectiveness of the West's current conceptions of reality and its theoretical frameworks. Ultimately, this inclusion is necessary as it directly challenges the supposed objectivity of the Western scientific enterprise (DeLoria, 1997). I would further argue that this inclusion may make the conditions necessary for dialogue and perhaps a re-imagination and re-conceptualization of the West's discourses.

Methodological Considerations

My research question was, "How are women with ties to Native American communities thinking about and talking about sexual violence against Native American women?" This question and the research it generated were feminist in nature. They sought to explore women's lived experiences and perspectives. Additionally, they sought to explore women's lived experiences in regards to and perspectives on the intersections of multiple oppressions, including sexism, racism, and colonialism. As a researcher who advocates for feminism and the feminist

paradigm, I acknowledged too that myself and my research had a political and social commitment to critically evaluate and deconstruct systemic oppression.

For this research, I chose to conduct qualitative research utilizing interviews, as this method was best suited to capturing the nuances, complexities, and multiplicity of individual voices. Clearly, a more quantitative approach was ill-suited to my question, as it diminishes individual voice. It was not my intention to reduce the richness and diversity of individual voices to easily generalizable data. Rather, I aimed to do research that offered women the chance to speak, and in a sense, engage collaboratively with me as we examined their thought processes, opinions, and analyses of sexual violence in their communities. Native American communities and community members are not necessarily homogenous in their goals, values, or discussions surrounding sexual violence, and therefore, I expected to find voices that at times disagreed and agreed with each other. Such a dialogue gave Native American women the opportunity to discuss an issue of such critical importance to their lives on their own terms and in their own language. At its core, this research recognized the existence of multiple, plural, and situated truths, and promoted their inclusion in the knowledge production process.

However, as a researcher looking to conduct feminist research with a Native American population and Native American communities, I had to take into account Native American scholars' critiques of feminism and of feminist research. Apart from understanding the problem of sexual violence against Native American women as an issue merely related to sexism, it was imperative that I framed sexual violence against Native American women within the simultaneous operation of sexism, racism, and colonialism. Within such a framework, addressing sexual violence becomes a tool for decolonization and promoting the survival and sovereignty of Native American women and their nations. Acknowledging and respecting the important and

very real struggle of Native Americans, both as peoples and nations, for attaining full decolonization and sovereignty was vital to how some women who participated in this research could have thought about sexual violence against Native American women in their communities. Therefore, this research was feminist research, but it was feminist research that went beyond the singular analysis of sexism, and instead viewed the situation of Native American women in regards to sexual violence perpetrated against them as a problem that cannot be separated from racial, gender, and colonial violence.

However, as a feminist looking to conduct feminist research, I was particularly concerned that the manner in which I conducted my research, gathered my data, and analyzed my data was aligned with the feminist paradigm and took critiques of representation and marginalization seriously. Thus, I was required at all levels of my research to be able to critically assess my subjectivity and positionality as a researcher. I recognized that I am a white, upper-middle class, college educated woman, and I have been told on numerous occasions that there is no viable reason as to why my commitment to this research topic was justified and that I did not have the right to pursue it as a non-Native American. In the words of Alcoff (2008), I have been asked repeatedly to step aside. There seemed to be a concern over my speaking for or speaking about others (Alcoff, 2008). But what was most striking to me about these conversations was that it was never members of the group in question who asked me to step aside. It was other white, upper-middle class, college educated women and men. I have often wondered what this says about the maintenance of privilege, the barriers that silence constructs, and our inability to engage in dialogue because of difference, whether or not that difference is real or imagined.

This is not to say that difference, or what has been socially constructed as difference, did not carry a very real and potentially very dangerous weight in the research I was conducting. I

would have been a poor sociologist and a sorry excuse for a feminist if I had failed to understand the complications my own positionality and subjectivity could have potentially had on my ability to do research. But I also thought about what it would mean symbolically if I, as a white, upper-middle class, college educated woman stepped aside on this issue. Alcoff (2008) argues that stepping aside, rather than alleviating the problem of speaking for or speaking about others, can actually oppress. Stepping aside in this case could have contributed to the continued oppression of Native American women, as it suggests that I, as an individual who has benefited immensely from racism and colonialism, had no need to deconstruct these oppressions and was complicit in their perpetuation. In this sense, speaking for others became necessary; my retreat from speaking for others may have maintained privilege as would have undermines political effectiveness, collective action, and my responsibility and accountability for social justice (Alcoff, 2008). And despite that the end result of this research was speaking for others, throughout the course of my interviews, I spoke to and spoke with others.

Still, speaking for others had to be critically assessed in terms of whether or not the speaking for would allow for the empowerment of oppressed peoples (Alcoff, 2008). Alcoff (2008) provides four practices that a speaker can utilize to accomplish such an analysis, and I did this analysis below. For Alcoff (2008), these interrogatory practices are not a definitive solution to the problem of speaking for others. But speakers can engage with these practices in their endeavors to reduce the political and social dangers associated with speaking for others.

First, Alcoff (2008) asks speakers to evaluate their reasons for speaking. "The impetus to speak must be carefully analyzed, and, in many cases, [...] fought against" (Alcoff, 2008, p. 492). Speakers who occupy more privileged locations by virtue of their belonging to the dominant race, class, gender, or any number of other categories, are likely to have been socialized to

always speak, rather than to listen. But Alcoff (2008) simultaneously cautions speakers from privileged locations against maintaining their privilege through stepping aside, as "moving over" only arises from a position of privilege. Specifically, Alcoff (2008) writes "making the decision for oneself whether to retreat is an extension or application of privilege, not an abdication of it" (p. 492). In my attempt to speak for others, I acknowledged that I embody the dominant race (white) and class (upper middle) and that I, as a white, upper middle class woman, have reaped innumerable benefits because of the colonization of Native American peoples. However, in this instance, I refrained from immediately speaking for others. Instead, I earnestly endeavored to listen and to learn from women who occupied positions far less privileged than my own. Considering the political and social implications of my stepping aside on the problem of sexual violence against Native American women and my intentions to engage in dialogue with this community, I strongly believe that I had a political and social responsibility to conduct this research.

Second, Alcoff (2008) implores speakers to critically assess how their location and context influences what they are saying. Here, Alcoff (2008) is calling for "constructing hypotheses about the possible connections between our location and our words" (p. 492). This exercise, according to Alcoff (2008), is most effective when utilized collaboratively with others. Additionally, this exercise prevents privileged speakers from hiding behind autobiographical disclaimers meant to free them from responsibility of their own error or ignorance (Alcoff, 2008). Due to my location, I recognize that women from Native American communities may have been reluctant to disclose their experiences to me or suspicious of my intentions. There is a long, excruciating, ongoing history of colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation, and I came to realize that this history may have served as a barrier to finding participants. This issue is one of

the many that justified my framing of the problem of sexual violence as problem that lies at the intersection of racism, sexism, and colonialism. It is also why I argue that sexual violence must be addressed to achieve full decolonization. As a white, upper middle class, college educated woman, there are few, if any instances, where I would have been required to examine colonialism and sovereignty in this manner. Moreover, I recognized that the community I belong to most likely constructs ideas about the individual, community, and how the individual is connected to community very differently than the women I spoke with. Throughout the interview process, I encouraged my participants to be critical of my questions themselves and how I was presenting them. During our conversations, I was flexible and adaptable in order to accommodate the individual needs and concerns of participants. I expected that, and was completely open to, participants collaborating with me during the interviews to restate or clarify questions. Furthermore, the semi-structured nature of the interviews provided participants the conditions necessary for us to discuss topics I had not originally intended to explore. Consequently, I had to be humble and take seriously my role as a learner, not a teacher. I conducted interviews with women from Native American communities precisely because they had knowledge and experiences that I did not have; here, these women were teaching me.

Third, Alcoff (2008) argues that speakers must be responsible and accountable for what they say in the course of speaking for others. Therefore, to be responsible and accountable for what one says, speakers must not only accept criticism, they must also make a commitment to "attempt to actively, attentively, and sensitively to 'hear' (understand) the criticism" (p. 492). I have never viewed criticism as threatening in either my academic, professional, or personal pursuits. Rather, I see criticism as an opportunity to make apparent and critically examine privileges that I have taken for granted due to my socialization and social location. As a writing

consultant at the University of Washington, Tacoma's Teaching and Learning Center, there have been countless instances where a student has inadvertently or purposefully made me question and be reflective of my teaching, learning, and listening practices. Though these interactions are oftentimes uncomfortable or painful for me, I believe that the discomfort and pain I experience speaks to my privilege. It does not matter if what I had done was intentional or unintentional, subconscious or conscious, miniscule or monumental, because the discomfort and pain is a maker of my realization that I have hurt someone or their community. I always own the damage I have done by extending a sincere apology and then asking the student to explain to me how I have hurt them. On a weekly basis for almost three years, I have viewed these moments as students teaching me about my own privilege and their marginalization from their experiences. Ultimately, I begin incorporating students' perspectives into my analysis of my actions and words, which leads to my privileged worldviews becoming more deconstructed. For me, this is true social justice advocacy and the foundation of coalition building, and I was committed to receiving and engaging with criticism of my research as I do at the Teaching and Learning Center.

Finally, Alcoff (2008) contends that speakers must analyze the "probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context" (p. 492). Here, the location of the speaker, the content of what is spoken, and what the speech ultimately does need to be analyzed (Alcoff, 2008). Simply, the content of what is spoken cannot be separated from its effects (Alcoff, 2008). Thus, the relationship between what is spoken and how those who hear it interpret it is of critical importance. There is the very real and very damaging possibility that these elements, the speaker, what is spoken, who hears it, and what is heard, can maintain the authority and privilege of the speaker while concurrently maintaining the silence and oppression of those who are being

spoken for (Alcoff, 2008). I had to be conscious of and take seriously how I presented the end result of my research. If I had failed to acknowledge the effects of my research, I may have inadvertently reinforced racist and colonialist notions of the inherent savagery, inferiority, and backwardness of Native American peoples in the United States. Therefore, I used interviews for this research because I saw the voices of women with ties to Native American communities as an impetus for dialogue and critical understanding of sexual violence against Native American women. My research demonstrated that these women are not passive objects, nor are they silently enduring their oppression with a quiet, romanticized dignity. These women were shown to be powerful, action-taking, critical subjects who actively engaged with and thought about their conditions and how systemic oppression impacted their communities. As Native feminist scholars have suggested, when the links between colonization, gender violence, racial violence, and state violence are taken into account, the voices of Native American women and their communities can become a powerful source of analysis in feminist and political discourses (Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005b). In this respect, I would argue that this research certainly did contribute to the empowerment of oppressed peoples.

To conclude, I would like to incorporate and reflect on several passages from Lorde (2009). Lorde (2009) professes, "and where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in pertinence to our lives. That we not hide behind the mockeries of separation that have been imposed upon us and which we so often accept as our own" (p. 42). This research was undoubtedly borne of my social and political commitment to listening and to learning from those which society has so falsely constructed to be different from me. It was also a conscientious effort to fight against forces of oppression, to name the intersection of racism,

sexism, and colonialism, and to understand how these oppressions may simultaneously advantage and disadvantage communities, some of which I do and do not belong to. I believe that dialogue with these women created opportunities for dialogue and mutual liberation, as these women shared their experiences of marginalization and exclusion with a person who has oftentimes never been marginalized nor excluded except by virtue of her gender.

And, in this instance, my desire to speak for others was inextricably linked to my desire to break silences. Lorde (2009) contends "the fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence" (p. 43). I cannot put this sentiment more eloquently, but Lorde's (2009) words are why I chose to commit myself to this research and to the women whom conversed with me. The voices of Native American women and community members should be incorporated into our discourses on sexual violence; without them, women of all social locations will not be able to adequately critique racism, sexism, and colonialism, and how the United States itself has created and perpetuated violence against women. I recognized, honestly, humbly, and graciously that, "each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital with that transformation" (Lorde, 2009, p. 42). My role as a listener was vital to the empowerment of the women I conversed with. My role as learner was vital to the deconstructing of my own privileged location and the hierarchies that legitimize it; it was also instrumental in encouraging dialogue between our communities. My role as researcher was vital to presenting the voices of these women to the academic discourses that

have so frequently denied their subjectivity, their experiences, and their knowledge and consequently silenced them. And this research became evidence of our ability to pursue collective work and responsibility despite our differences, and that we can pursue empowerment and liberation together.

IV. Methods

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to explore how women with ties to Native American communities in the Tacoma area were talking about and thinking about sexual violence against Native American women. As the review of the literature indicates, other researchers have conducted several quantitative surveys that suggest that Native American women suffer some of the highest rates of sexual violence in the United States. Additionally, scholars and academics have argued that the problem of sexual violence against Native American women must be understood within the context of colonization and its complicated effects on Native American social and gender systems, reproductive rights, political and judicial systems, and economic systems. However, very few of these research efforts have used interviews as a tool to study sexual violence against Native American women. As a result, current research has given women whom this problem most effects limited opportunities to discuss their perspectives on and experiences of sexual violence against Native American women. My research attempted to fill this gap in our knowledge by speaking with women who lived and/or worked professionally in a Native American community in the greater Tacoma area. During the course of this research, I discovered how sexual violence against Native American women was talked about, impacted, and was addressed in this from female community members themselves.

Research Design and Data Collection

This research was qualitative in nature and looked to produce knowledge that was nuanced, contextualized, and not generalizable. Because the research question sought to highlight women's voices, interviews were the most appropriate form of data collection. The interviews themselves were semi-structured, which gave the participants the opportunity to explain their perspectives and experiences in detail and elaborate when necessary; but they also allowed me to direct the conversation back to the issue of sexual violence in their community and to ask pertinent probing questions. I used a snowball sampling method to find women with ties to Native American communities in the greater Tacoma area, women whose voices were of critical importance to this research. Each interview averaged about 40 minutes in length but sometimes lasted longer at the discretion of both the participant and myself. To collect and record data, I took hand-written notes during the interview and recorded the audio digitally on my laptop computer. All the interviews were fully transcribed during the analysis of the data.

Participants

Participants voluntarily consented to participate in this research. Eligible research participants included women over the age of eighteen who lived and/or worked professionally in Native American communities in the greater Tacoma area. Given these criteria, women could self-identify as Native American but could also identify as members of other racial and/or ethnic groups. Participants could hold formal or informal tribal membership, be community leaders, activists, social workers, healthcare workers, and/or other professionals. Because participation was voluntary, I administered informed consent forms to participants that documented that their decision to participate in the research was both voluntary and informed. There were no financial incentives, including monetary compensation for time or travel expenses, offered to participants.

Human Subjects Review

This research received exempt status from the University of Washington's Human Subjects Division on 27 October 2014 under the application #48487. I did not contact potential participants or attempt to interview participants prior to receiving exempt status.

Sampling

To recruit eligible participants, I used a snowball sampling method. Initially, I made personal contact with professionals and community members through e-mail, telephone calls, and face-to-face meetings. I also distributed flyers advertising the opportunity to participate in my research to two locations. First, I received permission from the University of Washington, Tacoma to post several flyers on bulletin boards around campus. Second, a local sexual assault program allowed me to forward them a copy of the flyer through e-mail; they explained that they would post the flyer in their lobby. These flyers briefly indicated the topic of my research, the eligibility requirements for participants, the potential benefits of participating, and my contact information. However, to my knowledge, I did not recruit a single participant through the flyers. All of the final participants for this research were recruited through telephone calls, e-mails, face-to-face meetings, and referrals.

Informing Participants about the Research

During the recruitment process, I disclosed the research topic and the purpose of the research to participants. Women who met the criteria and expressed interest in the research project and wished to participate were further debriefed either through an e-mail or telephone conversation. These conversations covered an overview of the research, what would be asked of them as participants, sample questions from the interview, information about myself and my motivations for conducting the research, and addressed any qualifying concerns they needed

clarified in order to confirm their interest in participating. The participants and I then scheduled a date, time, and location for the interview that was convenient, public, and comfortable for them. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to read and review the informed consent form; they were required to sign the consent form documenting that their consent to participate was both voluntary and informed. This form also indicated clearly that they could terminate their participation at any time during or after the interview and that, if they chose to terminate their participation, all related data would be removed from the research and destroyed.

Protecting the Confidentiality of Participants

In final analysis and write-up of the data, no identifiers were associated with the information obtained from the interviews. Specifics, such as the participants' names, their places of employment, and/or their tribal affiliations were replaced with pseudonyms. All materials related to this research, such as the original copies of the informed consent forms, my handwritten notes of the interviews, interview transcripts, and audio files, were stored either in a locked file cabinet at my home or on my personal, password protected computer. Only I had access to the original material but my thesis committee did have access to the first drafts of the analysis.

Perceived Risks to Participants

Perceived risks to participants who participated in this research were minimal. However, depending on the extent of their personal experience with sexual violence, I acknowledged that some women could have had difficulty discussing past trauma or other aspects that were unanticipated. All participants were reminded numerous times in the informed consent form and in the beginning of the interview that their participation was voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw. To protect the emotional, mental, and physical health of the women who

participated, the informed consent forms provided a list of local resources and hotlines, including general sexual violence services and services more tailored to the specific needs of Native American women, that they could contact before, during, or after the interviews were completed.

Analysis

According to Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007), qualitative data analysis is an "iterative process" where data collection and data analysis happen simultaneously and inform each other (p. 144). To begin my analysis, I memoed throughout the research process, which allowed me to document and reflect on potential connections and relationships between the data, my interpretations of and ideas about the data, and my positionality (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Additionally, I endeavored to find "negative cases" (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 145). It was imperative that I was both conscious and critical of such negative data; negative data were data that "[did] not fit cohesively or [created] problems" in the research and my preliminary interpretations (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 145). My first memos and analysis started immediately after my first interview, which I used to inform my probing questions in the proceeding interviews. As a result, the analysis process was continuous and reflective throughout my research.

Memoing was extremely important to this research and was a primary strategy for my analysis. Particularly, memoing acted as a tool for me to record unanticipated responses from the participants and assisted me in determining the appropriateness of my ideas and the current and future directions of my research (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) interviewed the sociologist David Karp, who explains that memoing could generate longer idea or concept memos that tracked my emerging ideas. After several interviews, I reevaluated my interview guide and its questions to determine what sort of data the questions were producing, as

well as what sort of data the questions were *not* producing (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Based on my reflections, it did become appropriate for me to adjust the interview guide in respect to possible questions I asked later participants. For example, I did not originally intend to directly ask participants about the connections between colonization and sexual violence against the Native American women in their communities. However, once the first participant made this connection clear without being prompted, other participants seemed eager to discuss colonization and the arrival of settlers when I raised such probing questions. This was extremely meaningful as scholars, including Smith (2003; 2005a) and Ross (2009), have suggested that colonization may be a useful tool for contextualizing and analyzing sexual violence against Native American women. Therefore, due to the flexible nature of qualitative research and semi-structured interviews, I detailed changes made to the research like these in my analysis (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). This process ensured that I was accountable for my procedures and that other researchers could follow my reasoning.

Once I began to identify potential themes from the data, I then created a data memo. Within the data memo, I paired the available data and themes with the literature (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Data that did not fit the pattern was carefully marked and considered. Rather than using data solely for the purpose of supporting my themes, I strived to disprove my ideas and embrace the complexity and any ambiguity I found about my themes (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Because qualitative research, and especially feminist qualitative research, aims to capture the lived experiences of individuals, I also made notes of the uniqueness of each participant's responses (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). While I did expect to find commonalities between the participant's responses, it was just as important that I reported variations in their thinking that reflected their particular circumstances.

Following each interview, I wrote a summary sheet that described the main themes I pulled from the interview (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Karp also suggests presenting hypotheses to participants by incorporating them into interview questions (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). For example, I asked participants, "You know, several of the people with whom I have talked tell me that...Does this make sense to you?" (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 146). Collaborating with participants informed me of the validity of my hypotheses, ideas, and concepts (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). The feminist nature of this research required that I took the concerns and responses of participants seriously, examined their pertinence to the research as a whole and my positionality, and incorporated these reflections into the research. It was not my intention to conceal information from my participants, especially if that information consisted of my interpretations of their stories. When the majority of my interviews were completed, I started to creating coding categories. Coding categories assisted me as I examined the data and prepared for paper and memo writing (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Drafting and receiving feedback from my thesis committee and participants were integral parts of this research. Once I had coded the data, I began the process of writing the individual chapters in the analysis section of my thesis. I submitted drafts of my analysis chapters to both my thesis chair and my thesis reader and spent several weeks incorporating their feedback and comments. Such feedback enabled me to strengthen connections between the data and the literature and reminded me provide adequate rationale for my probing questions. Additionally, I asked each participant for feedback on the interview itself and the questions within it. This enabled me to reflect on my role as a researcher and what the women had taken from their experiences as participants.

V. Reflections on the Research Process

The following is a personal reflection that I compiled from a series of electronic journal entries, free writing, and memos written over two and a half years. This reflection does not necessarily go in a linear progression but it does detail my experiences, feelings, and struggles of being a white, upper-middle class, college-educated, feminist woman who talked to Native American women about sexual violence in their communities. It is my intention that this reflection conveys my commitment to being critical about my positionality at all stages of the research process and my graduate education. In order to begin, I suppose I'll have to introduce myself.

The Room

Hello, white, upper-middle class, college educated, heterosexual, feminist woman here. God, that's a mouthful. To use Reagon's (1981) metaphor, I've spent quite a bit of time in the room of white, upper-middle class, college educated, heterosexual, feminist women, too. About seven years ago, when I walked in front of its door, I stood in the hall, wrung my hands, and bit my lip. Hard. I tasted blood when the skin broke, and underneath the warm current of salt and copper, there was fear. It took courage for me to knock on that door. I was inexperienced with feminism but I was also a spitfire, punk rock kid who was angry and sad and wanted to know that she wasn't crazy. I desperately needed that because I'd spent a good portion of my life feeling absolutely and irrevocably insane.

And would you believe it? The women in that room checked me at the door. There were qualifications I had to meet, a checklist if you will, and when I said, "Hello, white, upper-middle class, college educated, heterosexual woman who thinks she'd like to support feminism here," they filled the empty boxes on their forms with neat little ticks. Tick. Tick. Tick, tick, tick. Yeah,

I thought it was strange that those ticks in the boxes granted me entrance into that room. I thought it was strange but I didn't question it because I needed that room like air in my lungs. I couldn't breathe in the hall; I was suffocating in my skin.

I went inside and the women in that room looked like me and talked like me and *lived* like me. And there, I learned I wasn't the only one who thought she was crazy. I wasn't the only one who couldn't breathe. I shared my stories about being a white, upper-middle class, college educated, heterosexual woman, and when I listened to theirs, I already knew them. Their words were the words that danced in ink across my tattered notebooks in high school and the corners of my pasta-sauce stained napkins after dinner with my family. We named our insanity together. Oh, hey there patriarchy. It's nice to formally get acquainted. And there was power in that disempowering name, to name *it*, the source of my self-depreciation and self-loathing. It meant, "What's up? I'm calling you out. I'm calling you out because you and the *system* are messed up, not me, even if you did mess me up for a while there."

That room was a safe-haven. We talked about our oppression as women, first, last, and always in that room. We talked about the grabbing and the groping and the harassment on the street. We talked about despising our bodies, not just the physicality of them, but their symbolism. Weak. Stupid. Subhuman. Other. Some of us talked about our sexual assaults. I realized that my experience wasn't indicative of my personal failings, reduced to the "dids", the "should have dones" and "didn't dos". It was indicative of an epidemic.

I cried a lot in that room. I raged in that room. I seethed until the walls trembled and I could imagine them crashing down around me; I dreamt of burning them to ash and sifting through the gritty residue until the soot dirtying my cuticles and trapped in the lines of my

knuckles served as a testament to my grief. To my will to survive. And yes, to my liberation. Because I built confidence in that room. I confronted my insecurities, my demons, my shame.

Well, to be frank, I really started to get sick of that room. Don't get me wrong. It was a nice room but it was too comfortable. It became so comfortable that I couldn't breathe again. And Reagon (1981) is right. That room *was* like a womb. It protected me; it cradled me, nurtured me in its confines and I grew. But I was tossing and turning and repositioning myself. My feet and fists kicked and beat against its walls. That room became isolation, not only for the people who missed a tick-mark on the check list, but also for me. I knew that the gestational period was over.

When the screams were torn from my throat, leaving it raw and red, the women in the room heard them. But we'd sound-proofed the room to the extent that the people in the rooms across the hall couldn't hear me; they couldn't hear us. And you know what? We wouldn't hear them, either. It's such a cliché strategy, but it worked. Divide and conquer. Divided like that, we could only work to dismantle the individual bricks named "sexism" that built the room. We would conquer nothing if we failed to understand that the mortar and cement that binds the walls together had to be dismantled, too. It was like playing Jenga. You hesitantly removed the piece labeled "sexism" and you felt the structure wobble. You felt its imminent collapse and then sucked in a tentative breath because, well, look at that. The structure still held firm.

That's how oppression works as a system. At least, I think it does. Because oppressions in the system are operating simultaneously, always, and so you have to deconstruct them simultaneously.

I've thought that the true battle, the real struggle if you will, is being able to explain your oppression and how the system oppresses you to someone who's never been oppressed by the

system in that way. Chances are, the system has oppressed *them* in a way that it's never oppressed *you* before. And there's an even greater chance that the system as a whole is oppressing *them* and *you* at the same time. But, in our separate rooms, with their sound-proofing and their check-lists, we were never going to have that conversation, were we?

Iron Maiden schools an undergraduate on colonialism. I knew what I wanted to study the moment I applied for the graduate program at the University of Washington, Tacoma. Fresh from earning my bachelor's degree in sociology from Seattle University, I knew that I wanted to study sexual violence against Native American women in Native American communities from Washington state. This topic had haunted me since I began critically assessing sexual violence against women of color, nearly two years before I ever enrolled in graduate school. Since I encountered the stark statistics of 1 in 3. That 1 in 3 Native American women would be sexually victimized in her lifetime. Quite simply, I didn't understand how it was possible. So I did what any hopeful scholar would do in such a situation. I dove headfirst into the literature and started collecting articles from the library's databases. I scoured the Native American Studies section at the Half Price Books in Tukwila and became deeply moved by the works of Andrea Smith. And I purposefully contrived ways to make class assignments, research papers, PowerPoint presentations, and whatever else my professors threw at me relevant to sexual violence against Native American women.

About five or six months before I graduated from Seattle University, it happened. I can't recall the specifics of what I was doing, but I'm fairly certain I was in my car, probably stuck in traffic on I-5, enduring an hour and a half of stop-and-go in a stick shift on that hellish commute from Capitol Hill to Federal Way. I'm almost positive I was chain-smoking cigarettes (the singed upholstery and nicotine-stained sun-visors were a testament to that awful habit), flicking ash out

the crack in the window with my speakers blaring at full blast. I was listening to Iron Maiden (1982), and as soon as Bruce Dickenson sang the opening lines of "Run to the Hills," it happened.

So I remember listening to Iron Maiden's (1982) "Run to the Hills," smoking cigarettes and being stuck in traffic, and actually *getting* it for the first time. The feeling was slowly-sinking at first, and then, in a rush, my heart dropped straight into my belly. I can only think of the most hackneyed phrases to describe this feeling, which at the time was monumental and kind of a revelation. You know the feeling, though. The hairs on the back of your neck prickle and your arms are covered in gooseflesh. Shock like you've just been doused with ice water, like you've just been hit with all the subtlety of a freight train. Like it's just *WHAM* and *there* and in your face and you couldn't look away if you tried. I listened to "Run to the Hills" again and again and again, mystified and a little ashamed that I'd never gotten it before. Thanks to my mother, I'd been listening to Iron Maiden since I was at least 10, and it took me eight years to fully understand.

For those of you unfamiliar with this song, its lyrics are broadly about the arrival of European settlers on the North American continent (Iron Maiden, 1982). Told first from the perspective of a Native American, the narrator details the death and utter destruction that European settlers brought into Native American communities and Native American efforts to combat them (Iron Maiden, 1982). The lyrics then shift for the remainder of the song to European settlers' point of views, where the narrator explicitly names the strategies they implemented in order to colonize Native American peoples and nations, including mass genocide and sexual violence (Iron Maiden, 1982). Even typing them now, these particular lyrics never fail to send a shiver down my spine.

Solider blue in the barren wastes. Hunting and killing's a game. Raping the women and wasting the men. The only good injins are tame (Iron Maiden, 1982).

Here was the exact instance that I began to comprehend the intersections of race, gender, and colonialism. That I began to understand that what I had been reading in Smith's (2005a) book *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. That, during the initial phases of colonization, it was exactly as Bruce Dickenson sang: Native American communities were targeted for wholesale slaughter and rape to further colonization and the subjugation of Native American nations. Being white and an American citizen, I was sick to realize that, at twenty years old, I was just figuring out what colonization meant and its role in the creation of my country. That this country was made possible only by the cultural and physical genocide of a people. I realized then that sexual violence against Native American women could not, as Smith (2005a) contended, be separated from its colonial context and that sexual violence against Native American women was both an attack on their racial and gender identities and also part of the colonial history of the US. Coupled with the stark statistic of 1 in 3, these lyrics started to haunt me, too. And I think they haunted me because colonization wasn't part of my narrative as an American. It was certainly never part of the narrative I'd learned in public schools or heard in the media. Therefore, when I applied to graduate school, I fully committed myself to challenging the silencing of Native American women in whatever capacity I could and decided that I would devote my graduate studies towards pursuing this end. As a white, college-educated, upper-middle class woman, I promised that I would no longer be complicit in such silencing.

Andrea Smith Schools a Graduate Student on Feminism

They were right, you know. Those Native American scholars who argued that feminism is far from beneficial to Native American women precisely because mainstream feminism is composed of white, upper-middle class, college educated women like myself. They were right

because, yeah, I'll admit it. The feminism in that room did not ask me to question my stakes in racism or colonialism. Well, I wanted to question it. Punk rock taught me that questioning the system is exactly what the system didn't want me to do. Andrea Smith taught me to focus that questioning on colonialism and racism.

So I thought about how I, as a white, upper-middle class, college educated, woman benefitted from colonialism. For a long time, all I could see were the benefits. To be sure, I'm fairly certain that's all you're supposed to see in a capitalistic, patriarchal, white-supremacist, colonial society. I was dissatisfied with this answer and I asked myself, repeatedly, daily, how does colonialism hurt white women like me? Why was it in my best interest to deconstruct the "ism" that had seemingly provided me with nothing but benefits? And then, in the process of *not* seeing it, I realized that what I couldn't see was the solution. Colonialism robs white women of picturing a society that isn't patriarchal.

I remembered the reading I'd done on indigenous nations prior to contact with European colonizers. According to scholars, indigenous nations were based on non-hierarchical systems. Men did not dominant women; women did not dominate men. The inherent agency and dignity of people as human beings was recognized and respected. Women were spiritual, religious, political, economic, and social leaders.

I came to find that European colonization in North America worked not only to colonize indigenous nations but also to maintain its own through the eradication of another. European colonizers knew patriarchy was a precarious institution. They knew it was socially constructed and unstable. It's true: patriarchy can survive if it is presented as the only viable option. European colonizers implemented patriarchy to conquer indigenous nations and to maintain the patriarchy that was an essential piece of the emerging nation. If seen by white women, the non-

hierarchical social systems of Native American peoples become other viable options. As threats, the other viable options were literally and metaphorically eliminated. Although white women could have conceived of non-patriarchal societies without seeing them in practice, the colonization of indigenous nations naturalized the subordinate positions of white women and Native American women within patriarchal white society.

And further, I came to understand sexual violence as political violence perpetuated by my nation, the US, historically against all kinds of women. What did that mean for our unquestioned allegiance to the nation that rendered all of us subject to mass sexual violence?

This is why I was compelled to believe that colonization should be addressed within mainstream feminism. If feminism is truly the movement to end sexist oppression, then we can't be content as white, upper-middle class, college educated women to ignore it when it exists in other spheres, as it does in racism and colonialism. Colonialism is patriarchy, sexism, and racism.

To the Native American scholars who argue that Native American women are oppressed as American Indians first, last, and always, I think you're playing identity politics. And identity politics is a dangerous game. It's dangerous because it keeps all of us locked away inside our respective rooms. And, I'd tentatively suggest, it's an incomplete analysis. Native American *women* were subjected to oppressions reserved specifically for them by virtue of the fact that they were Native American *and* women simultaneously. Without including a feminist analysis, this component is lost.

Step aside. Once I took my first graduate school course, I had already been reading a large amount of literature on the topic of sexual violence against Native American women and certainly felt that I was adequately prepared to begin writing the literature review and planning

my research methods. What has been consistently problematic, even when I began working on the skeleton of my literature review, was the lack of Native American women's voices in the literature. I searched and searched, but to no avail. For whatever reason, Native American women and their stories remained persistently absent in the literature surrounding sexual violence. I wondered who these women were, where they were, what they thought and felt and what they had to say. I discovered, only after I had the academic terminology to describe it, that this is what scholars referred to as a gap. A gap, indeed. It seemed to be a yawning void, a black chasm whose silence was deafening. I wanted to find these women, to ask them to speak if they would give me the opportunity to listen. I believed that this gap in the research justified a feminist methodology and interviews as a method.

That first quarter at the University of Washington, Tacoma, I was excited and optimistic. But my first experiences presenting my plans for my research to faculty and prospective committee members were not happy ones. Well intentioned, misinformed, or perhaps just cruel, I was told repeatedly that my idea was not viable. At one point, a professor stated that I had no business trying to talk to these women. According to her, no Native American woman would talk to me even if I tried. Although I didn't understand why at the time, what all of these professors were hinting at was that because I was white, I had no authority to investigate this topic.

Disheartened, young, and wanting desperately to complete a thesis that would be respected by the scholarly community, the direction of my research changed dramatically and quite unexpectedly. The literature I was reading didn't make sense anymore; I didn't know how to organize my thoughts. I couldn't even articulate my research question. Just weeks before, it had been on the tip of my tongue. Now, I had swallowed it and was choking. When I went to talk to more professors about my work, I was sometimes completely ignored or told that they weren't

the best people to help me. I felt like I was being passed around and that no one thought that my research was important. It was an acutely sharp pain I carried. I was hurt because I was being ignored, but it was even more painful to think that my academic community didn't find Native American women and their perspectives worthwhile. Lasting for about a year, this process was convoluted and abysmally depressing, and I had no compass with which to navigate any of it.

Apparently, being White Justifies being Complicit in Oppression

"Why do you want to study this if you aren't Native American?"

This is a question I came to loathe. It inevitably crept into conversations where my thesis was the subject of discussion. I heard it so frequently from friends, family members, strangers, colleagues and professors that I became a master of anticipating it. I could sense it as it curled on their tongues, as it was pushed past teeth and lips, hit the air, and became a series of corporeal words. And I'd feel myself bristle, face flushing. Immediately, I was on the defense. I suppose it was because this question, a *why* question, never ceased to sound accusatory. And it always seemed to suggest that a white woman simply had no reason addressing a Native American problem like sexual violence against Native American women. The implication? It wasn't *my* problem to address. And the white professors that told me that? Obviously, it wasn't *their* problem, either.

For me, this question was as problematic as it was necessary. In the US, where our history of colonialism, racism, and genocide has been systematically erased from the dominant narrative, it might have been considered odd or outright unnecessary for a white woman to be interested in the oppression of Native American women. After all, I recognized that white people have invested centuries in ensuring that the oppression of indigenous peoples was unquestioned

and unchallenged. In fact, I argued then as I do now that, for members of the dominant culture, the oppression of indigenous peoples isn't even questionable. It just is.

So I thought a better question for people to have asked me would have been, "*How do you intend to study this if you aren't Native American?*"

That question would have been more appropriate, and ultimately more productive, because it would have forced me to acknowledge my positionality. As an upper-middle class, college-educated, white woman, I knew that my body was not only raced, classed, and gendered, but that it was also political. My body was that of a colonizer. While I have been oppressed as a woman, the remaining intersections of my identity have been instrumental in oppressing.

I realized that, were I studying sexual violence against white women, my race would not have been as salient of an issue. It might not even have become an issue at all. Why I was studying it would concern the sexual violence in and of itself. And that I could have answered readily enough because, well, a stranger shoved his hands down my pants at a party without my consent and I've had men threaten to rape me to teach me a lesson more times that I have ever cared to count. I've come to understand more clearly than ever that our research topics, like our identities, are raced, classed, gendered, and political, too. And I can understand now why people regarded my research topic and my investment in it with suspicion. I am the quintessential oppressor seeking to study the oppressed.

But I wanted to move from phrasing what I was doing in terms of me seeking to study the oppressed because that was in and of itself an oppressive mindset. Instead of studying people, instead of further objectifying a marginalized population into the objects of study, I wanted to engage in dialogue and conversation with human beings. I wanted to respect and acknowledge the dignity, agency, and voice that were inherent parts of their humanity. I wanted to do this

because I believe that human liberation is a mutual enterprise. My liberation must be someone else's liberation. And liberation cannot happen if it is contingent upon someone else's oppression.

Before I began researching sexual violence against Native American women, I have to admit that I was woefully ignorant of colonization and how the creation of my nation was made possible through genocide. I knew that colonization had happened and who it had happened to; I knew who were the colonizers and who were the colonized because I could identify the conquerors and the conquered. But I couldn't grasp *how* it had happened. I hadn't yet learned that sexual violence is political violence. It is imperative that I own that ignorance. By virtue of my not questioning it, I was complicit in it.

For me, using a feminist analysis for sexual violence against Native American women was a no-brainer. It seemed so obvious. But that was before I understood what it represented. White. Upper-middle class. College-educated. Heterosexual. What had helped liberate me was silencing others. And how can that possibly be liberation?

A research symposium. Finally, at a research symposium hosted by the University of Washington, Tacoma, the professor of my capstone course required myself and my fellow colleagues to present posters explaining our research to peers and faculty. The purpose behind this assignment was for us to gain experience in talking about our research to an academic audience and to connect those who didn't have thesis committees to potential chairs and readers. In the weeks before the poster was due, I had the good fortune of speaking with two professors who were interested in my work. We'd been discussing my research topic and my interest in using interviews as a method. Their responses towards my research were encouraging; they were the first professors I encountered who asked me *how* I wanted to study sexual violence against Native American women, not *why*.

Because my conversations with these professors went much better than I had anticipated, I invited them both to the research symposium and went about making my poster. I was tired of feeling directionless and so I committed to the poster, spending many days and nights hunched over my kitchen table with scissors and glue sticks and scrapbook paper. While I was designing my poster, I articulated my research question out loud for the first time. On the poster itself, I detailed highlights from my literature review, my proposed research question, methodology, and method. I was confident that my poster represented what I wanted my research to be and why it needed to be that way. Once the night of the research symposium came, I was giddy with excitement. And I should have been excited, because all of my colleagues in the graduate program and a handful of faculty engaged with my poster and were impressed with my plans for my research. In the weeks that followed, the professors I had been talking to agreed to be my chair and my reader for my thesis committee.

Refusing to be Complicit

I'll return to and revise the second question, make a third. *"As a white, upper-middle class, college educated, feminist woman, how do I intend to engage in dialogue and conversation with Native American women about sexual violence?"* People's experiences with feminism and the white women who support it do not have to be ones of marginalization. But it isn't those peoples' responsibilities to make sure that they are not. As white, upper-middle class, college-educated women, it's ours; it's *mine*. Reagon (1981) says that coalition work has to make you uncomfortable. But it also means eliminating the rooms in their entirety. There should be no rooms. That is why I proposed using Native feminism to address the issue of sexual violence against Native American women. It forced me to be uncomfortable. It forced me to recognize that colonialism, sexism, racism, and genocide cannot be separated. If I approached my research

solely from a feminist perspective that did not recognize the intersections of these oppressions, then *my* analysis was incomplete. It wouldn't be useful to anyone, let alone the Native American women I wanted to speak to.

So, here I am, and I'm sick of being complicit in perpetuating the silence of Native American women. I'm ready to tear down these walls with you and to hear you if you are.

A white, upper-middle class, college-educated, feminist woman and her research.

Throughout the undertakings of this research, I made a conscious effort to reflect on my identity as a researcher and a person. For me, it was an ongoing process of ensuring that I acknowledged and was critical of the politics of my identities and the potential for the very real consequences that they could have, given the community I wanted to speak with. I feared that Native American communities would view me as an outsider by virtue of my whiteness and my association with the university. Additionally, I was constantly concerned with and oftentimes troubled by issues of representation, especially after my reading of Alcoff's (2008) work and what it meant to be speaking for others during the analysis of my research. Most of all, I reflected on the long legacy of broken promises, violence, genocide, and colonization that people who look like me, a member of the dominant white culture in the US, have historically used to subjugate Native American peoples and their nations. To say that I was nervous does not quite express the fear, anxiety, and almost debilitating self-consciousness I experienced while researching and conducting interviews.

I certainly had assistance and support along the way from many people and organizations, non-Native American and Native American alike, who passed on valuable information and critiques to me about how to recruit participants and how to present myself. In the beginning stages of recruiting participants, I believe that I relied too heavily on my identity as a student and

my affiliation with the university. Although largely unintentional, I would argue that this was my subconscious solution to distancing myself from the whiteness I perceived as problematic. After all, numerous people had convinced me that it would in fact be problematic. I falsely assumed that my affiliation with the university and identifying myself as a student afforded me an aura of authenticity and trustworthiness. In those first few e-mails and phone calls I made to Native American communities, I failed to give potential participants the specifics about my identities that seemed to elicit participation in the long run.

I never told participants *why* I was studying sexual violence in Native American communities, only that I was studying it. I was never clear on why I was invested in this research or for how long I had been doing it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I never made it plain that I was not Native American. These things, I ridiculously imagined, did not matter in our first introductions but would be made obvious once participants read the informed consent forms or when we met in person to discuss their participation. Of course, this approach typically resulted in unanswered e-mails and voicemails that were never returned.

The first critiques I received about this approach came after a meeting I had with a woman from the University of Washington, Tacoma. She was Native American and had connections with several people in Native American communities and Native American service providers in the Pacific Northwest. During the meeting, she asked me questions about how I was conducting my research and how I was presenting myself in the e-mails and phone calls. She told me that it was imperative that I informed potential participants, especially those who were Native American, in our introductions over the phone and through e-mail, that I was not Native American. Because of the distrust of outsiders that characterizes Native American communities, she advised me to invest myself in relationship building with participants and to honor that. She

reminded me to explain to people that I was not planning on interviewing survivors of sexual violence but that my research focused on community members' understandings of and responses to sexual violence against Native American women. Ultimately, she believed that potential participants would have a better sense of and an increased ability to evaluate what they were getting into and whether or not they wanted to speak with me as a white woman.

About three days after I met with the woman from the university, I discovered through chatting with a co-worker that her mother had worked extensively with Native American populations and Native American women in the field of health care advocacy. I talked with my co-worker's mother over the phone and this close to an hour long conversation reiterated several of the points that the woman from the university had made. Again, I was advised to be explicit about the fact that I was not Native American and to explain that I was not intending to interview survivors of sexual violence but that they were welcome to disclose their experiences during the interviews if they felt comfortable to do so. Additionally, she recommended that I make plain in my e-mails and phone calls to potential participants the benefits they might expect to receive as participants. At the end of our conversation, my co-worker's mother urged me to rewrite my templates for e-mail and phone call introductions, focusing on incorporating her feedback.

What both of these conversations elucidated for me was that, rather than distancing myself from my whiteness and my privilege, it was necessary to own them. Failing to own my whiteness and my privilege was a disservice to potential participants as it prevented them from obtaining the information they needed to make an informed decision about if they even wanted to return my e-mails and phone calls in the first place. That same morning after speaking to my co-worker's mother, I redrafted the template I was using to introduce myself to participants. Below, minus my contact information, is what this template came to look like:

My name is Victoria Olive and I am currently a graduate student at the University of Washington, Tacoma in the Master of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies program. As a part of my master's thesis research, I am looking to interview women about sexual violence against Native American women.

To be eligible for participation, women must be:

- 18 years old or older
- Formal or informal tribal members and/or
- Live and/or
- Work professionally with Native American communities, e.g. community activists, advocates, social workers, lawyers, service providers, etc.

Women do not necessarily have to be Native American themselves or survivors of sexual violence. They can also be women who have extensive experience working with Native American communities.

To be clear, I am not seeking to interview survivors of sexual violence about their experiences.

Although women are welcome to discuss this during the interview if they feel comfortable doing so, the interview questions are much more macro in scope and include:

- What are some of the most pressing concerns in your community? Do you consider sexual violence to be one of them?
- Is sexual violence discussed in the community? If so, under what circumstances and how?
- Do you believe there are adequate resources and services in the community designed to support survivors of sexual violence? If so, what makes them appropriate and useful? If not, where and how are they lacking?

Although I am not Native American myself, I have been extremely invested in this research since I was a sociology undergraduate at Seattle University. Over the past five years, I have learned that the bulk of available research produces statistics and other quantitative data. Few studies have used interviews when conducting research about sexual violence and Native American women. I find this lack of voice to be problematic.

The women whom this issue most affects have been offered extremely limited opportunities to speak out. Native American women have historically combated cultural and social silencing from both the United States in general and from academia in particular. I sincerely believe that the knowledge, voices, and perspectives of Native American women and women who have relationships to their communities must be sought out, taken seriously, and included in the conversation about sexual violence. Further, I would argue that listening to these women may in fact lead to an entirely new conversation that will prompt us to be critical of our own frameworks for addressing sexual violence not only against Native American women, but all women. I hope that the interviews begin lasting and meaningful conversations across communities and ultimately inspire a collaborative effort for action and change.

Shortly after revising and utilizing this new introductory template, I began receiving e-mail responses and phone calls from the programs, agencies, and people I had been reaching out to. A service provider from the Tacoma area promised to put me into contact with a woman who worked at a tribal domestic violence shelter. This woman from the shelter, Katrina (pseudonym), agreed to meet with me in person at the shelter to discuss my research the following week. We ended up having to reschedule this appointment a few times and I continually expressed my interest in meeting her. Finally, on a gorgeous sunny day in early June, I arrived at the shelter, where Katrina greeted me openly and warmly. There were two other women in the room, and I also introduced myself to them; one of these women was Arya (pseudonym). Katrina and I sat at a table in the main room of the shelter and began talking not only about my research but about sexual violence against Native American women in her community, how sexual violence was discussed in her community, the availability and usefulness of services, and her tribe's goals of beginning sexual violence awareness projects and education. Although Katrina herself did not seem to want to participate in the research, the meeting I had with her was productive in a way that I had not anticipated. Here is an excerpt from my research memo that day:

Met with Katrina from the [tribal domestic violence shelter] this morning. I also met her colleague Arya. Katrina was extremely accommodating and open with me and seemed to be genuinely interested in my project.

She told me that she will inform group participants about my research and that I should come to events that the shelter hosts, such as the candle light vigil in October. She said that women often share their stories there and that people may be willing to speak to me during and afterwards.

After I left our meeting, Katrina e-mailed me and told me that Arya herself is a sexual assault survivor and was interested in sharing her story with me. However, Arya is uncomfortable putting this in writing and would like to speak to me in person. I e-mailed her to set up a meeting so we can discuss the parameters of my project and the extent to which she is willing to participate.

All in all, I feel that this was a productive meeting. I left feeling that Katrina and I established a good rapport and possible future relationships. She seemed very pleased when I expressed my interest in helping and support her and her community in whatever capacity I could. Arya stayed in a room away from where Katrina and I were talking but she obviously overheard our discussion. I'm glad I took the few extra moments to introduce myself to her and say goodbye to her.

Through these series of interactions, Arya became the first Native American woman to participate in my research. She also proved to be a valuable contact, as she introduced me to her mother, Josephine (pseudonym). After becoming the second Native American woman to participate, Josephine introduced me to her friend and co-worker Mary (pseudonym), who became the third Native American woman to participate. I am forever in debt to Katrina for trusting me enough to grant me access into this Native American community and to begin my journey of speaking with Native American women about sexual violence.

Back in the early spring of 2015, when I had started to recruit participants, I posted flyers advertising my research and the eligibility requirements for participation throughout my university and at a sexual assault program in Tacoma after receiving permission from an

administrator. Not surprisingly, these efforts did not elicit a single response. I have realized now that, as a non-Native American, it was nearly impossible to gain access into Native American communities without first establishing trust. I think it helped people like Katrina to put a face and a voice behind the e-mails they had been getting. As a non-Native American, gaining access into Native American communities also meant that I had to rely on people who had already earned a position of trust in their communities, such as the woman from the university, my co-worker's mother, the service provider, and Katrina. In a word, these women were gatekeepers and we had to establish that I meant no harm to their community. Consequently, it was necessary for me to reflect on the feedback and critique I received from these individuals, as it enabled me to be honest about who I was, both as a researcher and a person, and the investments I had in the research. I sincerely and graciously contend that, if I had not taken these critiques seriously, not one Native American woman would have agreed to participate in this research.

Despite that I did not get the number of responses I had originally intended to, in the end, I think that snowball sampling was the best strategy for the research itself and for the Native American women to whom I spoke. As participants stated quite plainly during the interviews, this Native American community as a whole does not trust outsiders, and for good reason. Therefore, it was crucial that I made meaningful connections with trusted, respected members of the community who could vouch for my intentions. In fact, although not uncommon in this Native American community, the participants I interviewed all knew each other either through familial or professional relationships. Participants in this research later revealed that trust and confidentiality were primary concerns for this Native American community. As a result, participant needed to know through other community members and services providers that I as a researcher was a safe person.

The drawbacks to being an outsider to this Native American community (and I was definitely an outsider on numerous accounts) meant that the process of recruiting participants was initially slow and frustrating. It was, in my experience, strenuous work to gain access into this Native American community and required me to be critical and reflective of my process and also humble enough to accept and take to heart constructive criticism. However, there was an unforeseen benefit to being an outsider. I had thoroughly believed not being a member of this Native American community was going to be consistently be a significant barrier to this research in terms of how I would gain access and of what participants would feel comfortable revealing and how beneficial participating would be for them. After the end of each interview, I asked participants for feedback on the interview questions, my role as a researcher, and how they felt about being participants. One participant told me in an e-mail that it was a powerful experience for her to share her story of sexual violence with someone she hardly knew and that she felt comfortable and at ease during the interview. For this participant, speaking to someone outside of her community was a positive, rather than a negative experience. I have since speculated about how being an outsider can be a benefit to the research process. Furthermore, I have thought about how engaging in dialogue across differences, such as race, can empower both parties involved and reiterates the importance of coalition building.

I think that participants responded enthusiastically to the interview questions and that I, as a white woman, did not shy away from the instances where they framed their discussions of sexual violence and other violent victimizations within the context of the arrival of settlers. As participants and scholars have argued, colonization and its disastrous effects on Native American nations and their peoples is not included in mainstream media nor in the white, dominant culture of the US. Thus, when I encouraged and took seriously the knowledge these Native American

women had of their historical oppression, it seemed to be instrumental in facilitating our conversations. And participants did not hesitate to express their outrage, frustration, and deep sadness about the problems that were hurting their community and its community members. If I had not asked participants about colonization once they brought it up and had simply chose to ignore it, I believe that I would have been complicit in their silencing at that moment and in the dominant historical narrative of the US.

Even though I obviously did not interview every person I sat down with and met, each of these conversations contributed to my knowledge and helped me frame my approach for this research. I had to be honest about and own my privileges and intentions for the research. This gave participants the information they needed to make a truly informed decision about whether or not to contact me, while simultaneously positioned them as agents and honors how important they were to the research itself. Without their participation, this research could not have moved forward. And, for me, all the experiences I have described above illustrate that we must, in both research and our personal lives, commit to conversing across difference and challenging oppressive, dominant historical and cultural narratives whenever and wherever possible.

VI. Results

I conducted the interviews between June and July of 2015. In order to reach potential participants, I made initial contact through telephone calls and e-mail messages to numerous professional organizations in the greater Tacoma area whose work focused on sexual violence in varying capacities. After explaining the topic, purpose, and objectives behind my research and describing the population I hoped to speak with, I used a snowball sampling method and relied on these initial contacts to connect me to potential participants. Those women who did participate in the interviews then referred me to family, friends, and colleagues they believed

would be also interested in participating. The end result was comprised of the stories of three Native American women. Although I did not originally anticipate interviewing all Native American women, these women shared the same tribal affiliation and enrolled tribal member status. Additionally, these women worked professionally in their Native American community and had significant experience in either growing up or living in the community. To protect their identities, their names and the names of the people they mentioned in the interviews have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Participants

Arya was the first woman I interviewed. She was 28 years old at the time of the interview and self-identified as an enrolled tribal member and half white. Because she is half white and the child of divorced parents, Arya clarified that she had lived in both the Native American community of her tribe and what she called "mainstream white culture." Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Arya moved back and forth between her tribal community's housing and mainstream white culture, living at various times with her grandmother, her uncle, her aunt, and her mother. During the interview, Arya disclosed to me that she was a survivor of sexual violence. Currently, Arya usually works the night shift at her tribe's domestic violence program, where she has been employed for the past five years, switching to the day shift when the shelter does not have clients.

A few weeks later, I interviewed Josephine, whom Arya had referred me to. Josephine is 51 years old and also self-identified as an enrolled tribal member. Her mother is an enrolled tribal member as well and her father was in the army. She was born at Fort Lewis in Washington state. Like Arya, she lived with different family members throughout her childhood, staying with her grandparents in Oregon, visiting her father when he was stationed in Germany, and returning

to Washington when her father finished his military service. However, she has been in the Tacoma area since 1992. Josephine comes from a large family and spoke of its members fondly. She has four daughters, the youngest of which is actually Arya. In addition to her biological daughters, Josephine has two step-daughters and raised her nephew. Her husband's brother joined her family when her husband adopted him. Josephine is the oldest child in her family and has a brother and two sisters who live in the area, as well. At this moment, Josephine works professionally for her tribe.

Later in July, Mary became the final participant in my research and the last woman I interviewed. Mary is 41 years old and self-identified as an enrolled tribal member. Similar to Josephine, family is an integral part of Mary's life; she has a daughter and a granddaughter that she professed to be her "world." She is very close to her cousin and her cousin's children, too. Even though Mary described herself as an "isolated person" and a "workaholic", she seemed to be active and creative in her free time. She avidly reads about Native American history and also enjoys photography, walking on the beach, and camping. Although her mother kept her from the tribe in her childhood, Mary has lived in the greater Tacoma area since 1996 and has "just never left." Formerly an employee for her tribe's casino, Mary now works professionally at the same building as Josephine and manages her department. She and Josephine are colleagues and Josephine introduced us.

Interviews

The interviews themselves lasted approximately 50 minutes in length and were semi-structured. Being flexible, the interviews allowed participants and myself to explore the interview questions in depth and sometimes took us to unforeseen, though relevant, areas of discussion about sexual violence in their Native American community. The data from the

interviews resulted in four themes and their accompanying subthemes. Broadly, these themes included community relationships, the frequency and context of sexual violence in the community itself, the community's responses to sexual violence, and pathways to empowerment and social change.

VII. Analysis

"Who is Your Family?"

When I asked participants to describe what it was like either growing up or living in their Native American community, they immediately began framing their community as family. Although not always formed through direct blood connections, it is not unusual for members of this Native American community to be related. In fact, blood connections, family ties, and lineages are one of the first things members of this community attempt to establish when introduced.

Josephine: I think in our tribal community when we introduce ourselves it's usually identifying what family we're from, and my family's probably your family.

Arya: We wanna know, "Who is your family?" Like when you meet somebody for the first time, it's, "What tribe are you? Who's your family? What's your mom's name?" So, umm, we kind of get a sense of your lineage when we first do our introductions...and then we'll, sometimes we'll, "Who's your grandma?" Because we might be related to that family.

Laughing, Mary told me that she actually does not date in her community because she feels it's too likely that she will be related to potential partners. "I don't date in this community because I'm probably related to them," Mary said. "And it's one of those things, you know - I'm good! No, I've even had we're - we're only like twelve cousins two times removed by marriage - no! The term cousin is there. No! You know, it's - it's family." It became clear early on in the

interview process that a significant part of how participants understood their community as family was indeed through blood connections, literal family ties, and lineages.

Certainly, it is not uncommon for family members in this Native American community to become integral parts of each other's lives, nor is it unusual for many generations of a family to live near or with each other. Grandparents, uncles, and aunts help raise and provide for children. "I lived with my grandma for many years," Arya stated. "I ended up moving in with my uncle when I was 11 and I stayed with him until I was 16. And I went back to my mom's for one year. And then when I was 17, I moved in with my aunt until I was 18." Like Arya, Josephine was raised by her grandparents. Mary, who has a daughter and a granddaughter, spends a considerable amount of her time with her family, and is very close to her cousin. "She's a lot for me," Mary said about her cousin. "She's a good strength for me." In Josephine's experience, children and grandchildren often move in with elders, especially when the tribe provides the elders with new housing. While this can be problematic for elders in that the family may encroach upon them and their resources, Josephine believes that, ultimately, elders are less lonely. Josephine clarified for me that this phenomenon, of several generations living under the same roof, is largely cultural. "It comes from longhouses," Josephine said. "Sometimes ten families in one longhouse."

Even if community members are not directly related through blood or marriage, participants told me stories about the strong relationships and bonds that foster mutual assistance, support, and love among members of their Native American community. Participants often referred to everyone in this Native American community knowing each other, and this affection for community members is not just limited to people from the same tribe. "We all take care of everybody," Mary began. "And it doesn't - I mean, and it's not just [our tribe]. There's - it's all the

Natives in this community." In the course of her line of work, Mary has interacted with "in excess of 900 different clients," and she assured me proudly that she knows their families and their histories; she's met their children and held their babies. Mary elaborated, "I have a client out here on one of my job sites, who, when his daughter went into labor, I was his first phone call. And so we build relationships like that. We're there to help each other no matter what." Arya, who grew up in tribal housing, described this Native American community as a very strong community that had to stick together. It has been well documented through research that Native American communities are home to some of the worst impoverishment and unemployment rates in the US (Bubar, 2010; Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Poupart, 2003; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Norton & Manson, 1996; United States Census Bureau, 2011). The tribal housing Arya spent her childhood in was located in a wealthier, more predominantly white area of town. "We were like different than everyone else," Arya said, alluding to these real and dire economic circumstances. "We didn't have money and we didn't live clean." It seemed to me that, for Arya, these strong relationships and bonds among members of her community proved beneficial sources of support in the face of poverty.

Apart from blood connections, literal family ties, lineages, and strong relationships and bonds, participants' notions of family also appeared to be grounded in shared racial identity. Josephine told me the following story, which highlights the importance of Native American and tribal identities for people in this community. Her father was in the military and Josephine was stationed with him in Germany as a child.

Josephine: When I lived in Germany, umm, the neighbors downstairs from me were from the Crow nation and they adored me just for the simple fact that I was a tribal member. I didn't have to share anything with them to become friends with them other than that I was a tribal member, too. And that was all that we needed to be the best of friends. There were no expectations or need for

waiting and seeing and observing and testing things or anything like that. It was just kind of an unconditional acceptance. And I think when tribal people get out of that community, they don't feel that. People are always searching for that common ground so there's not that awkward silence or that need to be accepted or anything like that.

Even though she was far from her original tribal community, the shared experience of being Native American and a tribal member served as the foundation for an instant bond between herself and her neighbors.

People who are enrolled tribal members like the women who participated in this research tend to root themselves in their Native American community and stay involved, whether through work or living within the community, for extended periods of time. Arya, Josephine, and Mary all spent time away from their community as a result of living with other family members or living in different states. However, after they returned to their Native American community, they expressed no interest in leaving. For example, Mary's mother kept her away from the tribe throughout her childhood, saying, "I really came back to the tribe in my early 20s. So it was 1996. And then I've just never left." Though she lived briefly in Oregon, Josephine has lived in this Native American community since 1992. Arya also lived in Oregon at one point but she has worked at her tribe's domestic violence shelter for the past five years. For Mary, people in her tribe leaving the Native American community is relatively common. Returning to and reintegrating into this community appears easier than in other Native American communities, a process which will be detailed in a moment.

Given the emphasis on family and connectedness in this Native American community, elders are vital members of the community and they hold positions of deep respect and trust. Most importantly, they play a crucial role in the disclosures of sexual violence. Not only do they help rear and support their children and grandchildren, their nephews and nieces, they are people

that all community members can turn to in times of devastation and trauma. If a survivor of sexual violence needs to make a disclosure, Mary said, "They're [survivors] going to go down to the lady down the hall where they know it's gonna be confidential, where they know it's not judgmental. They're gonna come talk to me, they're gonna talk to their auntie." In the years after her sexual trauma, Arya disclosed to her older sister. She elaborated further on disclosures, sexual violence, and elders: "Any disclosures I've heard of as a child, umm, either come from an elder or are made to elders, usually, cuz they're safe people." The assurance of confidentiality and trust are crucial to Native American women's decisions to disclose sexual violence. It is for this reason that elders become a necessary strength for this Native American community.

For participants, family and a shared sense of culture are precisely what made their community markedly different from what they referred to as mainstream white culture.

Mary: I live [outside of the Native American community] and it's totally different there. You don't know your neighbor's name. You guys - they might wave as they drive by. Here [in this Native American community], you know your neighbors, you know what's goin' on. If somebody needs somethin', they know they can go to each other and they're gonna help...and that's how we are. It's automatic. You need somethin', and if I'm here, I'm gonna do it.

Returning to many generations living under the same roof, Josephine expressed that this is also what makes her Native American community different from mainstream white culture. "We all live in today's society," she stated. "Each person has their own house and we're not in the gist of it, I guess." Arya echoed Mary's response, particularly focusing on family ties. "I consider [this Native American community] my home-base, my core and I haven't really strayed too far away from it," she explained. "I feel like there's more connectedness in a way than, umm, in mainstream. It's like you're just somebody else, you know? It doesn't matter who your family is, who is your mom." Arya asserted that this connectedness and the emphasis on family is not only

different from mainstream white culture, but that it's her identity. As a woman who has lived in mainstream white culture, she spoke about her experiences there, saying, "I think it's very - it feels kind of crowded, like, it gets you lost in the crowd, like I don't have a personal identity in this mainstream because it's *so* crowded. I mean, it's - I don't know how to explain that but here in the Native community, I have a sense of individuality." For Arya, this Native American community's emphasis on family is cultural. "I can connect with the culture," she told me. "There's a strong sense of culture, wherein, umm, mainstream it could be whatever the media shows you could be the culture." This makes the practice of asking, "Who's your family?" in this community that much more meaningful for community members. It's about blood connections, family ties, being able to trace your Native American lineage, affirming your tribal affiliations, and communicating a shared experience of culture.

Additionally, Mary was quick to point out to me that this Native American community is also different from other Native American communities. According to Mary, the urban nature of this Native American community, being "right in the middle of the city", makes it different. "Our tribal nation is different than in many nations, than many other nations across the country...many of the tribes here in Washington, in western Washington, you'll find similar to here." Continuing, she advised me that the attitude towards leaving and returning to the Native American community is much different on the reservations and in poorer Native American communities. In Mary's words, "You'd get a totally different reaction from most of the people on the rez. Umm, when you leave the reservation and come back, you're an outsider...you become an outcast...when you start going more east, you're gonna find a lot different attitudes." Apart from being more urban, this tribe as a whole is also relatively more economically sufficient than other tribal nations. Josephine told me that this tribe has been successful in the gaming industry. Being

urban and more economically sufficient may be attributable to the reasons that this Native American community is welcoming and supportive to returning members and other tribal members from different tribes.

Throughout the course of my conversations with participants on the subject of growing up and living in their Native American community, what I continually found remarkable is the extent to which notions of family are not discussed in relation to sexual violence in the available literature. However, it was necessary for me to include questions about how participants understood their community and the people who comprise it because I am an outsider. As our conversations progressed, it became clear to me that it is extremely difficult to talk about sexual violence in this Native American community without taking into consideration how it is related to notions of family. Although participants viewed and framed the members of their Native American community and the community as family itself, the prevalence of sexual violence presents challenges to the maintenance of these relationships and the closeness and support that they create. As it will be seen in the next section, everybody knowing each other and high degrees of affinity can be problematic. Familiarity and closeness can actually serve as damaging barriers to how the survivor and the community in general responds to sexual violence.

Sexual Violence in a Native American Community

"Every single family." The literature indicates that Native American women suffer some of the highest rates of sexual violence of any population in the US (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004; Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Despite the discrepancies that arise between data collected through national and local surveys, quantitative data suggests that approximately one-fourth to one-third of Native American women will be sexually victimized in their lifetimes (Bachman et al., 2010; Black et al., 2011; Tjaden &

Thoennes, 1998). Although participants in this research were comprised of three women, and therefore, their experiences are not representative of Native American communities as a whole or this Native American community specifically, it nevertheless remains significant that two participants of the three I interviewed self-identified as survivors of sexual violence. Over the past two decades, scholars have speculated that rates of sexual violence against Native American women are much higher than what is reflected in the available quantitative data (Bubar, 2010; Deer, 2005). In speaking with participants, these women affirmed that sexual violence is indeed a pervasive and persistent challenge for this Native American community. Similar to Bubar (2010) and Deer (2005), participants provided estimates of incidents of sexual violence in their community that were considerably higher than those found in the results of quantitative surveys.

For Arya, Josephine, and Mary, it is almost impossible for members of their community to escape sexual violence, particularly Native American women and children. When I asked Arya how many members of the community or families in the community she thought sexual violence affected, she sighed heavily and replied, "Every single family. In my opinion. That means one person in every single family." Even as a child, Arya was fully aware of the prevalence of sexual violence in her community.

Arya: Like in the apartments where I grew up, we were all close as kids and I would say every kid that lived in those apartments with me that were my peers, I would say every single one of them has been sexually assaulted, except for one that I know for sure was not.

Josephine stated that sexual violence happens in this Native American community "more often than anyone would like to admit". Like Arya, Josephine observed the prevalence of sexual violence among children while she lived in tribal housing.

Josephine: I know that when we moved into tribal housing, I know that there was issues with, oh, with sexual abuse with the kids. It got so that I couldn't - I had to move.

As with Arya and Josephine, Mary spoke about how the trauma associated with sexual violence affects every member of this Native American community.

Mary: I think it affects them all. Not that I think they've all been personally violated, but if they haven't, I guarantee they have a sister or a cousin or a friend that has. So it affects them all, a hundred percent.

Ultimately, given its pervasiveness, participants were adamant that sexual violence is one of the most pressing issues facing this Native American community. Participants' responses concerning the rates of sexual violence present in their community echo the words of Deer (2005) and Bubar (2010); both of these scholars argue that the Native American community members and elders they spoke with were unable to identify a single woman from their community who had not been sexually victimized.

Even though I did not ask participants directly about their personal experiences with sexual violence, Arya and Josephine revealed that they were survivors of sexual violence. While each of their stories were unique and reflective of their own personal, lived-experience, they bore striking similarities to the available quantitative data on sexual violence against Native American women.

Arya: I have been sexually assaulted, umm, by a non-Native but he is, umm, my sister's husband now and so he's married to a tribal member and in my family because my niece and nephew are his offspring. So, umm, he is now a tribal police officer and, umm, there have been no reports.

Arya spent the next several minutes elaborating on the circumstances surrounding her sexual assault, including her disclosure process, her interactions with law enforcement, her emotional states, and her harrowing struggles with victim-shaming and victim-blaming. While Mary only briefly mentioned her personal experience with sexual violence, what she did tell me also connected to the available body of literature. When she was a young adult, Mary was raped

by her boyfriend. This man, now an ex-boyfriend, continues to stalk her nearly twenty-one years later. Mary did not make it clear as to whether or not her ex-boyfriend was Native American or a tribal member. However, Arya's story verifies that Native American women are extremely likely to be sexually victimized by non-Native Americans (Bachman et al., 2010; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004). Research has additionally indicated that acquaintances, intimate partners, male relatives, and other known persons are often the perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women; Arya's abuser was her sister's husband and Mary's abuser was her boyfriend (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004; Yuan et al., 2006). Although it will be discussed further in a later section, it is important to indicate here, as Arya did, that Native American women are extremely unlikely to see the perpetrators of their sexual victimizations arrested or prosecuted (Bachman et al., 2010; Golden, 2012). Therefore, the available quantitative research does seem to reflect individual Native American women's experiences of sexual violence in these respects.

As can be seen from the excerpts presented above, however, participants did not always assign obvious sex pronouns to survivors when describing the prevalence of sexual violence in this Native American community. Immediately, during my transcription of the interviews, I noticed the proliferation of non-sex specific pronouns participants used, such as "person," "them," and "kid". This struck me as important because the interviews were centered on sexual violence against Native American women. I was reminded of my initial meeting with Mary, where we talked about her interest and potential participation in this research. Mary wanted to know if she could introduce me to male participants. I explained to her that my research was focused on Native American women. She then asked me, quite bluntly, "Well, why aren't you talking to men?" The question caught me off guard, as nothing I had encountered in the literature

on sexual violence against Native American women had prepared me to answer it. During their interviews, Arya and Josephine also talked about how common sexual violence is against the Native American men in their community. Data on Native American men and sexual assault is extremely limited as a whole, but Black et al. (2011) estimate that as many as one-fifth of Native American men has experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetimes. While beyond the scope of this research, I would argue that my conversations with Mary, Arya, and Josephine and the lack of sex specific pronouns like "she" suggests that sexual violence is in fact pervasive in this Native American community, but that it is not necessarily limited to women; it may, as Arya argued, affect one person in every single family. Thus Native American men and children could be perceived as being at an elevated risk for sexual victimization, as well.

"Open a history book." In order to contextualize and explain the high prevalence of sexual violence against Native American women in the US, scholars and activists have repeatedly framed this prevalence within a discussion of European colonization. Such scholars argue that colonization has fundamentally impacted, transformed, and in many instances, infringed upon or completely destroyed Native American social and gender systems, reproductive rights, political and judicial systems, and socioeconomic systems (Bubar, 2013; Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Golden, 2012; Holzman, 1996; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a; Weaver, 2009). The historical legacies of European colonization have contributed to the present-day and continued oppression of Native American peoples, resulting in but not limited to poverty, poor educational achievement, and legal limitations imposed upon Native American nations and their governments. In line with scholars and activists, participants contextualized the marginalization of Native Americans, and the marginalization of and the violence perpetrated against Native

American women in particular, within the extensive history of the colonization of Native American peoples and nations. Due to the oppression, broken promises, and abuse that have typically characterized the interactions between Native Americans, the "settlers" who colonized what would become the US, and the US government, participants and this Native American community as a whole distrust outsiders.

All participants spoke from a perspective that acknowledged how "settlers," which was the terminology they used to talk about European colonizers and colonialist projects, have had profound effects on the fabric of Native American societies and their peoples. For participants, these effects are apparent in the distinct loss of Native American culture, the suppression of Native American languages, and the removal of Native American children from their communities during the period of assimilation. Throughout this period, Native Americans were forcibly assimilated and forcibly relocated into white culture, reservations and boarding schools.

Arya: I also feel sad because I feel like this culture has been tainted by settlers and the colonists.

So it's, umm, it's not pure anymore.

Arya: I didn't live back then so I can't remember how it was before but, umm, I do feel like we have adopted a lot of white culture because our culture has been wiped out. And so we have nothing left besides what they teach us.

Josephine: Our language was taken from us. Our children were taken away.

Mary: We've lost - we've lost our way of how to raise children, in a lot of ways, because, as little as two generations ago, there - well, even actually today - the government is still stealing our children.

Mary: But having our children stolen from our elders and stuff like that generations ago. Not only were the children stripped of everything in their culture but the adults lost their way of how to raise them because they weren't there. So there's a major disconnect.

Mary: And we have come so far away from our traditions and our culture.

The above policies that participants referred to were supported and sanctioned by the US government. Scholars have argued that these policies gave the legal rationale and justification for the US government to perpetuate culturally genocidal activities against Native American peoples while simultaneously weakening the power of indigenous governments (Golden, 2012; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002). Mary was all too aware that these practices were imposed upon Native American nations at the behest of the US government.

Mary: It's government sanctioned.

Mary: The violence has been sanctioned and allowed [by the US government].

Participants understood these policies and the targeting of Native American culture, language, and children as deriving from the racism and discrimination against Native Americans that prevailed in the years of European colonization and later shaped interactions between the US government and Native American nations. In fact, participants were able to connect the US government sanctioned racism and discrimination against Native Americans to both cultural and physical genocide.

Mary: I mean, they used to print newspapers paying people to be violent against Natives.

Josephine: There's moments in history that it's legal to hunt and shoot Indians because they're considered wild animals, and blacks were considered domesticated animals. And settlers coming through, especially uneducated people, coming through, treating people less than - basically abused them.

Like Josephine, scholars have commented on the racist ideologies that were inherent and necessary to the effectiveness of European efforts to colonize indigenous communities and their governments. Smith (2003; 2005a; 2011/2012) argues that the racist ideologies of European colonizers considered Native Americans to be enemies of the emerging state. Acts of genocide perpetuated against Native Americans during colonization were justified by equating Native Americans to dirt and filth (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a). These racist ideologies legitimized the

framing of Native Americans as "wild animals," making them deserving of violence and rewarding settlers for participating in this violence.

For Josephine especially, the relationship between the period of assimilation, government sanctioned cultural genocide and violence, and racism can be exemplified by the practice of taking Native American children from their communities and forcibly enrolling them in boarding schools. The fact that Josephine's grandmother was sent to a boarding school just two generations ago illustrates the pervasiveness of these policies and the cultural and physical damage they inflicted upon Native American communities.

Josephine: There's signs out in front of the boarding schools that say, "Kill the Indian, save the man."

Josephine: We have no way of verifying for the boarding schools, but I talk about the boarding schools because it was part of my grandparents' history and what they were living through. And I know that my grandma, personally, so I can testify to my personal view, is that she was never abused, ever, until boarding schools.

When I asked Josephine what kind of abuse her grandmother had been subjected to, whether it was verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual, she was uncertain about how to name the abuse. However, she concluded without hesitation that her grandmother had been terrified while she was at the boarding schools.

Josephine: Well, she - I was so young I don't know about - I hardly knew about sexual. I know that she was scared. She lived in fear.

As Josephine made clear, the overriding goal behind these boarding schools was to "Kill the Indian, save the man." These infamous words were actually uttered by Richard Pratt, who opened the first off-reservation boarding school in 1879 (Smith, 2005a). What Pratt was advocating for was effectively cultural rather than physical genocide and resulted in a mandated policy that ensured that more than 100,000 Native American children were forcibly taken from

their communities and enrolled in the boarding schools (Smith, 2005a). Statements made by Pratt, such as, "Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit," demonstrate two points (as cited in Smith, 2005a, p. 36). First, the boarding schools were inundated with racist ideologies about the inherent savagery and inferiority of Native Americans. Second, the aim of the boarding schools was to contribute to the eradication of Native Americans through the suppression of their language and culture. At the boarding schools for the majority of the year, Native American children were forced to abandon their cultural and religious traditions and to instead practice Christianity and speak English (Smith, 2005a). And while boarding schools advocated for cultural genocide, they also committed physical genocide against Native American children. Smith (2005a) clarifies that administrators of the boarding schools endeavored to run them as inexpensively as possible, an oversight that resulted in rampant over-crowding, inadequate food and medical care, child labor, and too often, starvation and death. In 2001, the Truth Commission of Genocide in Canada issued a report that maintained that boarding schools were responsible for the murders of over 50,000 Native American children (Smith, 2005a).

Since their inception, boarding schools have been sites for unchecked physical and sexual abuse against Native American children, which has continued to proliferate in the modern era. Church officials at boarding schools have routinely resorted to brutal methods of torture and execution to enforce policies regarding Christianity and English, including but not limited to beating, poisoning, hanging, and starvation. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs, "children were frequently beaten severely with whips, rods and fists, chained and shackled, bound hand and foot and locked in closets, basements, and bathrooms, and had their heads shaved or hair closely cropped" (as cited in Smith, 2005a, p. 39). There have additionally

been several official cases and complaints documenting the extent of the sexual abuse against Native American children at boarding schools. "Child molestation at BIA (BIA) schools is a dirty little secret and has been for years," a former BIA school administrator stated (as cited in Smith, 2005a, p. 38). As recently as 1987, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found that a boarding school teacher in Arizona had sexually assaulted at least 142 boys; there is also evidence that the BIA has hired known pedophiles and other perpetrators of sexual violence to teach at boarding schools (Smith, 2005a). It was not until 1987 and 1989 respectively that the BIA issued policies on reporting sexual abuse and doing background checks on potential teachers, though Smith (2005a) questions the effectiveness of these policies. Thus, it is a small wonder that Josephine's grandmother lived in perpetual fear and suffered abuse during her time in boarding school.

However, boarding schools were not an isolated incident of violence perpetuated against Native American peoples, their children, and their communities. Rather, they are indicative of the manner in which European colonizers and eventually the US government sanctioned racially and politically motivated cultural and physical genocide against Native Americans. Participants believed that the proliferation of violence and oppression against Native American communities, and especially against women, can be traced to the arrival of settlers on the American continent.

Arya: I think that violence against women, umm, has been a growing issue all over, not just the Native community. But I feel like it has been, umm, very strong here after, umm, after settlers.

Me: A lot of media sources are framing this [violence against Native American women] as a modern issue, so it helps me when I hear you say that this became much more of an issue after settlers came. So would you say this has been an ongoing issue since the colonizers came?

Arya: Yes. The oppression of Native Americans in general but especially of women, yes.

As the above exchange illustrates, Arya was the first participant to frame the oppression of Native American women within the context of colonization. I deemed it appropriate to ask her further probing questions about colonization, as many scholars, such as Smith (2003/2005a) and Ross (2009), have argued that colonization is an appropriate context for analyzing sexual violence against Native American women. Despite that Arya and I were using different terminology (she referred to "settlers" while I referred to "colonizers"), it became clear that we were thinking about the same process. Furthermore, Bubar (2013) has contended that framing sexual violence within colonization legitimizes Native Americans' knowledge and experiences of their own oppression and histories. At this moment in Arya's interview, I felt it was necessary to acknowledge and validate her understandings of the connection between the arrival of settlers and the oppression of Native American women. After the interview, I made a note of Arya's discussion of settlers and colonization and became curious as to what other participants had to say on the subject. Because colonization and settlers seemed to be vital to Arya's perspective, I included probing questions about colonization and settlers in the subsequent interviews I conducted where it seemed relevant to do so.

Josephine: Yes. And typically, if a child's been sexually abused, they become abusers. We've been dealing with that, as far as I know, back to boarding schools. When assimilation came in.

Me: A lot of the sources I've read talk about this period in this way. They also argue that you have to contextualize it within colonization. How do you feel about those sort of statements, that colonization brought problems into this community?

Josephine: Yeah, it's pretty obvious.

Mary: I love Native history, so it's - I think that's probably why I look at this from a farther generation past problem. Because the violence has been sanctioned and allowed...It's become more subtle in certain ways but every right they take from a Native person, every child they steal tells me they're still doin' it today.

Me: So would you consider colonization to be a part of this [violence in the Native American community]?

Mary: Yeah. That would probably be where it all started. I mean, Native people being the loving, family orientate - orientated people they are, the settlers came here and they accepted them with open arms. I wish they would've picked up their damn bow and arrows and shot 'em before they got off the boat! Because, umm, at first, we outnumbered them. And then, pretty soon, they did.

Therefore, European colonization and the arrival of settlers dramatically changed and often destroyed Native American peoples and communities. In the colonial narrative, violence against Native Americans was legitimized and committed with impunity. This routinely manifested as the implementation of and normalization of gender violence within Native American social systems. The available literature has detailed the processes by which European colonizers transformed these systems through patriarchy and sexism, which served to eliminate the cultural practices that had previously protected Native American community members, particularly women and children, from violence (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ross, 2009; Smith, 2005a; Tippeconic Fox, 2009; Weaver, 2009). Before the arrival of settlers, indigenous social systems were usually sexually egalitarian and balanced; in terms of gender, women and men were not subordinate to one another and gender relations were based on mutual dependence (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Bubar, 2013; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2005b; Weaver, 2009). Native American women held positions of power and reverence in their communities, serving as political, social, spiritual, and religious leaders, and were valued for their contribution to the bearing, teaching, and socializing of children (Deer, 2005; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Ramirez, 2004). Thus, scholars have concluded that sexual violence was a rare occurrence in Native American communities prior to the arrival of settlers (Bubar & Thurman,

2004; Deer, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2011/2012; Tippeconic Fox, 2009; Weaver, 2009). Throughout the course of the interviews, participants reflected on how settlers transformed and frequently destroyed the above social and gender systems of Native American peoples, and, by proxy, marginalized and oppressed Native American women.

Mary: They treated their women, had as much say as a man. Women were not *beneath* the men.

The women were an integral part of the operating of the tribe, of that little band. Because without the women, the men - hunting still does them no good if you don't have the women there to cook the meat. That entire situation. You're not gonna have flavor for your meat if the women aren't gathering berries or breeding your children. Umm, and it even goes so far to the gay and lesbian community. Traditionally speaking, a person of alternate - alternative sexual orientations, in our beliefs, was revered. Somebody that walked in two worlds, very spiritual. Now - look at how they're treated. And we have come so far from our traditions and culture.

Arya: I've been told stories of how it was before settlers and it was very matriarchal.

Within their discussions of how colonizers transformed and destroyed indigenous social and gender systems, participants, like the available literature, seemed to suggest that violence against women was indeed a rare occurrence. Scholars have also put forth evidence that describes how severely perpetrators of violence against women and children were punished. For instance, perpetrators of sexual violence in Native American communities were typically banished from the tribal community, sentenced to death, or publically humiliated (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a). It was therefore significant when participants affirmed the rarity of sexual violence in their communities prior to the arrival of settlers and the nature of justice.

Mary: I mean, now don't get me wrong. They had their little war games. This tribe would go steal their horses and that - they did do that. That was there. But if you hurt a child, it was swift justice. If you hurt a woman, it was swift justice. If you hurt an elder, it was swift justice.

Arya: If a man was to hurt a woman or to sexually assault her, he was shunned. And, umm, it saddens me that things aren't that way anymore. It's not the way that we've been running our society for thousands of years anymore.

This change in indigenous communities addressed perpetrators of sexual violence can also be traced to the effects of colonization on Native American political and judicial systems. Previously, indigenous governments and communities had provided swift justice to women who had been sexually victimized (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Smith, 2005a). Additionally, Native American justice systems were victim-centered and restorative, aiming to ensure the agency of the victim and promote healing between community members (Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Hamby, 2008; Poupart, 2003; Smith, 2011/2012). However, since the arrival of settlers, colonialism and paternalism have characterized the US government's political relationship with indigenous nations. To gain control over their land, their resources, and their peoples, the US government enacted policies and laws that effectively weakened the power of tribal governments (Lujan & Adams, 2004; Smith, 2003). The US government relied on discourses of racism that propagated the savagery and inferiority of Native Americans to legally justify these practices (Bubar & Thurman, 2004); Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Weaver, 2009). What resulted then was a dramatic change in how indigenous governments and communities could legally address sexual violence against Native American women.

When Arya referred to it, she saw that the relationship between the federal government and Native American governments is typically characterized by restrictions and limitations. Such restrictions and limitations impede the effectiveness and the cultural appropriateness with which Native American governments control the legal aspects surrounding sexual violence in their communities. Arya reflected on how colonization transformed Native American legal systems.

Arya: Yeah, umm, before, umm - we didn't have like a justice system in the sense of you go to court and a judge who overrules and who was a third party that had nothing to do with it, and wasn't there, you know, can only go off testimony. I don't feel like that's the way it was in small, village-sized tribes. Umm, I feel whoever was involved or has immediate say, umm, like, you know, the parents or whoever they respect, maybe an elder, or if it's a chief.

Arya: I'm also not sure if, umm, my tribe had a chief. Now, today, we have seven council members that make up the leadership of the tribe but I almost feel the natural way would be like a democracy where there is no one true leader.

Without explicitly naming them, Arya went on to describe the various laws and court cases that the US government has imposed upon Native American legal systems in regards to jurisdiction for crimes committed on Indian land. Arya especially emphasized how these laws have impeded Native American governments in their ability to prosecute perpetrators of violent crimes.

Arya: I feel that more serious crimes, tribal police does not have the power to prosecute. Umm, if it's a murder or a very serious case, it's always forwarded to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Umm, recently tribes have been given the power to prosecute.

Arya: Umm, so they have passed, umm, a law that tribes can prosecute their own, umm, crimes on their reservation and within their community. However, it's limited. Umm, most tribes have a maximum of one year service time in jail for any crime, no matter what it is.

The laws and court case that Arya referred to were probably the Major Crimes Act (MCA), *Oliphant v. Squamish Indian Tribe (Oliphant)*, the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA) and the recent reauthorization of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA). The MCA triggers federal, not tribal jurisdiction, for major crimes, including rape, committed on Indian land, meaning that such cases would be forwarded to the BIA (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002). In *Oliphant*, the US Supreme Court ruled that all tribal governments did not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians who

committed crimes on reservations, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or tribal status ((Bubar, 2010; Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Golden, 2012; Holcomb, 1999; Lujan & Adams, 2004). When Native American governments can prosecute outside of these parameters, the ICRA limits tribal courts to legally sentencing perpetrators to a maximum of one year in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine (Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004). The recently passed law Arya spoke of is most likely the reauthorization of the VAWA, which has increased situations where tribal governments can legally assume jurisdiction over perpetrators of crimes on Indian land (GPO, 2013). However, as Arya reminded me, these situations remain limited as tribal governments can only legally assume jurisdiction if the defendant "resides in the Indian country of the participating tribe", "is employed in the Indian country of the participating tribe" or "is a spouse, intimate partner, or dating partner of (I) member of the participating tribe; or (II) an Indian who resides in the Indian country" (GOP, 2013, p. 69). Therefore, tribal governments like Arya's still cannot legally assume jurisdiction over non-Native American strangers or acquaintances who do not meet the above parameters and commit major crimes on Indian land.

Although Josephine was the only participant to discuss the colonization of Native American reproductive rights, it is crucial to devote attention to it here. The literature indicates that the involuntary and forced sterilization of Native American women is yet another manifestation of the genocide perpetuated against Native American peoples (Smith, 2005a; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005). Over a period of approximately ten years, the Indian Health Service (IHS) performed thousands of involuntary and unnecessary permanent sterilization procedures, such as tubal ligation, on Native American women without their informed consent ((Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2003; Vicenti Carpio, 2004; Weaver, 2009). Consequently, the IHS sterilized between 25% and 42% of Native American women of

childbearing age; some reservations experienced sterilization rates as high as 80% (Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Ralstin-Lewis, 2005; Smith, 2003; Vicenti Carpio, 2004).

Josephine: Our women were sterilized. They'd go in to get their tonsils out and come out sterilized or used as a test model. They take tribal members' blood, blood samples, take our DNA.

What Josephine said also connects to Césaire's (1995/2009) concept of "thingification". This concept describes the process by which the targets of colonization are transformed from human beings into commodities. Smith (2003; 2005a) has argued extensively that Native Americans lose their bodily integrity and their humanity in such discourses; the bodies of Native Americans become commodities for white consumption. Josephine reminded me that Native American peoples and women have been considered test subjects, not full human beings, a status which made them viable for experimentation. In fact, Smith (2005a) provides a detailed account of how Native Americans have been considered viable test subjects and thusly subjected to an array of medical and experimental atrocities. According to Smith (2005a), Native American populations have been targets for "unethical medical experimentation," particularly in contraceptive and vaccine trial programs (p. 100). Smith (2005a) argues that "indigenous peoples have been regarded as expendable by the dominant society," which legitimizes medical experimentation, sterilization, and other culturally and physically genocidal projects against Native American communities (p. 113). Of course, these become highly problematic when we consider that Native American communities are some of the poorest in the US, and, as a consequence of poverty and the bureaucratic policies that govern their extremely limited access to healthcare, suffer tuberculosis, accident mortality, infant mortality, sudden infant death syndrome, alcoholism, diabetes, and suicide rates astronomically higher than the national average (Smith, 2005a).

Combined, the arrival of settlers and the historical legacies of colonization and cultural and physical genocide have resulted in a marked distrust of outsiders in this Native American community. This distrust, as will be seen in a later section on community responses to sexual violence, makes it difficult for survivors of sexual violence in this community to utilize resources such as law enforcement and service providers. Mary had no doubt whatsoever that this distrust of outsiders in her community and many Native American communities around the country is tied directly to the historical legacies of colonization and violence. For Mary, the abuse of Native American peoples is not a relic of the past and manifests today as continued discrimination, the co-opting and controlling of Native American land and resources, the violation of Native Americans' rights, and the removal of Native American children from their communities. As an avid researcher of native American history in her spare time, Mary understands the oppression of Native American communities and community members through a lens that contextualizes it within the very historical circumstances that perpetuate it.

Mary: I love Native history, so it's - I think that's probably why I look at this from a farther generation past problem. Because the violence has been sanctioned and allowed...and it hasn't stopped. It's become more subtle in certain ways but every single right they take from a Native person, every child they steal tells me they're still doin' it today.

Mary: A lot of people don't realize it cuz you'll never hear it in mainstream media. But the government, like I said, they're still stealing our children. I'm not lyin'. If you go on Indian Country Today, the news website, you'll see case after case. Umm, but you don't hear about it in the mainstream media. So those things that happened to our people generations ago still occur today.

Mary: I know the black community is very discriminated against. They are. Nobody realizes that with Natives, it's even worse. I was - in my job, I work with contractors. I hear contract - contractors all the time make comments like, "You don't have a Native who can do this job." So you can discount an entire *race* of people but you don't hear, "You don't have a black man who

can do this job or an Asian person who can do this job." So, in a lot of ways, Natives are still more discriminated against than anybody.

Mary: I mean, it drives me nuts - I hear about, people will make comments about, "This is America so speak the language." Why? You did - your ancestors didn't learn my language when *you* came here. *You* chose not to learn the language of the land, so what's the difference? Cuz *you* weren't invited here, either. So, umm, yeah. Little comments like that just drive me crazy cuz it's like, you know, think back. And they just don't understand. A lot of people don't understand.

Mary: History. Open a history book. Every promise that's ever been made to us by an outside agent - see, there's always ulterior motives. There's always an underlying reason. And that's recent history. Now, I'm not even talking a hundred years ago. I'm talking stuff as recent - we've got the cigarette contract, where, "Oh, yeah. You're gonna get all the taxes that you collect." Until they took 'em. Before that, you had the fishing wars. You have the 1988 land claim settlement where they bought out all [my tribal members] for \$20,000. "Oh, yeah. This is a good deal for ya." They took all our land. They took half our rights. So, I mean, it's - even recent, yesterday.

Mary: Every member, I mean - every member of my family has spent time in prison because of our government. For doing their *treaty rights*. Every member. Uh, when my dad had a cigarette shop, he was raided at least once a year. They confiscate your merchandise, they confiscate your cash, they confiscate your computers - and when you're found innocent, you know how they're supposed to return all that stuff? Usually, they don't. So \$1,000,000 in inventory - are they ever held accountable? No. [Indistinguishable from recording] because *they mismanaged tribal lands*. So, I just - it makes me want to spit.

Mary: So these things, it's not just - it's not history. It's not *gone*. It's still happening. So, you know, because of stuff like that we don't trust outsiders. I'm so mad. They sent in somebody here [in this department] from like one of my unions and it's not a Native, I won't talk to them. Because you don't know what Natives go through. I know sometimes it sounds like I'm turning racist, and maybe in certain ways I am, but the reality is that a non-Native representing a Native community is illogical to me. That's like a Native representing a black community. A black person representing an Asian community. *How?*

To Mary, at least, it would seem that being Native American is derived from notions of family within this Native American community, but that it is also derived from a shared experience and understanding of the historical oppression and discrimination that is perpetuated today. Additionally, this shared experience and understanding of the historical oppression and discrimination from outside agents, such as the US government, maintains the distrust of outsiders in this Native American community. Later, it will become clear that this distrust of outsiders significantly impacts how survivors of sexual violence utilize available resources for sexual violence and determines how useful and sought after these resources will actually be for community members.

The most important point here is that participants seemed to respond well when I asked them probing questions about colonization as a tool of analysis for understanding the effects it has had on their community. All participants did make references to the arrival of settlers; settlers' historical abuse of Native American communities and their peoples; and the colonial transformation and destruction of the social and gender systems, reproductive rights, and political and judicial systems of Native Americans. However, as Mary stated above, the general public has difficulty connecting the oppression of and discrimination against Native American peoples to the historical legacies of European colonization. According to DeLoria (1997), the West's academic and scientific institutions have repeatedly labeled Native American knowledge, worldviews, and perspectives as inferior and thusly unreliable, unscientific, and irrational. Racism has shaped the ways in which the West's scientific and academic projects have marginalized and excluded the Native American production of knowledge and the expression of their worldviews and perspectives (DeLoria, 1997).

In this regard, the Native American historical narrative has been rendered largely absent and severely lacking in US historical discourses, especially in terms of its colonial history and the instrumental role colonialism played in the founding of the US and the extermination of Native American peoples, nations, and cultures. According to Bubar (2013), "indigenous stories, narratives, and oral histories have never been viewed or presented as the American story, although they are arguably the original American stories, perhaps the first North American stories" (p. 529). For Bubar (2013), this serves as an explanation as to why Native American populations are portrayed in media, they are as "a people of the past," which legitimizes their erasure (p. 529). It is therefore unsurprising that Mary argued that the oppression of and discrimination against Native Americans is not discussed in mainstream media nor is it surprising that she concluded that "a lot of people don't understand." Like Mary, Poupart (2003) contends that Native Americans have a deep knowledge of their historical oppression and that such knowledge causes profound, unresolved anguish. The dominant culture of the US does not recognize or validate this pain but instead views Native American peoples as objectified "others" (Poupart, 2003). This phenomenon is most evident in the erasure of Native American knowledge, worldviews, and perspectives from dominant historical discourses.

There is evidence that attempting to recognize and validate the knowledge that Native Americans have of their historical oppression can be a positive experience for participants in the course of qualitative research. Bubar (2013) contextualized data about sexual assault against Native American women within colonization and then presented these findings to participants who worked in the field of sexual violence, violence against women, or victimization at a conference session. Indigenous participants, Bubar (2013) argued, "appeared validated and somewhat relieved" when she presented the data in this manner. Furthermore, Bubar (2013)

reports that session participants felt her presentation validated their experiences, legitimized their knowledge, and answered their desires to be heard. In short, Bubar (2013) concluded that her findings confirmed that the voices of Native American service providers is essential to engaging in critical dialogue on sexual violence and that their "stories and concerns must be respected, valued, and taken seriously (p. 539). Based on the data I received from participants when contextualizing the larger oppression of and discrimination against Native American peoples, and especially of women, I would agree with Bubar (2013). Using colonization and the arrival of settlers as context did seem to be integral to how participants framed the oppression of and discrimination against Native American peoples and women. It is therefore necessary that those conducting research with Native American participants on the subject of sexual violence against Native American women recognize and validate their knowledge, perspective, and worldviews about the historical legacies of colonization.

"It's all interconnected." Throughout the course of the interviews, participants rarely discussed sexual violence as an isolated problem in their community. Often, sexual violence was talked about in close proximity to other issues of violence and oppression facing this Native American community. Therefore, it is imperative to understand sexual violence in this particular Native American community as a manifestation of this violence and oppression that is compounded by its relationship to problems such as poverty and drug and alcohol abuse. Although participants identified sexual violence against Native American women as one of the most serious problems in their community, it became clear that sexual violence is not the only problem that endangers the health and safety of community members. This can make it extremely difficult to talk about and understand problems of violence and oppression as separate from the larger contexts that they inhabit. Because these problems are usually deeply

interconnected, participants advocated for an approach that addresses these problems simultaneously.

Research has indicated that Native American communities experience rates of violent crime twice that of the general US population (Greenfeld & Smith, 1999). In certain respects, Native American women are adversely affected by these heightened levels of violence. Apart from being sexually victimized at higher rates than women of other ethnicities, Native American women are nearly four times as likely to encounter domestic and intimate partner violence and are murdered at ten times the national average (Gilg, 2015). Participants described the pervasiveness of violence against women, including sexual violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, and murder, in their Native American community.

Arya: Every single family. In my opinion. That means one person in every single family [is affected by sexual violence]."

Arya: I would say every kid that lived in those apartments with me that were my peers, I would say every single one of them has been sexually assaulted, except for one that I know for sure was not.

Josephine: [Sexual violence happens in this Native American community] more often than anyone would like to admit.

Mary: I think [sexual violence] affects them all. Not that I think they've all been personally violated, but if they haven't, I guarantee they have a sister or a cousin or a friend that has. So it affects them all, a hundred percent.

Mary: Violence period is a problem. In the past month, month and a half, I've had two violent deaths affect me, against women. You've got that woman who was taken from [that] bar that was beaten to death. That's my community, that's - I live down the street. Her body was found on our tribal property, where I camp. So that hit me. And then one of my adopted daughters, who I take care of and stuff like that, contacted me yesterday that one of her good friend's boyfriends beat her to death.

Josephine: I used to be a domestic violence advocate, I still volunteer there, and any given month, we would have, I'd say, 20 reports a month.

Arya: I think violence against women, umm, has been a growing issue all over, not just the Native community.

Although the available literature and participants' responses suggested that Native American women are often targeted for violence, sexual and otherwise, it does not necessarily mean that women are not participating in violence. In Mary's perspective, despite that Native American women in this Native American community are likely to be violently victimized, it does not bar them from contributing to the perpetuation of violence. The violent actions of Native American women in this community may in fact be a response to the very violence that surrounds them.

Mary: There's a very large level of violence on the rez. And it's not just men against women. Some of our Native girls, myself included, are some of the most violent people you will ever meet. I am less surprised when I hear Jane Doe assaulted John Doe than I am the other way around most of the time. I've done legal work over in the tribal courts, so I've actually represented a few cases, and it wasn't the male against the female. It was usually, "Well, she struck him or she stabbed him or - " We don't take, as a woman, we don't take real well to a lot of things - we react violently! I mean, my ex to this day who's still stalking me, he showed up at my house one night driving the woman's car who he cheated on me with. I had been drinking - I went after him with a samurai sword. So, it's not just male on female. The females have realized they've gotta stand up, and in a lot of ways, we have to be the warriors because the men are lost. We don't know how to be mothers, so it's easier to fight.

However, participants did understand the violence against Native American women in their Native American community as having a relationship to patriarchy and sexism. As discussed in the previous section, European colonizers implemented patriarchy and sexism within Native American communities in order to propel colonization and effectively destroy the

social and gender systems that had both protected Native American women from violence and afforded them status and agency. Arya spoke about how patriarchy and sexism remain deeply ingrained in the fabric of her Native American community. For Arya, patriarchy and sexism simultaneously contribute to the oppression and objectification of Native American women and the sexual victimizations of men.

Arya: I think, umm, that it's been an ongoing thing and [we're willing?] to objectify women.

Where women are no longer people. They are to pleasure men, they are to cook dinner, you know - just kind of the stereotypical women roles that young boys are taught to believe, umm, growing up. And I don't know if it's necessarily from their parents - see, it's probably through subconscious ways because their parents may have had those underlying beliefs but, umm, it's hard to say where it comes from cuz we didn't always have media. But I feel like media is amping that up, umm, where in women are sexual objects, you - you know, just we are supposed to look pretty and, umm, I feel like men don't have those challenges. They, umm, are kind of recognized for their thoughts and beliefs, umm, their roles and, umm, it's - so sexism is a factor and, umm, I would say that's probably one of the main things. But I can also say there are males who have sexual assault in Native communities and it's very common, very common.

Like other communities across the US, sexism is a dominant narrative in this Native American community that systematically devalues, dehumanizes, and objectifies Native American women. Too, this narrative normalizes and legitimizes violence, which in turn can render men vulnerable to violent victimization.

Furthermore, Mary's and Arya's uses of the past-tense and Arya's mentioning of the media's influence when they discussed Native American women's status in their community prior to colonization suggest that the social and gender systems in their present-day community are no longer egalitarian. Rather, they are male-dominated.

Arya: If a man was to hurt a woman or to sexually assault her, he was shunned. And, umm, it saddens me that things aren't that way anymore. It's not the way that we've been running our society for thousands of years anymore.

Mary: I mean, now don't get me wrong. They had their little war games. This tribe would go steal their horses and that - they did do that. That was there. But if you hurt a child, it was swift justice. If you hurt a woman, it was swift justice. If you hurt an elder, it was swift justice.

Mary: They treated their women, had as much say as a man. Women were not *beneath* the men. The women were an integral part of the operating of the tribe, of that little band. Because without the women, the men - hunting still does them no good if you don't have the women there to cook the meat. That entire situation. You're not gonna have flavor for your meat if the women aren't gathering berries or breeding your children. Umm, and it even goes so far to the gay and lesbian community. Traditionally speaking, a person of alternate - alternative sexual orientations, in our beliefs, was revered. Somebody that walked in two worlds, very spiritual. Now - look at how they're treated. And we have come so far from our traditions and culture.

Arya: I've been told stories of how it was before settlers and it was very matriarchal.

While not always connected to sexual violence against Native American women, bullying and gangs also contribute to the high degree of violence present in this Native American community.

Arya: I went to that school in middle school and I ended up leaving that school and going to [another] high school because of bullying. And I had gotten into a physical fight.

Josephine: We've had a lot of bullying going on out at [our tribal] schools.

Mary: Gangs are bad [in this tribal community].

Mary: I mean, gang initiations involve sexual violence.

Mary: And we have 11, 12, 13 year old little girls away from home because this little homeboy convinces her. "Oh, come out with me." Well, like I tried to explain to one of my little nieces who pulled that, "Well, you can trust him but what happens when he brings you around a bunch of the real OG's and they decide they want a piece of you? I guarantee that little boy ain't gonna be able

to stop them." I ran with gangs as a child, I know what they're capable of but our children don't get it

According to participants, poverty is another problem that challenges members of this Native American community. Research has suggested that Native American communities are home to some of the worst economic deprivation and impoverishment in the US (Bubar, 2010; Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Poupart, 2003; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Holzman, 1996; Norton & Manson, 1996; United States Census Bureau, 2011). The United States Census Bureau (2011) estimates that almost a third of the Native American population lives in poverty and that 14.6% of Native Americans are unemployed. However, more localized studies have produced data that speaks to just how desperate these economic realities can be for Native American women. Some research reports that over 70% of the Native American women sampled live at or below the federal poverty level, live on incomes of less than \$10,000 annually, and that unemployment rates for these women were between three and five times higher than the rates reported in national statistics (Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Norton & Manson, 1995). In her interview, Arya talked about her personal experiences of living in poverty as a child growing up in this Native American community.

Arya: I, umm, we lived up in the Native American housing where it was subsidized income so it was very low income and it was for tribal members. Umm, my tribe has a per capita now where they distribute money to all the tribe - tribal members. When I was young, that wasn't so, so we were very poor as a - when I was a child. Getting government commodity food and, umm, not very wealthy.

Arya: Umm, we were like different than everyone else and we didn't have money and we didn't live clean. Umm, I would say my house was - like it had dirty laundry and I wouldn't have clean clothes all the time to wear and, umm, I didn't have dinner cooked for me every night. You know, I would make my own Top Ramen and things like that.

Like Arya described above, this Native American community and tribe now issues per capita to enrolled tribal members. But the practice of per capita does not automatically alleviate the effects that intergenerational poverty has had on members of this community. Josephine explained the practice of per capita and how it intersects with poverty, making it, in her opinion, a major problem.

Josephine: Our tribe [*indistinguishable from recording*] has been successful in the gaming industry. It issue a per capita to every tribal member, that includes children under the age of 18. So money goes into a trust fund and it's changed amounts over the years. At this point in time, the kids get a \$1,000 to be invested and \$1,000 in their own and a check to their parents. And then when they turn 18, they, at the end of their birth month, they get a lump sum check for however much is in their trust fund, which could be thousands of thousands of dollars.

When I asked Josephine what was problematic about this practice of per capita, she said the following:

Josephine: Well, they think they're rich, you know. They buy a sports car, and they'll buy things for their friends...some of them will take their whole family, and I'm not talking 3 or 4 people, I'm talking 20 plus people to Hawaii or to Vegas or something. Umm, they're handed hundreds of thousands of dollars, with no restrictions - it goes pretty quick. And most of them, they don't have any credit to speak of so they're not in a position where they can buy a house. And they had no money, and no experience...there's generations that live in poverty and now we're - we're in a position where we don't need to but without the skills and the education and the practice..." - Josephine

As Josephine indicated above, community members' extensive experiences of intergenerational poverty are exactly what makes her tribe's practice of per capita problematic. Intergenerational poverty has framed most community members' financial experiences, contributing to a general inexperience and significant lack of knowledge about how to responsibly manage and invest the very large lump sums of money per capita provides them.

Their additionally limited access to credit impedes community members' abilities to purchase homes with their per capita money and accrue wealth and increased net worth through homeownership. In Josephine's experience, intergenerational poverty and her tribe's practice of per capita also intersects with bullying, contributing to an elevated risk of violence for community members. This intersection creates situations in this Native American community where young adults, both male and female, are vulnerable to violent and sexual victimizations.

Josephine: We've had a lot of bullying going on out at [our tribal] schools. If students target a tribal member that's about to turn 18 and they bully them. And if they've already gotten their money, they take their money. They won't feel safe going to school, so there's a high dropout rate.

Josephine: Well, they have - they have a thousand dollars [*indistinguishable from recording*] and there's some instances where people will and then they date rape them, umm, all these young ladies, and then video them doing like sexual things and then when they wake up, they have no knowledge of what's happened. So now they're being blackmailed. They feel like if they don't pay up or do what's asked of them, the videos will be released on social media and they'll be disgraced, embarrassed - they're being controlled. Not even the ladies, we have some men going through similar situations.

Here, perpetrators use sexual violence as a method of extortion and control. Perpetrators target young adult Native American women and men for violent and sexual victimizations in order to access the money that these individuals have been issued through the practice of per capita. Although official data does not link the intersection of poverty, per capita, and violent and sexual victimizations to the high drop-out rates in Native American communities across the US, it is important to acknowledge that Josephine did. The United States Census Bureau (2011) estimates that 78% of Native Americans have acquired their high school diploma, GED certificate or alternative credential. However, 44% of Native American women in surveys with smaller sample sizes reported having some high school education while only 19% reported

actually having obtained their high school diploma (Norton & Mason, 1995). High drop-out rates as a result of bullying appear to be a significant issue in this Native American community and may well be a significant issue in other Native American communities across the US.

Similar to bullying and its relationship to sexual and violent victimizations, participants seemed to find a strong correlation between the prevalence of drugs and alcohol and the prevalence of sexual violence in this Native American community. In some instances, drugs and alcohol are involved in the perpetuation of sexual violence against community members. In others, survivors of sexual violence utilize drugs and alcohol as a method of healing from their trauma.

Mary: Well, you've got the drugs. Umm, drugs is a huge problem on the rez.

Arya: A lot of our people are on drugs and alcohol.

Josephine: I mean like they'll be out with their friends and find a victim to abuse and - that's what they do. There's usually drugs and alcohol involved.

Arya: I also feel like [sexual violence] goes hand in hand with - like when we talk about addiction and things, umm, I call that self - self-healing, self-medicating, umm, where what you're living with is too hard to live with so you numb yourself to get through.

According to participants, drugs and alcohol also contribute to the high levels of violence, including deaths from automobile accidents and overdoses, and the growing problem of homelessness present in this Native American community.

Arya: There's a big problem on the reservation where homelessness, umm, has come in and I feel from addiction has - they become homeless. And, umm, as well as maybe a violent way of living.

Josephine: Tribal members buy drugs, get into their car, wrap it around a telephone pole, drive off a cliff. Umm, overdoses.

Research has documented that drug and alcohol use is generally prevalent in Native American communities. As 2013, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration (SAMHSA) estimated that 38.4% of American Indians and Alaska Natives were currently using alcohol, 23.5% were binge drinking, and 9.3% of youths aged 12 to 17 had used alcohol. Furthermore, SAMHSA (2013) reported that 12.3% of American Indians and Alaska Natives were using illicit drugs. By the same token, research suggests that drugs and alcohol are routinely involved in the sexual victimizations of Native American women. Numerous quantitative studies, such as Bachman et al.'s (2010), Greenfeld and Smith's (1999), and Perry's (2004), have repeatedly indicated that Native American women who have been sexually victimized are much more likely than other women perceive their attackers to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Finally, participants argued that this Native American community is experiencing a disconnect in how to rear and socialize children. Due to the US government's practice of forcibly removing Native American children from their communities and enrolling them in boarding schools, participants discussed how processes of raising and socializing children have been damaged. The removal of Native American children from their communities has additionally perpetuated intergenerational abuses, such as sexual and physical violence, between family members and households.

Mary: But having our children stolen from our elders and stuff like that generations ago. Not only were the children stripped of everything in their culture but the adults lost their way of how to raise them because they weren't there. So there's a major disconnect. That's where the abuse and the neglect comes into play, in my opinion. It's like you can't do brain surgery if you're not taught how. And raising kids, well, in some ways, it could be brain surgery. Umm, it's not easy to do but when you don't have that ability at all, when you've lost it for generation and generation and generation - we're just starting to realize it. We're just startin' to come back from it.

Josephine: Typically, if a child's been sexually abused, they become abusers. We've been dealing with that, as far as I know, back to boarding schools. When assimilation came in.

Josephine: So once there's a generation of people that have been abused, it just continues. Because it's carried down from generation to generation.

Josephine: But I know that when we moved into tribal housing, I know that there was issues with, oh, with sexual abuse with the kids It go so that I couldn't - I had to move. I couldn't let my kids go out on the playground in housing because the kids would be pulling, pulling their skirts and pants down -

Me: And would you say kids were engaging in these behaviors because of cycles of violence in their own families?

Josephine: Definitely. It's a learned behavior.

In particular, Josephine spoke about how the abuse her grandmother suffered in the boarding schools affected her family. Josephine linked the atrocities her grandmother most likely encountered while in boarding school to the hoarding and abusive tendencies she had later in life. As Josephine clarified, the abuse became generational, passed down between her grandmother and her mother.

Josephine: And that caused [my grandmother] to have hoarding tendencies. She would hide canned food, like open cans, empty cans, so it looked like she had nothing. Umm, if she had new clothes, she would throw them on the floor and then throw dirty clothes on top of them to hide them. Caused, they caused her to physically beat my mom, which made my mom abusive.

To Josephine, the generational abuse was directed at children, not grandchildren. Although her grandmother had abused her mother, Josephine did not recall her grandmother ever being abusive towards her. In fact, Josephine believed that being raised by her grandparents instead of her mother actually broke the cycle of abuse that was present in her family.

Josephine: And I didn't see any of that in my grandmother. And then when my mom became a grandmother, I didn't see any of that, those tendencies towards my children. It was only towards me and my siblings. When, when I grew up, I was raised by my grandparents and I think that

broke that cycle of, of abuse towards children. So my kids basically laughing at me if I told them I was gonna beat them.

Mary compared the combined problems discussed above, including but not limited to high degrees of violence, sexism, bullying, gangs, and drugs and alcohol in this community to bullet holes in a person's chest. When I asked her if she thought that sexual violence could be addressed simultaneously with other issues in the community, she told me emphatically:

Mary: Yeah. It has to be. I mean, gang initiations involve sexual violence. They're - it's - it's like you said. It's all interconnected. It's all interwoven. If you have five bullet holes in your chest, you can't just bandage one. You gotta work on all five.

Mary's metaphor emphasizes two main ideas. First, these problems and issues are threatening to the health and well-being of her Native American community. Second, it is imperative that the community address these problems and issues simultaneously. A piecemeal approach to stitching one bullet hole at a time leaves the remaining wounds open and bleeding. And, perhaps, the bullets that Mary spoke of were not fired one by one. Instead, I imagine Mary's metaphor to be more akin to a shotgun blast, where the intersection of various oppressions constitutes the actual weapon, and problems and issues like bullying are the lethal buckshot it fires. That being the case, addressing the bullet holes in the body of this Native American community must call to attention the ways in which race, class, gender, and colonialism intersect to create so powerful a weapon in the first place.

This requires adopting a perspective that sees these individual problems and issues as interconnected parts of a larger narrative about the structures of oppression that perpetuate them in this Native American community. Failing to view individual problems and issues in this manner does nothing to challenge and deconstruct systemic oppression. For instance, sexism and its normalization of gender violence, racism, and intergenerational poverty compose the context

wherein Native American women are concurrently more vulnerable to sexual violence, murder, and intimate partner violence. Native American women are more frequently sexually victimized and murdered than women of most other races and/or ethnicities (Bachman et al., 2010; Glig, 2015; Perry, 2004; Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The research also indicates that poor women are likely to experience disproportionate levels of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (Holzman, 1996; Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery, 2004; Norton & Manson, 1995; Wahab & Olson, 2004). According to participants, intergenerational poverty puts young women who have received their per capita tribal money at increased risk for sexual violence and subsequent extortion. In these cases, the individual bullet holes of sexual violence, murder, and intimate partner violence must be contextualized within the larger narrative of sexism, racism, and intergenerational poverty. To be brief, a Native American woman experiences these individual problems and issues within this larger narrative by virtue of the intersection of her race, class, and gender identities.

Admittedly, though, limiting the analysis to one of race, class, and gender here does not suffice. When one weighs the importance of the arrival of settlers in North America and European colonialist projects, it is imperative that the approach towards these problems and issues includes a consideration of colonialism. In the previous sections, the literature and participants were adamant that gender and racial violence and intergenerational poverty are rooted in colonial efforts to dismantle the social and political systems that protected Native American women from violence. Colonial discourses legitimized the rapes, sexual violations, and mutilation of the bodies of Native American women (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2005a). Furthermore, such discourses used racism to justify the colonization and seizure of Native American land and resources, which has put Native American communities in precarious and

often destitute socioeconomic positions that render Native American women in particular more vulnerable to violent and sexual victimizations (Bubar & Thurman, 2004; Golden, 2012; Lujan & Adams, 2004; Poupart, 2002; Smith, 2003; Weaver, 2009). Therefore, I would agree with Mary that the efforts of her Native American community to alleviate problems and issues must be simultaneous and comprehensive in order to deconstruct these intersections of oppression.

Community Responses to Sexual Violence

This section explores the many levels of community responses to sexual violence in this Native American community. These levels include the responses of law enforcement, service providers and professional services, community members, and survivors of sexual violence themselves. Although unique to their particular context, victim-shaming and victim-blaming routinely characterize community responses to sexual violence, which complicates the process of disclosure for survivors of sexual violence and negatively impacts the likelihood that they will actively seek resources and support from community members. Therefore, I argue here that the victim-blaming and victim-shaming apparent at all levels of community responses to sexual violence serve as significant barriers to this Native American community's ability to engage all community members in meaningful conversations about sexual violence.

"It doesn't sound like rape to me." According to the available literature, there is a marked trend of underreporting and disclosures made to law enforcement among Native American women who have been sexually victimized (Bachman et al., 2010; Hamby, 2008). In quantitative studies, Native American women provided fear of the offender, shame, being blamed for the rape, not being believed, re-victimization, and loss of anonymity as reasons they did not report their sexual victimizations to law enforcement (Bachman et al., 2010; Gebhart & Woody, 2012; Hamby, 2008; Wahab & Olson, 2004). Research also suggests that Native

American women who have been sexually victimized should not expect positive outcomes from seeking legal recourse, as perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women are rarely arrested or prosecuted (Bachman et al., 2010). In the course of the interviews, participants described how these factors in addition to notions of this Native American community as family interact with law enforcement's responses to sexual violence.

Like the literature indicates, participants explained that survivors of sexual violence in their community do not readily report to law enforcement. In speaking about her own sexual assault, Arya remembered, "I didn't wanna report. I didn't want to talk about it anymore." Similarly, Mary estimated that "9 outta 10 times, we're not gonna call the cops." Josephine, who had previous experience as a domestic violence advocate, told me that "most of our victims don't want the police involved". Since survivors of sexual violence do not want the police involved, there is, therefore, an extremely small chance that they will report the incident to law enforcement. Scholars, such as Deer (2005) and Bubar (2010), have taken notice of this trend of underreporting and they maintain that rates of sexual violence against Native American women are actually much higher than what is represented in national surveys. Earlier, participants contended that sexual violence affects every single family in their community. Given their professed reluctance to involve law enforcement and the arguments of scholars, it would be appropriate to tentatively conclude that many of the sexual victimizations in this Native American community are never brought to the attention of law enforcement and never officially recorded or reported.

In this Native American community, tribal law enforcement is unlikely to be responsive to survivors of sexual violence and community members in general. Arya described the tribal police in her community as indifferent and that, in her experience, reporting to tribal police

typically feels like an inconvenience. She spoke to me about the occasions where she has called tribal police to report potentially dangerous criminal activity other than sexual violence.

Arya: I have called them for minor other things that are not as serious, like suspicious vehicles or maybe there's fighting or come and check out this backpack somebody, you know, left here...and it's been kind of like, you know, "I'm too busy for that," or "That's not substantial enough," ...like recently, last week, I called from this department [at the domestic violence shelter], here in the office, about a car and the dispatch told me, "What is suspicious about the car?" and I said, "They're parked in front of an abandoned building, umm, it's a known drug area." And she says, "Well, none of my officers are gonna come out there if you can't tell me what is suspicious about the vehicle." So I reported it to my boss, who had to get in contact with the chief of police to get somebody out here. So, umm, even for something as little as that car a block away and they couldn't send a patrol car to see what the car was doing over here.

As the literature has suggested, other Native American communities and Native American women who have been sexually victimized ascribe the same characteristics Arya did to law enforcement's responses to sexual violence. For Native American women in particular, Tippeconic Fox (2009) writes that they do not get timely responses from police, if they even get a response to begin with. In regards to this Native American community, this lack of response seems to radiate into tribal polices' dealings in all criminal activity, suspicious vehicles and sexual violence alike. Law enforcement's apparent disinterest in responding to reports of criminal activity has made Arya lose her trust in the justice system, especially when it comes to sexual violence.

Arya: It's kind of discouraging in that if I am having troubles with something as minor as this, how can I trust you with something as big as a trauma or an incident where people are really hurt?

Arya raised an extremely important and valuable question whose answer is, essentially, that she cannot. Given the closeness and support participants attributed to their notions of their

community as family, it is significant and troubling that participants do not feel that they can count on law enforcement in times of trauma and need like they can with other community members in other situations.

This distrust of law enforcement is also magnified by the reality that there are known perpetrators of sexual violence, domestic violence, and criminal activity working in law enforcement. Arya was sexually assaulted by a man who is presently a tribal police officer; no criminal charges were ever brought against him. Mary spoke to me about a stalker and a domestic violence perpetrator on the current tribal police force. She detailed the privilege that law enforcement assumes by virtue of their authority, and that this authority often protects them from retribution.

Mary: I have a friend whose son was killed by a drunk driver on the highway...the police chief - he - he was the drunk driver's dad. So, of course, no charges were ever pressed.

Visibly perturbed and angered by this practice, Mary argued that law enforcement should be treated equal to ordinary citizens and maintain their professionalism.

Mary: It is a definite abuse of power. If it has anything to do with your family, you step the hell out. Don't even make - don't even let a little twitch cross your face, you just, "May I be excused? That's my family member, I can't be here." Be professional. Treat everybody fairly. Earn membership. It's supposed to be fair across the board.

But, for Mary, her expectations of an ideal system are not reflected in her experiences. She finished this story by calling attention to the racial tensions between community members and law enforcement, saying, "Not that any law's ever been fair to minorities, anyways." From Mary and Arya's perspectives, law enforcement abuses their positions of power to protect themselves from justice.

Should a Native American woman report her sexual victimization to law enforcement, and if law enforcement responds, survivors often receive unsatisfactory responses, no matter their timeliness. Participants described their dissatisfaction as partly rooted in law enforcement's repeated failure to make official reports of the incident, and the legal limitations placed on sentencing abilities. For instance, when Arya's mother heard that Arya had been sexually assaulted, she attempted to make a report to the Oregon sheriff's office.

Arya: She called the Oregon sheriff and they said, "There's no evidence. It was a really long time ago. There's nothing substantial here. We can't make a report." So there's no records of it.

Arya also spoke about her tribal law enforcement's limited power to prosecute perpetrators, referring to serious cases being forwarded to the BIA and tribal law enforcement recently being granted the power to prosecute their own crimes. What she alluded to were the disastrous effects of the MCA, ICRA, and *Oliphant* on indigenous legal systems, their abilities to prosecute, and Native American nation's sovereignty (Bubar, 2010; Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Poupart, 2002). Like Arya indicated, these laws were partially revised under the VAWA in 2013 (GOP, 2013).

Arya: So they have just passed, umm, a law that tribes can prosecute their own, umm, crimes on their reservations and within the community. However, it's limited.

Arya further qualified her meaning of "limited" and continued to explain the ICRA.

Arya: Most tribes have a maximum of one year service time in jail for any crime, no matter what it is.

Arya gave voice to what previous research has found, that these acts and court cases, prior to 2013, automatically forwarded jurisdiction involving major crimes, including sexual violence, on Indian reservations to the federal government. This imposed sentencing limitations on tribal courts in the punishment of perpetrators and barred tribal governments from prosecuting

non-Native American offenders of crimes committed on tribal land (Bubar, 2010; Cardick, 2012; Deer, 2004; Deer, 2005; Golden, 2012; Poupart, 2002). The reauthorization of the VAWA has addressed some of these concerns, though perhaps not satisfactorily to members of this Native American community.

Participants also expressed often ambiguous and conflicted feelings about the rare instances where perpetrators are arrested, prosecuted, and punished. Josephine explained that if the perpetrator is caught immediately, they will spend a mandatory 72 hours in jail without bail and must see the judge before being released. This Native American community does supervise a perpetrator treatment program, but attendance is not mandatory unless it has been court ordered. "Some people are court ordered to get perpetrator treatment, umm, but that's after the trial...you know, charges and things," Arya told me. Josephine talked about perpetrators and punishment in domestic violence cases.

Josephine: Well, if they do suffer any recourse, it's more of a court order to go to domestic violence classes. They have to get their, umm, domestic violence assessment and they're like court ordered to go to classes...it's more of a corrective type thing.

However, despite that this model appears to be more in line with restorative justice, correcting behavior, and reintegrating the perpetrator into the community, Josephine especially seemed skeptical about its effectiveness. "We're still new at that," she said, reflecting on the process of sending perpetrators to treatment. Josephine vacillated between concluding that the programs were successful and being suspicious as to whether people were "getting it or if they're faking their way through." Ultimately, she decided that she was unsure. Arya, too, seemed uncertain about this course of action and more mainstream methods of justice.

Arya: I feel like it could change, but, umm, following mainstream - I don't see it going that way.

So, umm, I feel like there's holes even in mainstream.

According to Arya, the current judicial system does not have a high success rate in prosecuting criminals. Consequently, participants appeared unhappy with and indecisive about law enforcement's responses, restorative, retributive, or otherwise. Thus, the path towards alternatives may be difficult to pursue at this time. Additionally, there was a hesitance to conclude that such alternatives would even be useful and effective in their community in the first place.

In addition to untimely and unsatisfactory law enforcement responses, the literature also points to the roles of fear of the offender, shame, being blamed for the rape, not being believed, re-victimization, and loss of anonymity in a survivor's decision not to report (Bachman et al., 2010; Gebhart & Woody, 2012; Hamby, 2008; Wahab & Olson, 2004). Mary argued that it is precisely because of fear and the potential for judgment that Native American women avoid law enforcement all together. Her concerns are valid; after speaking with participants, it seems that interactions with law enforcement can become added trauma to survivors of sexual violence. Participants were adamant that encounters with law enforcement result in re-victimization, victim-blaming, and victim-shaming.

Josephine: When the police are involved, umm, generally or typically, they re-victimize the victim in their questions and they usually feel like they're the ones that causes everything to happen after talking to the police officer.

Mary used almost identical words to describe interactions with tribal police and law enforcement, saying, "They victimize the victim." Her personal experience with sexual violence illuminates the extent to which law enforcement re-victimizes the victim and engages in victim-blaming and victim-shaming practices.

Mary: I had a cop who, I was raped by my boyfriend. He looked me in the face and told me, "You let him sleep in your bed. It doesn't sound like rape to me."

Voice sharp with rage, Mary elaborated on these circumstances and the officer's victim-blaming, victim-shaming, and failure to acknowledge and believe her claim. "I was twenty years old," she emphasized. "I was a *child*."

It bears repeating that, as participants and the research have revealed, these Native American women already have little trust in law enforcement, and it would be obvious to conclude that law enforcement's practices of re-victimization, victim-blaming, and victim-shaming diminish the survivors' interest in seeking legal recourse. Not only can law enforcement in this Native American community be ineffectual and unsatisfactory in their responses, but they are also contributing to the continued trauma to and the oppression of Native American women. For Josephine, unfortunately, the above practices are standard.

According to participants, unsatisfactory law enforcement responses, re-victimization, victim-blaming, and victim-shaming are attributable to a lack of resources and the training law enforcement receives. "That is their training," Josephine said of law enforcement's practices of re-victimization. Arya included short-staffing and the flooded court system in her assessment of law enforcement.

Arya: I actually have an uncle who worked on tribal police and he's told me about somebody trying to break into a vehicle at the casino. He was called to the scene, and the guy really was trying to break into the car but he told me personally, umm, "We don't have anywhere to house him. I can't arrest him because I have nowhere to take him. We don't want just a bunch of people that are breaking into cars taking up all the space. We need that for serious things."

Arya discussed their inadequate training in her assessment of law enforcement, as well. "At the police academy, they, umm - I think they lose their empathy...they're trained to just go for the facts and that people's emotions can get in the way of findings the facts," she said. Even if law enforcement wishes to respond to criminal activity differently, the lack of resources in terms

of housing perpetrators, this insufficient training, and the above mentioned sentencing limitations may hinder their ability to do so.

In a community that participants thought of as family, it is deeply problematic that law enforcement engages in re-victimization, victim-blaming, and victim-shaming, and, in certain cases, traumatizes the very people who have requested their assistance and support. In all other areas of this community, participants considered community members and their community itself to be family. But these notions of family are not reciprocated between survivors of sexual violence and law enforcement. Rather than assisting and supporting survivors, law enforcement silences and marginalizes them, leading to distrust. As a result, the pool of resources available to survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community becomes much more limited. Although, the pool of resources is not just simply more limited. In this case, law enforcement is not an incredibly useful resource for survivors and does not tend to contribute to their healing; often it causes survivors additional trauma. However, what is most troubling is that the fear of re-victimization and distrust that characterizes survivors' interactions with law enforcement are replicated in their interactions with other community resources. This suggests that fear and distrust are part of the larger experience of resource seeking for survivors of violent victimizations in this community.

"People have been reluctant to come here." When I initially began contacting local domestic violence and sexual violence resource and support centers to find participants for this research, the general consensus among them was that Native American women, especially those who have suffered sexual violence, are extremely hesitant to utilize these services. One woman, whose work centers on sexual violence prevention, counseling, and advocacy in the greater Tacoma area, told me during our meeting that her center may serve only two or three Native

American clients in a year. Given the high degrees of sexual violence against Native American women that the literature has documented, I was surprised to repeatedly discover in other interactions like this that Native American women were largely not using services. As a result, I wanted to ask participants about the resources that were available to community members who have been sexually victimized. What participants revealed to me in the course of our conversations together is that the close degrees of affinity, literal familial relations, and notions of family in this community are extremely problematic, rather than helpful, to Native American women who have survived sexual violence. Coupled with a professed distrust of outsiders among participants, these factors make the availability and usefulness of resources complex and complicated situations.

To begin, participants did describe the resources available to survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community. Although these resources are not exactly prolific, participants had no difficulty in identifying the resources that were available. These resources included tribal and non-tribal programs, shelters, clinics, and counseling. Arya told me about the tribal domestic violence shelter where she has worked for the past five years, which offers short term housing for women who are fleeing domestic violence in her Native American community and also runs a women's group. "We house them in our shelter," Arya said. "We essentially get the women living independently." This particular program also provides a legal advocate to women; the legal advocate is in charge of several services to women, such as "[going] to court with them and [getting] protection orders in place for sexual assault if that's what they're going through or stalking or cyber stalking". Josephine, who formerly worked as a domestic violence advocate, identified Arya's shelter as an important resource for survivors of sexual violence in her Native American community, as well as her tribe's domestic violence advocacy program and

legal advocates, her tribe's weekly support group, and three other non-tribal sexual assault and domestic violence programs in the greater Tacoma area. Another resource is the tribal clinic that Josephine spoke about, where survivors of sexual violence can go if they are in need of immediate medical assistance. This is an important service as research has suggested that Native American women are at an increased risk of sustaining injuries during a sexual victimization (Bachman et al., 2010). Mary mentioned that the tribal counseling center is available to survivors of sexual violence in her community but she described this resource and others as limited. Although there are several resources in place, I would agree with Mary that they are in fact limited. Not a single tribal resource available to survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community is specifically tailored to sexual assault and rape. However, the limitations of these resources cannot be simply reduced to their lack of tailoring.

Due to the high degrees of affinity, literal familial relations, and notions of family that participants feel characterizes their Native American community, seeking resources within this community leaves survivors of sexual violence in a precarious position. Arya explained how survivors are unsure of how to respond to and use the services at her tribe's domestic violence shelter.

Arya: Because this is a Native community, people have been reluctant to come here and speak because someone here might be related to their abuser. And, umm, so it's, "I don't know who works down there, I don't know if they will tell somebody, I don't know how confidential they will be." If they are a [tribal] member they're coming to a [tribal] program that has [tribal] workers - yeah, it's well, "Are they in the family or - " so, it is kind of scary to step forward when we are such a close knit community.

Like Arya, Josephine said that "people are reluctant to use any kind of services. It's scary." It became evident that this reluctance and fear is derived from how truly public seeking

resources in this Native American community actually is. In speaking about the tribal counseling center, Mary said, "When you walk into the lobby and you see half your family on one side, and your coworker here and friends - what's confidential? Everybody knows why you're there."

Josephine expressed similar sentiments in her assessment of the tribal medical clinic.

Josephine: We have - we have people that are sexually assaulted and they go to the clinic, our tribal clinic, for - for help, for medical attention and it's an open area where you have to tell them in - in public why you're there to see someone, especially if it's urgent care. And when they take you back and they get your vitals, they send you back out where everyone can see you. And if you choose not to involve the police in any of this, then they - the clinic will deny you services to go over to the emergency room for any kind of help.

The highly public nature of seeking resources in this Native American community no doubt makes it difficult for survivors to pursue these kinds of resources.

As the above indicates, confidentiality when seeking resources is a primary concern for survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community. In Josephine's words, survivors of sexual and domestic violence "don't want anybody to know. Anybody." Arya and Josephine, women who both have experience working as service providers, said the following about confidentiality in professional settings. "Confidentiality here in this department is very strict," Arya told me about the tribal domestic violence shelter. Josephine expressed similar ideas about her time spent as a domestic violence advocate.

Josephine: Confidentiality was strictly enforced, like if there was any sign of breach of confidentiality, it could be grounds for termination [as an advocate]...like if I have a client that I've been working with and I saw them in the community, then I - I couldn't approach them. They have to approach me.

Although Arya and Josephine made it clear that confidentiality is a top priority in their lines of work, Arya expressed doubts about her tribe's ability in general to keep confidentiality.

"It should be all over the tribe," Arya said, talking about the enforcement of confidentiality. "But, umm, the tribe has a reputation of not keeping confidentiality when it should be." Despite that the counseling center is tribal, Mary stated pointedly, "People don't have trust in that place. They don't know what confidentiality is." What these excerpts exemplify is that, because of high degrees of affinity, literal familial relations, notions of family, and the highly public nature of seeking resources, survivors of sexual violence do not only have to be concerned with employees at the available resources ensuring their confidentiality, they also have to be concerned with the extent to which other clients from their community ensure their confidentiality.

Even if survivors of sexual violence wanted to avoid these complications by utilizing non-tribal services, this can also present a problem. Participants explained to me that Native American people in this community do not trust outsiders. The reasoning participants gave for this distrust was discussed in an earlier section, but it is worth mentioning here because it demonstrates just how dire the situation is for survivors. In her experience as a domestic violence advocate, Josephine was responsible for introducing survivors of sexual and domestic violence to available resources in the community, both tribal and non-tribal. For Josephine, the overwhelming message she received during these interactions was that non-tribal people, such as women who have married into the tribal scene, are "pretty much comfortable anywhere," and are much more likely to use any service. However, tribal people, "really want the tribal scene." She attributed this to the culture and tribal people's level of comfort in their own community. "The tribal people want to talk with tribal people. It's kind of a kindred spirit thing," Josephine said. When I asked Mary about the possibility of creating future resources, she responded, "An outside group coming in and running it? It would never work. They've tried it. They couldn't even get Weight Watchers to work here, okay?"

In the end, Mary was adamant that members of this Native American community are largely not going to seek resources, especially those affiliated with outsiders and with professionals in general.

Mary: I think that there's limited resources that are available. But the problem is also that I don't believe that Native women are gonna seek out those resources, either. They're going to go down to the lady down the hall where they know it's gonna be confidential, where they know it's not judgmental. They're gonna come talk to me, they're gonna talk to their auntie. They're not gonna seek professionals.

It seems that, in light of the risks associated with seeking tribal and non-tribal resources, members of this Native American community would prefer to use the close, familial relationships and bonds they have fostered with other community members when it comes to sexual violence, though this too can be a difficult enterprise for survivors of sexual violence. I will explore below how sexual violence is likely to diminish and damage the trust between community members, and often results in victim-blaming and victim-shaming.

"The squeaky wheel." Similar to interactions with law enforcement and with service providers, survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community commonly find unsatisfactory and sometimes traumatizing responses from community members themselves. Despite the prevalence of sexual violence in this community, sexual violence itself is, as Arya said, "not a very open issue." In Arya's experience, sexual violence, when it is discussed among community members, is typically brief and vague and expressed as a warning to other community members. Arya described how this works.

Arya: When it has been discussed, it's usually like I mentioned before, for reputation reasons - 'Don't go to their house alone', or something like that or, umm, just kind of like, "Oh, well this happened to my friend," not ever their personal story but, "Oh, I know my cousin had this happen," or "My brother did this to somebody," or something to that effect.

While these conversations may include the word "rape" or "molestation", the dynamics of how it happened and exact details are left unclear. Arya said that these sorts of warning can be viewed as community members attempting to shun perpetrators of sexual violence from their families and from the community in general.

Arya: They might be potentially shunned from the family, umm, in that, "Hey, don't go to their house because they have done such and such to so and so." Or, umm, when they're seen around the community just - their reputation might, "Whoa, I don't like them," you know, so, umm, because they have a history or something like that.

These warnings may be useful in attempting to distribute information about potentially dangerous people in the community, but this practice makes individual community members responsible for avoiding sexual violence. It reminded me of people in my community telling women, "Don't walk alone at night," or "Be aware of your surroundings." Though these warnings are couched in terms of self-preservation, it nevertheless places the responsibility of preventing sexual violence on those who are likely to become sexually victimized, not on the perpetrators themselves.

Much like unchecked authority in law enforcement, perpetrators of sexual violence in positions of power may use their influence to their advantage to ensure that their histories of sexual violence against community members are not readily available. This contributes to the further silencing of survivors. "God forbid it happens to be somebody in power's child or relative," Mary said. "Because then it definitely never happened." When community members do attempt to discuss perpetrators of sexual violence who are in positions of power, it is done in a similar way to how community members discuss other potentially dangerous members of the community.

Arya: I have heard rumors of a council member who is no longer in council but they were running for council. My grandma said, "Well, he's a known child molester. Don't vote for him." And, umm, that was kind of it...that was all the information I had. I don't know how many victims he had or if he really was one or if it was by rumor or if someone didn't like him and just made that up.

Arya made it clear that conversations about sexual violence rarely go beyond the sort of exchange she and her grandmother had above. In this Native American community, it would seem that the specifics of the sexual victimization and the perpetrator's actions are not discussed in detail, giving community members limited opportunities to fully participate in the conversation and to ask questions and have them answered. Consequently, apart from silencing survivors of sexual violence, this lack of information may make it difficult for community members and survivors alike to adequately assess the situation.

Given the brevity of these discussions, I was not surprised when participants said that their community as a whole is unwilling to accept that sexual violence is happening in the community and to members of their families. For Arya, it is not uncommon for people to express disbelief at sexual violence in their families, reasoning instead that "that's something that happens, you know, in mainstream, that's something that happens down the street - that should never happen in my personal family." It may be that, therefore, community members are unwilling to believe survivors of sexual violence when they disclose their sexual victimizations, which can result in victim-blaming and victim-shaming.

Discourses of victim-blaming and victim-shaming commonly surround conversations about sexual and domestic violence in US communities. The particular Native American community whose members I spoke with was no exception. When the sexual victimization of a community member is made public, participants were adamant that victim-blaming and victim-

shaming abound in their community. "People are shunned in a very subtle way if they've been victimized," Josephine told me. Mary, on the other hand, when asked what happens if woman does come forward about her sexual victimization, stated starkly, "She's shunned. She's called a liar." Arya spoke about the harsh divisions that sexual violence creates among otherwise strong community relationships, saying, "I have seen a lot of victim-blaming, maybe by the perpetrator's family and, umm, families will do that - they take sides. And they will believe one story and not the other." In the course of not believing the survivor of sexual violence, community members frame them as "squeaky wheels." Arya continued, "The victim-blaming...you know, they kind of get blamed...the one who's speaking out, the squeaky wheel, you know, kind of gets oiled, umm - 'Be quiet!'" Similarly, Mary said that community members see survivors who speak out against their sexual victimizations as only trying to cause problems. Arya understood this victim-blaming and victim-shaming as an impulsive response that community members have to protect their families and relationships, which are the core of this Native American community. "They wanna protect their family," Arya said, attempting to put herself in the place of community members who engage in victim-blaming and victim-shaming. "Of course, if someone said my son did that, I would immediately be defensive, umm, as a protective mother." But the reluctance to go beyond this immediate response has dire consequences for survivors of sexual violence. Because victim-blaming and victim-shaming practices are comprised of a mixture of obvious slander and silencing, I would disagree with Josephine that these practices are subtle. Moreover, they are pervasive and woven into the fabric of how the community as a whole responds to sexual violence.

Although disclosures do not always result in victim-blaming and victim-shaming, they can still leave the survivor feeling invalidated and isolated. Arya told me the following story

about her making a disclosure to a woman that works with her at the domestic violence shelter. They had gone to a local high school to discuss starting a healthy relationships program. Coincidentally, this high school is where Arya had been bullied and had gotten into a physical fight as a teenager, events which ultimately lead to her leaving the high school. In her words, at this meeting, "I had trauma. I was experiencing post traumatic stress disorder, where my hands started sweating and I - they would ask me something and it would be blank." After the meeting, she chose to make a disclosure to her coworker.

Arya: I said that, you know, "I'm sorry about how that interview went and everything," but she didn't know I - I - I let her know I'd been bullied and, you know, things were coming up for me emotionally. I wasn't in control of my body. And, umm, I think because I was in such an emotional state, I disclosed to her that we need to seriously make it a point - a total day subject on sexual assault and violence. And, umm, at that point, she knew that I was talking about - because I had a personal experience and she just hugged me. She goes, "I had no idea that happened to you." And that was that. She never brought it up again and I feel like that kind of speaks to how it goes here in the community. It's kind of, "I'm safe enough to make this disclosure to you," and it's kind of like, "Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you - let's not bring it up again," you know, and I can see where that would be good in a way so you're not rehashing things that people might not be comfortable talking about but it also kind of ignores what I just said. You know, it's just kind of, "Okay, well, you said that, so let's just keep it covered up so, you know, you're not damaged goods or anything like that," is kind of the feeling I got.

From this exchange, it seems that Arya was perhaps expecting something other than a brief moment of comfort. While she appreciated the gesture from her coworker, she decided not just to make a disclosure, but to use her experience of sexual violence as an example as to why it needed to be addressed in the healthy relationships program. Apart from invalidating Arya's experience as a survivor of sexual violence, the coworker, consciously or unconsciously, also

invalidated the motivation that inspired the disclosure, which was to start a conversation about sexual violence in the school.

Given the pervasiveness of victim-blaming and victim-shaming, survivors of sexual violence in this Native American community have very few people available to them to which they can share their stories. Elders are vital members of the community and they hold positions of deep respect and trust, Not only do they help rear and support their children and grandchildren, their nephews and nieces, but they are people that all community members can turn to in times of devastation and trauma. Most importantly, elders play a crucial role in disclosures of sexual violence. Arya elaborated further on disclosures, sexual violence, and elders. "Any disclosures I've heard of as a child," she said. "Either come from an elder or are made to elders, usually, cuz they're safe people." The assurance of confidentiality is crucial to survivors' decisions to disclose their sexual victimizations. It is for this reason that elders become a necessary asset to this Native American community in regards to sexual violence.

Despite the trust that people in this community place in elders, survivors of sexual violence in this community remain reluctant to make their experiences public, nor are community members themselves likely to engage in conversations about sexual violence. Not only does this present a barrier to this Native American community having conversations about sexual violence, it silences survivors of sexual violence and distances them from the very community that is an integral part of their identity and their lives. This victim-blaming and victim-shaming is so effective that it physically and emotionally isolates survivors of sexual violence from their community. As we will see below, being framed as a "squeaky wheel" has profound and lasting effects on survivors of sexual violence and how they understand their sexual victimizations.

"I'm a survivor." Below, I center a discussion around survivors' reactions to their own sexual victimizations in this Native American community. The victim-blaming and victim-shaming survivors of sexual violence encounter from law enforcement and community members have profound effects on survivors that damage their perceptions of themselves and isolate them from their community. It is important to note, however, that not all survivors respond to their sexual victimizations in identical ways, even if they have experienced victim-blaming and victim-shaming.

Not surprisingly, due to the high degree of victim-blaming and victim-shaming in this Native American community, participants described how survivors of sexual violence blame themselves and feel responsible for their sexual victimizations. Consequently, participants perceived survivors of sexual violence as having poor self-confidence and lacking self-esteem. In Mary's view, survivors of sexual violence "have no confidence in themselves." "They feel they caused this to happen to themselves," Josephine said. She continued:

Josephine: If they weren't with that person, it wouldn't have happened. If they would've dressed differently, it wouldn't have happened. If they didn't drink too much, it wouldn't have happened. If, you know - what if I didn't do this, I didn't do that, then none of this would have happened to a respectable person in this community...if I hadn't been drinking, this wouldn't have happened. If I wasn't wearing this mini skirt, this wouldn't have happened.

Again, notice that survivors of sexual violence are holding themselves responsible for their sexual victimizations in much the same way that community members hold survivors responsible. Thus, there seems to be a relationship between community members' victim-blaming and victim-shaming and the extent to which survivors of sexual violence instill this blame and shame. The perpetrator is rarely made accountable for his or her actions. Speaking to the myriad ways women encounter violence in this Native American community, including

sexual and domestic violence, Mary explained further how deeply rooted these feelings of culpability are. "It starts so slowly that they convince us we deserve it, that we can't do any better." Although far from unique to this particular Native American community, these sorts of sexist discourses surrounding sexual violence not only make women responsible for their sexual victimizations, but they make them responsible for preventing future sexual victimizations. In these discourses, the perpetrator is both absent and not held accountable. Feelings of guilt and deep shame that these discourses encourage further prevent survivors from engaging in conversations about sexual violence with their community. "When people are treated like they're the problem," Josephine said, "Why would they openly share things like that?"

Apart from instilling feelings of guilt within the survivor, community responses to sexual violence centered around victim-blaming and victim-shaming also physically isolate survivors of sexual violence from this Native American community.

Josephine: They [survivors of sexual violence] choose not to participate in community functions anymore. They feel like they'll be re-victimized. Umm, they don't feel safe. They think they'll be embarrassed publically so they avoid those situations...we have tribal members who are carrying to full term, umm, their father's babies. Umm, it's - and when it's known, they move away.

This severe degree of isolation from their community may present additional problems for survivors of sexual violence. Given how important maintaining relationships with the tribal community is to the participants that I spoke with, it seems to be further damaging to survivors that they may be denied these connections as a result of victim-blaming and victim-shaming.

These types of interactions with community members regarding sexual violence can sometimes lead survivors to distrusting the very community they had previously thought of as family. Arya described how perpetrators of sexual violence can be "members of the family," "people who are under eighteen but older than the victim" or "caretakers who are not necessarily

family but are in a position of power." Typically, then, survivors of sexual violence in this community trust the perpetrators of their sexual victimizations prior to the incident. Research has also indicated this, naming intimate partners and acquaintances as common perpetrators of sexual violence against Native American women (Bachman et al., 2010; Perry, 2004; Yuan et al., 2006). Of course, sexual violence diminishes trust between the survivor and members of their community.

Arya: I believe when sexual assault or any kind of event like this happens, people, umm, kind of shut down and don't trust anymore and - because, usually, it's someone who you trusted, that can have access to you in that way - so, that already has diminished their trust.

Arya's story about her sexual victimization illustrates how these forces, including victim-blaming, victim-shaming, and reluctance to utilize law enforcement and service providers, operate and interact after a woman has survived sexual violence in this Native American community. Arya described the circumstances surrounding the disclosure she made to her sister, Katrina, about her own sexual assault. When Arya was 12 years old, her other sister Melanie's husband, who is now a tribal police officer, sexually assaulted her. This segment from her interview details what elements were necessary for her to make the disclosure, her feelings of guilt and responsibility, and her struggles with victim-blaming and victim-shaming.

Arya: I - it was not very planned. I never just thought I would tell anybody about it and - it was kind of just - I felt very comfortable in the moment and trusting and I had a 2 hour long conversation about some deep things and our parents and stuff. So I felt safe enough to disclose to my sister [Katrina] and in the way I did, I said, "I've lost my virginity," which no one had known, "And it wasn't by choice." So then she wanted to know, "Who was it?" You know, "What happened?" I wasn't ready to open up about it. But I told her who it was.

After Arya made her brief disclosure, Katrina disclosed the sexual assault to her counselor, which prompted a response that Arya had not anticipated and did not necessarily want to pursue.

Arya: I didn't hear anything about it for about a week. You know, I figured [Katrina] kept my secret safe and her and my mom come into my room and said, "Well, Katrina let me know something." Katrina, and, umm, she - Katrina had made a disclosure to her counselor about it and her counselor said, umm, "Is your sister under eighteen?" She says, "Yeah." "Well, this is a mandated reporting issue. Umm, I want you to get on the phone and call your mom and let her know what your sister told you."

So, it was reported to my mom and my mom was coached by the counselor to make a report to law enforcement. Umm, the incident took place over 5 years before that and it was in another state - Oregon. Umm, she called the Oregon sheriff and they said, "There's no evidence. It was a really long time ago. There's nothing substantial here. We can't make a report." So, there's no records of it. And I wasn't cooperative, I said, "I didn't wanna report. I didn't want to talk about it anymore." I didn't share my story with my mom or anyone else. When they came into my room, I felt bombarded and attacked and my mom told my sister [Melanie], who's married to the guy. And [Melanie] calls me on the phone, screaming at me, crying - and I almost felt blamed. And she says, "Well, why didn't you ever tell me about it if this happened? Why wouldn't you refuse to come visit me? Or just, you know, why did you continue to act normal?" Like she just could not believe that I carried on as if nothing had ever happened.

Arya's personal experience with sexual violence shares many similarities to participants' own perceptions of how this Native American community and survivors themselves respond to sexual violence. Like many survivors in this community, Arya was extremely hesitant to disclose her sexual assault, and when she did, she chose to make it to a close, trusted, older family member, not to law enforcement or a service provider. Arya also encountered victim-blaming

and victim-shaming from her sister Melanie, which resulted in Arya harboring deep feelings of guilt, shame, and responsibility for her own sexual assault.

Arya: And I did, because I felt responsible. I thought, "Did I flirt with him? Did I lead him on? Did I - " You know, and it wasn't until high school and learning that all you have to say is, "No." You don't have to fight and punch and kick - it's still rape. So, I didn't even know it was rape until learning about sexual assault in your own high school [audible, heavy sigh]. And the fact that he was a tribal police officer now, I lose my trust in the system...Yeah, umm, my sister - from personal experience - yeah, I felt blamed by my sister...

The only, umm, sort of healing that I was offered was to go to counseling. And I thought to myself, being young, talking about it over and over is just gonna keep rehashing it and I'm not gonna feel healing from just talking - talking about it.

From Arya's personal experience, it seems that making a disclosure was a process for her. In the beginning, she felt safe enough to make a disclosure to Katrina, although she was not ready to discuss the incident in extreme detail. For Arya, making a disclosure to her sister took, in her best estimation, four or five years after the sexual assault. However, Arya was never interested in seeking recourse from law enforcement nor was she interested in pursuing support services throughout the entire process. As a result of the victim-blaming and victim-shaming from Melanie, Arya questioned the extent to which she was responsible for her sexual assault for many years. As Melanie blamed her, Arya began to blame herself. She carried these feelings of guilt, shame, and responsibility well into her young adulthood. It was unclear from the interview whether Arya and Melanie have since made amends regarding this incident, but it is clear that the incident strained their relationship.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all members of this community respond to their sexual victimizations in identical manners. Mary, who was raped by her boyfriend, did make an attempt to disclose and report the incident to law enforcement. In the end, this attempt

resulted in Mary experiencing victim-blaming and victim-shaming from a Tacoma police officer. Despite the experience of victim-blaming and victim-shaming that Mary shares with Arya, Mary framed her sexual victimization and its aftermath much differently than Arya.

Mary: Very few women can handle sexual violence the way I do. Umm, I've - I've got no heart. I don't care. It happened. Get over it. I would never say that to another person. I'd say that to myself on what happened to me, not how somebody else is handling it, but that's because I value strength above anything. My mother was a very weak woman, my sister is a very weak woman, and it disgusts me. To sit back and watch them in abusive relationships with abusive men, controlling men - no. I can't do that personally and I won't do it.

I look at my past, good and bad, and everything in between, it made me who I am today and I'm one hell of a woman today. I mean, when I got my position, I had barely a GED, and now I'm running a department...So, I chose to take my, a negative, and make it positive. I wish more of our women could do that. I'm not a victim. I don't like being referred to as a victim. I'm a survivor.

Because I survived it.

Mary, then, appeared to frame her experience with sexual violence as a chance to reclaim her agency and her subjectivity. She distanced herself from the term "victim," a word that carries connotations of weakness and passivity, and instead prefers to think of herself as a "survivor," which Mary seemed to associate with strength and survival. "Survivor" is also action-orientated. Although Mary encountered victim-blaming and victim-shaming from the police officer who told her, "You let him sleep in your bed. It doesn't sound like rape to me," Mary at no time during the interview expressed that she ever felt responsible for her rape. Towards the end of the interview, Mary explained to me that there are rarely instances where she feels that a woman should ever be held responsible for her sexual victimization. "I don't care if a woman is walking down the street butt ass naked," she said. "She does not deserve to be touched if she does not want to be touched." Unlike what participants said of how this Native American community in

general responds to sexual violence, Mary's language indicates that the perpetrator must be accountable for their actions.

Mary initially sought immediate recourse from law enforcement after the incident, but Mary articulated no interest in utilizing service providers or support groups. Like Arya and Josephine, she talked about the deep mistrust and issues of confidentiality associated with service providers. On the subject of starting sexual violence support groups in the community, Mary said the following when I asked her what those support groups might look like:

Mary: I don't know because I would never participate. Because I don't let that hold me back. I would participate on a level that, to teach, educate, and encourage only. I would not be in a group that piss and moan and whine about our past like an AA meeting or something, I'm - no. I - I just, it's not me. I don't let that stuff hold me back.

Again, it seems that Mary framed service providers and support groups in terms of her negative perceptions of the term "victim." For Mary, confronting your own sexual victimization may mean reclaiming your agency and your subjectivity and empowering other survivors of sexual violence to do the same. The teaching, educating, and encouraging that she spoke about are strong, action-orientated verbs that ultimately attempt to break down the barriers surrounding sexual violence in her community.

In conclusion, community responses to sexual violence, including those from law enforcement, service providers, community members, and survivors of sexual violence themselves, present barriers to the maintenance of the close, supportive bonds in this Native American community. Participants identified the familial bonds, literal and otherwise, as a collective strength and integral to how they understand their personal, racial, and cultural identities. However, sexual violence tests the limits of this strength, often leaving survivors isolated from and distrustful of the very community that is an integral and meaningful part of

their lives. What, then, can be done to change how this Native American community as a whole responds to sexual violence? How can community members harness this strength in order to pursue further empowerment?

Pathways to Empowerment and Social Change

In the previous sections, I argue that participants have made several overarching points. First, participants confirmed that sexual violence is indeed a pervasive problem in this Native American community. Second, participants contextualized the sexual violence within the historical legacies of violence, racism, and discrimination that settlers and European colonization projects perpetuated against Native American communities, their children, their language, and their culture. In this vein, participants understood the arrival of settlers and European colonization of Native American nations as inherently damaging to Native American social and gender systems, reproductive rights, and political and judicial systems. Third, participants identified the victim-blaming, victim-shaming, and public nature of disclosing present in this Native American community's responses to sexual violence debilitating and detrimental to survivors of sexual violence, both in terms of how survivors process their own sexual victimizations and in their seeking of community resources. However, it is important to recall that participants viewed the members of their Native American community as family. According to participants, members of this Native American community help and support each other at a moment's notice and are characterized by their high degrees of affinity, familial bonds, and close relationships. That being said, how sexual violence is handled remains a barrier to harnessing what I contend is an extremely significant strength of this community. In this final section, I detail how participants envisioned the efforts their community can make towards eliminating the barriers that surround sexual violence and the violence in general in their Native American

community. Ultimately, participants seemed to argue that, with the appropriate tools and education, members of this Native American community could simultaneously empower survivors of violent victimizations and empower themselves.

Participants expressed a deep desire to break down these barriers, including victim-blaming and victim-shaming, and to collectively make sexual violence, and other forms of violence, such as domestic violence, less pervasive in their Native American community. Although participants were hesitant to conclude that noticeable changes would occur in their lifetimes, they appeared hopeful that addressing these barriers was in fact possible.

Me: Do you think it's possible to break down barriers?

Arya: Yes, yes, I do, and it's - it's exactly right. It is my line of work and it's what I strive for daily.

Mary: Anything's possible. Do I believe that in my lifetime they're gonna be broken down? No.

Do I believe we can poke holes in the wall in my lifetime? Yes.

Arya: My overall goal, which I don't see it happening in my lifetime, but we can always hope - yeah, and that, umm, there's no more violence against women and that we would need this program [the tribe's domestic violence shelter] to save them.

Towards the end of the interviews, I asked participants to identify areas in their Native American community that could be improved to perhaps break down the barriers surrounding sexual violence. Below, participants identified three key areas for improvement that could potentially begin the process of addressing and, eventually, eliminating these barriers. These areas for improvement involve comprehensive education for community members and creating and maintaining safe spaces for Native American women and youth. Broadly, these areas for improvement were about empowering women as well as empowering community members to be agents for social change.

"Education is the key." For participants, education as a means to eliminate the barriers surrounding sexual and other forms of violent victimizations in their Native American community was a twofold project. Presently, discussions on sexual violence and other violent victimizations in this Native American community are typically brief, offering the survivor little recourse and too often subjecting the survivor to victim-blaming and victim-shaming. To begin, education entailed that survivors of violent victimizations were given the appropriate terminology and information to name their experiences in order to facilitate their personal understanding and their framing of these experiences.

Arya: It's always easier to say, "Oh, well that woman's being abused," but being in a marriage where you might be the partner being abused, it's not as easy to recognize when you're living through it.

Me: Do you feel that naming it and changing the terminology would be empowering in the long run?

Arya: Umm, yeah, I do. Yeah, I do. Because if I don't know that I'm living in domestic violence, I'm not gonna know to go to the domestic violence program and get help. Or I'm not gonna be able to label it for the police officers when they come to my house.

In Josephine's personal experience, receiving such education at a women's leadership conference on violent victimizations against and the oppression of women was a pivotal moment in her own empowerment, as well of the empowerment of other women in the room. For her, this conference created a moment where many women, herself included, first began to embrace and recognize their strength.

Josephine: I mean, we - they start education. Education is the key. I went to a women's leadership conference once and once we realized, or once it was made evident, how many women were raped or how many women were assaulted, or how many women struggle with domestic violence, or struggle with abortions and miscarriages, and pretty much any kind of, umm, trauma to them, once - once we made that known, we realized that we're strong, powerful women and that did a shift for

each and every one of us and I'm not sure that people in the tribal community want to publically, you know, identify that this has happened. Although, if they did it in a private way where the statistics were shown, that might help get the word out. Might help them feel more confident in facing their accuser. Or not their accuser, I should say abuser.

Like Josephine and Arya, Mary believed that educating survivors of sexual and violent victimizations was imperative to their empowerment. Mary advocated for education that teaches survivors to break the silence around their sexual and violent victimizations, saying, "They gotta - they gotta - they gotta be re-taught that it's okay to speak out."

However, it is crucial that community members themselves are simultaneously provided education on sexual and violent victimizations. Only educating survivors does nothing to address the prevalence of victim-blaming and victim-shaming in this Native American community. Without addressing victim-blaming and victim-shaming, survivors of sexual and violent victimizations are likely to continually be disempowered by community members. Therefore, participants identified victim-blaming and victim-shaming as critical barriers that could potentially be eliminated through community education.

Mary: Umm, and on the other side of that, the community needs to be educated that you don't treat 'em - you don't victimize a victim. You don't call a victim a liar. So there needs to be education from both angles.

Josephine: Just for the simple fact that they feel they caused this to happen to themselves. If they weren't with that person, it wouldn't have happened. If they would've dressed differently, it wouldn't have happened. If they didn't drink too much, it wouldn't have happened. If, you know - what if I didn't do this, I didn't do that, then none of this would have happened to a respectable person in the community. The things just don't happen. And that's - we're not getting the word out that that's not true.

Educating community members and survivors of sexual and violent victimizations has the potential to reduce the prevalence of victim-blaming and victim-shaming, which may

contribute to an easier disclosure process for survivors and decrease the likelihood that they will encounter re-victimization. Additionally, educating the entire community could also transform how community members frame their conversations surrounding sexual and violent victimizations and provide them with the coaching and tools they need to be comfortable in such discussions. With the implementation of comprehensive education to community members and survivors of sexual and violent victimizations alike, victim-blaming and victim-shaming could be addressed while simultaneously empowering the community.

"Start with the youth." Participants were adamant that such education efforts in their Native American community should be targeted towards youth. In targeting youth for education on sexual and violent victimizations, participants believed that the education could be a preventative resource rather than a response to violence after it has already occurred. Primarily, participants seemed to want these education efforts introduced to youth in their adolescence and young adulthood. Schools also appeared to be the environment where participants envisioned these education programs to emerge. In fact, Arya's domestic violence shelter has already begun designing and implementing preventative education at the local high school.

Mary: I think the education needs to start at a much younger age. It's - our little girls need to learn, understand, that these little boys with raging hormones do not have them thinking right. Or if you're running away and you're sleeping on the side of the street, there are grown men out there that are gonna *hurt* you.

Arya: We are going out to the Native American school and we are starting a program called [name withheld]. It's to teach young kids what healthy relationships look like.

Arya: So, I do feel it's really important to address [sexual assault], especially early on and we're able to recognize that and it's not 10 years or 5 years after an incident happened that they're comfortable to report. So, umm, giving the youth empowerment and tools to stay out of an unhealthy relationship and to get out of it if they ever get into one is very important to me.

In Arya's personal experience, the sexual assault education she received in high school represented a pivotal moment for her. Although she had been sexually assaulted several years prior to receiving this education, she explained to me that this education gave her the information to finally identify what had happened to her as sexual assault.

Arya: You know, and it wasn't until high school and learning that all you have to say is, "No."

You don't have to fight and punch and kick - it's still rape. So, I didn't even know it was rape until learning about sexual assault in your own high school.

Arya: But, umm, in going to the schools, I do really want to make it a point to talk about sexual assault because I didn't know I was raped until I learned that in school!

Notice that Arya's framework for understanding sexual assault transformed from one of resistance (fighting, punching, and kicking) to one of consent (saying 'No'). Historically, rape was legally considered rape only if, among other criteria, the rape had been against the woman's will (Tracy et al., 2012). Legally establishing that the rape was against the woman's will meant that the use of force had to be first established, typically through documenting the extent to which a woman had resisted (Tracy et al., 2012). Sexism and patriarchy, where the woman was defined as the legal property of her husband, constructs such rape laws along these parameters (Tracy et al., 2012). Despite recent statutes concerning rape and sexual assault laws (see *United States v. Neal*), these dominant narratives about establishing force and resistance continue to be pervasive. I would further argue that sexist and patriarchal narratives about sexual violence also contribute to victim-blaming and victim-shaming. These narratives legitimize only one type of victim, those who physically resisted the sexual assault or rape and can demonstrate that they did physically resist to their fullest capabilities. Victims of sexual violence who cannot demonstrate a high degree of physical resistance are often blamed for their sexual victimization in the sense that they did not resist enough. Hence, comprehensive education, especially for youth in this

Native American community, may empower youth to frame their experiences in terms of consent, not necessarily resistance, and could enable them to deconstruct prevalent ideas about rape and sexual assault.

Additionally, participants suggested a high prevalence of sexual abuse among children in this Native American community. As Arya recalled earlier, all but one of the children that lived in the tribal apartments with her when she was growing up had been sexually assaulted. Josephine also remembered how young children were learning these sexually abusive behaviors at home, which prompted them to perform acts of sexual harassment on other children in the tribal housing where she and her family lived.

Arya: I - like in the apartments where I grew up, we were all close as kids and I would say every kid that lived in those apartments with me that were my peers, I would say that every single one of them has been sexually assaulted, except for one that I know for sure was not. Umm, and it could be by other members of the family, umm, it could be by people who are under eighteen but older than the victim, and it could be by caretakers who are not necessarily family but are in a position of power.

Josephine: But I know that when we moved into tribal housing, I know that there was issues with, oh, sexual abuse with the kids. It got so that I couldn't - I had to move. I couldn't let my kids go out on the playground in housing because the kids would be pulling, pulling their skirts and pants down ...it's a learned behavior.

Because participants perceived these sexually abusive behaviors among children and youth to be learned, participants felt that education could provide children and youth the tools they need to not only reflect on sexually abusive behaviors but also on other violently abusive behaviors such as bullying and domestic violence.

Arya: It would be more starting at home, the choices that people make in interacting with each other, living more peaceful and loving, gentle and - encouraging as opposed to oppressive.

Arya: But, umm, like to get to that, umm, I'm not sure if programs like this [her domestic violence shelter] are the way to go because we are taking care of it after the fact so I'm thinking like the [healthy relationships] program where it's preventative, where we're getting them at childhood and getting them thinking about their own families and saying, "Well, that's right what my dad does to my mom? Or, you know, is it okay for me to bully my little sibling, you know?" Things - getting them thinking about the choices they're personally making cuz only someone can change themselves.

Overwhelmingly, participants' goals concerning comprehensive education towards youth seemed to be centered on empowering this Native American community through empowering youth. Participants saw education directed at youth as a vehicle for social change that provides them with the information they need to begin deconstructing and thinking critically about the violence in their community. Having the ability to deconstruct dominant and damaging discourses surrounding violence in this community, such as victim-blaming and victim-shaming, may enable youth to view themselves as active decision makers whose personal choices, even within a context that acknowledges the high degrees of violence that they live in, are detrimental both to individuals and to the community at large. If, as participants suggested, violent victimizations, including sexual assault, physical abuse, and domestic violence, are intergenerational and cyclical in this Native American community, it is crucial that youth are given the education and tools they require to attempt to end these cycles in their own families and lives.

"They need a safe place to go. Cuz this place's not safe." In order to facilitate meaningful conversations and education around sexual violence and other violent victimizations in this community, participants were concerned about the extent to which safe spaces for such discussions are available to community members. It is in safe spaces that participants envisioned the teaching, educating, and encouraging of community members. It is also in safe spaces that

community members can be coached to become empowered in their ability to make decisions and in the decisions themselves. Primarily, participants discussed safe spaces as they pertain to Native American women and youth.

Although limited at this moment, participants did describe the safe spaces that are presently available to Native American women in their community. For Arya, the domestic violence shelter where she works is a safe space. Arya took the position that the domestic violence shelter is a safe space because it encourages and supports the voices of Native American women who have been violently victimized.

Arya: It is my line of work and it's what I strive for daily, to give women empowerment and a voice and the safe place that people believe her and don't blame her for it and can offer healing...as I'm getting older, I realize that women need to talk and it's more healing than I knew it was. Umm, some women come in here and feel safe enough to share their story. It might not necessarily be about sexual assault but they have never told anyone that their husband hit them and, umm, they basically become uncomfortable because they have never done that before.

Arya: There are so many dynamics to it, umm, it's also some women might not leave, but they'll come to our women's group and just wanna express things and get the healing that way but still go home to, you know, violence or whatever they're living through at home. So, umm, I believe just meeting the women where they're at and giving them their choices would - that, their - a lot of the women that come in have not had - the choices presented to them. They've had every day choices like, umm, made for them. Like, "I want this for dinner," or they can't make those decisions.

Umm, so getting them in here and empowering them to have the options and choices and saying to pick one and that's their choice. Oh, I've seen so many people struggle with that. Umm, where it's just hard, so hard that they can't even think back to what they might want to do for *[indistinguishable from recording]* or something. And just giving the women empowerment is the main thing.

At the domestic violence shelter where Arya works, women in this Native American community have a voice and that voice is acknowledged and taken seriously. In a community where the voices of survivors are often silenced and denied through victim-blaming and victim-shaming, providing a safe space to speak out against violent victimizations is necessary. Arya's work at the domestic violence shelter is broadly about empowering women who have been and continue to be oppressed and repositioning them as active subjects and decision makers, which facilitates the healing process. In Arya's personal experience, the domestic violence shelter has been an instrument in the empowerment of Native American women and has served as an impetus for these women to transform their lives.

Arya: But I would say we have a lot of women who have successfully left their abusers and are living safe and are not afraid for their kids and, umm, come in and thank us and say, "You know, without you guys, I wouldn't have been able to do it. I wouldn't of had the strength to leave. I wouldn't have known where to go. I would've been on the streets or still living in it." Umm, so those are the, umm, success stories that I personally witnessed being a shelter sister.

For Josephine, her tribe's weekly support strives for and accomplishes many of the same goals that Arya's domestic violence shelter does. Like the shelter, the weekly support group aims to empower community members to confront their oppressions and violent victimizations. However, what is different about the weekly support group is that it encourages women and children from this Native American community to attend.

Josephine: The most influential thing that we provide is, umm, the weekly support group. And it's presented as an arts and crafts time or something - it's more of a - it's women's group and children are welcome and they come - they sing, they do arts and crafts, and they, umm, watch videos and learn about being oppressed, being abused, being sexually assaulted, and they become powerful, who they really are.

When Mary discussed the possibility of her participating in the creation and maintenance of safe spaces (in this instance, she gave the example of a support group), she also framed the safe space as somewhere where Native American women in this community could be empowered. At the crux of what Mary envisioned is survivors of violent victimizations moving past their traumas and negative experiences and finding healing.

Mary: I would participate on a level that, to teach, educate, and encourage only. I would not be in a group that piss and moan and whine about our past like an AA meeting or something.

Despite that safe spaces such as the domestic violence shelter and the weekly support group are extremely limited to women in this Native American community, safe spaces are noticeably less available to youth and children. The weekly support group is the only program participants identified as welcoming to youth and children. Mary explained this lack of safe spaces for youth and children in the following statement:

Mary: We need a safe place for these kids to go after school. And meetings at night where it's not necessarily - well, it needs to be supervised - but not an adult necessarily standing over their shoulders. I mean, back in my day, we had arcades. We could go to an arcade to play video games. We could go to the coffee shop and have with - they need the social interaction but they need a safe place to go. Cuz this place's not safe.

Participants have suggested, therefore, that safe spaces are crucial to the project of empowering community members, especially Native American women and youth. However, as participants indicated earlier, safe spaces and resources for community members who have suffered sexual and other violent victimizations are very limited at this time. Participants seemed open to and supportive of efforts to increase the availability of safe spaces and resources. But participants were adamant that members of this Native American community themselves should be at the forefront of these efforts. The reasoning for community members themselves heading

these efforts came down to issues of trust within the community and the community's historical distrust of outsiders.

Mary: But I think the people doing it, doing the programs and stuff like that, running the groups, running support groups, whatever it might be, must be a part of this community. They can't be these outside agents. It can't be.

Mary: Whereas I had discussions about starting certain support groups and stuff like that around here. I think it would - like if I was to start one, I think after a time it would go somewhere because people trust me, because over the years I've built that level of trust with them. I have clients - I mean, like I said, I know their most intimate secrets, good and bad. Because they trust me. They know I'll never tell another soul. Umm, when I'm doing - when a client complains to me about an employer that - no one knows who complained. Because I'll never release that information.

Mary: So if it's somebody doing it, Priya down at the - if she were do it, yes, I think that could be good if it could be through her. Because she is, over her years, built that level of trust with our community. Josephine would have a good chance. So yes, there are - well, there's only a few - but I could give you a list of names of people who could probably facilitate stuff like that. But an outside group coming in and running it? It would never work.

It is important to recall that concerns about trust and confidentiality are related to the likelihood that survivors of violent victimizations in this Native American community will disclose their traumas to community members, law enforcement, and service providers. The high degrees of affinity, familial bonds, and close relationships in this community often make the disclosure process exceptionally public, which can undermine confidentiality and anonymity. As a result, the people Mary suggested as possible developers of safe spaces and resources were people who had already established trust with community members, such as herself and Josephine. Given the historical distrust of and abuse perpetuated by outsiders, it would appear imperative that, at this stage, safe space and additional resources are coordinated by trusted

members of this Native American community. In fact, Josephine believed that safe spaces and resources could eventually be coordinated across the US with other Native American communities and tribes.

Me: These sorts of community programs where people can get together and it's a safe place, is this something you want to continue, something you want to see more of?

Josephine: Yeah, I think we're getting it now and if we were to see more of this, I think it would be like built up in neighboring tribes, in tribes all across the nation for that matter.

Me: So you want to see these sorts of things nationally, like coordinated across the country?

Josephine: Yes, absolutely.

Thus, it would appear that the project of empowering community members and this Native American community as a whole is a threefold, simultaneous effort. First, comprehensive education must be provided to survivors of violent victimizations and to community members themselves. Second, comprehensive education must also be targeted towards youth. Both of these steps are concerned with giving community members the tools they need to deconstruct and think critically about the violence in their community in order to break down barriers and encourage meaningful conversations. Third, existing safe space must be supported and new safe spaces must be created to ensure that the voices and experiences of Native American women and youth are recognized and encouraged. However, it is necessary that such efforts in maintain and creating safe spaces are headed by trusted community members themselves, as this acknowledges issues of distrust that are pervasive at several levels in this community.

Though not explicitly stated by participants, I would think that, too, these education programs must address the sexism that is so prevalent in this Native American community as well as the violent victimizations. While sexism is detrimental to the women in this Native American community, it additionally makes men targets for sexual and other forms of violent

victimizations. This is problematic because sexism inhibits men from being framed as victims and instead perpetuates the narrative that men can only be perpetrators. Ultimately, these sexist narratives silence and contribute to the oppression of men who have been violently victimized. As participants discussed, sexual and physical abuse against Native American men is a relatively common occurrence. Therefore, the complete absence of safe space for Native American men to utilize is troublesome.

Conversations around sexual and other violent victimizations, such as domestic violence, remain largely confined to the limited spaces offered by programs such as Arya's domestic violence shelter and the women's group that Josephine mentioned. And I would not deny that these safe spaces, primarily centered on Native American women who have experienced violent victimizations, are necessary while the community at large continues to silence survivors through victim-blaming and victim-shaming. Although sexism is pervasive in the dominant culture of the US, sexism and the victim-blaming and victim-shaming that it perpetuates appear to be particularly intense in this Native American community, perhaps due to the intersections of other oppressions, such as racism and colonialism, that members of this Native American community routinely experience. Reagon (1981) likens these safe spaces to rooms, which can be nurturing and healing but are also isolating.

Now, every once in awhile there is a need for people to try and clean out corners and bar the doors and check everybody who comes in the door, and check what they carry in and say, "Humph, inside this place the only thing we are going to deal with is X or Y or Z." And so only the X's or Y's or Z's get to come in. That place can then become a nurturing place or a very destructive place. Most of the time when people do that, they do it because of the heat of trying to live in this society where being an X or a Y or a Z is very difficult, to say the least...that space while it lasts should be a nurturing space where you sift out what people

are saying about you and decide who you really are. And you take the time to try to construct within yourself and within your community who you would be if you were running society (pp. 2-3).

Despite the nurturing and healing afforded to people within these safe spaces, safe spaces can ultimately be damaging to the very coalition building that can address simultaneously intersecting oppressions and empower all members of a community.

There is no chance that you can survive by staying *inside* the barred room...you don't do no coalition building in a womb...inside the womb you generally are very soft and unshelled. You have no covering. And you have no ability to handle what happens if you start to let folks in who are not like you...coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort...they're not looking for a coalition; they're looking for a home! They're looking for a bottle with some milk in it and a nipple, which does not happen in a coalition...In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go to the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle whatever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more (Reagon, 1981, pp. 3-4).

Eventually, in order to facilitate lasting social change, it will become necessary to include all members of this Native American community in such discussions and create dialogue. It would seem that the unique strength of this Native American community are its notions of family, familial bonds, and close relationships. If barriers surrounding sexual violence and victim-blaming and victim-shaming could be deconstructed, I would argue that it is possible for this community to stand united against sexual violence and the other forms of violent victimizations that endanger community members.

VIII. Limitations

Largely, the limitations of this research can be attributed to the sample size and the sampling procedure. As a result, the findings presented here are not generalizable and cannot be said to represent the entire spectrum of voices and experiences of the people in this Native American community. Additionally, the findings presented here neither represent the whole of the Native American communities in the greater Tacoma area, nor do they represent the diverse populations of Native American communities and tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Thus, it is important to contextualize the responses of the Native American women I interviewed within the unique experience of their lives as members of this particular Native American community.

To begin, the sample size for this research was small. This contributed to a number of limitations concerning whose voices were and were not heard. First, to be eligible for participation, participants had to be women with ties to Native American communities in the greater Tacoma area. Although this meant that potential participants could live, work, and/or self-identify racially or ethnically as Native American or non-Native American, it reduced the pool of potential participants to women. Consequently, men were excluded from this study. The exclusion of men is an important one in the study of sexual violence in Native American communities, as participants suggested that men in their tribal community were often sexually victimized. Second, this research did not hear every Native American women's story that are parts of this Native American community. Thus, although the perspectives of the women I spoke to were markedly similar in many ways, it cannot be assumed that their perspectives are the exact perspectives of every Native American woman in this Native American community.

The sampling procedure itself caused limitations. These limitations are related primarily to the representativeness of the sample itself. Because I relied on initial contacts and the women I

interviewed to connect me with and introduce me to other participants, participants often shared close familial relations or professional affiliations with one another. For example, Arya referred me to her mother, Josephine, and Josephine referred me to her professional colleague, Mary. It was obvious that these women traveled in the same social circles and shared many characteristics that defined their social network. Because of their relationships, it is possible that the women I interviewed had similar perspectives on sexual violence against Native American women. Additionally, women who may have otherwise participated in this research were excluded if they could not be referred to me by participants. I also encountered the problem of gate-keepers. Due to the distrust of outsiders within this Native American community, my ability to enter into the community and make connections to potential participants was contingent upon whether or not I had a trusted community member to facilitate our introduction and serve as a go-between. The point is that the women I spoke to, as a result of the sampling procedure, are a small subgroup of this Native American community.

However, despite the sampling size and sampling procedure limitations, it is significant that the responses of the Native American women in this study could be connected to the available quantitative and few qualitative studies on sexual violence against Native American women. This suggests that there are commonalities and shared experiences across the macro and micro levels of analysis. As the available qualitative research on the topic of sexual violence against Native American women still appears to be developing, I would argue that future research should continue to seek out the perspectives of community members themselves in order to more fully represent the nuances of community members' lived experiences. And while Native American women have been given extremely limited opportunities to speak out against sexual violence in scholarly research, I would additionally contend that, based on participants'

responses, future qualitative research should seek the perspectives of Native American women from the many different Native American communities in the US, as well those of Native American men.

IX. Conclusion

This research has contributed to addressing the gap in the available body of literature through the inclusion of Native American women's perspectives and understandings of and experiences with sexual violence in their Native American community. Qualitative studies that use a feminist methodology and interviews as a method for collecting data are largely unavailable in the current body of literature. Within the literature on sexual violence against Native American women, this scarcity is problematic as the women whom this issue most affects are provided with limited opportunities to speak out and make their voices heard.

Broadly, the conclusions for this research have implications for both sexual violence against Native American women itself and the directions of future research. To begin, as some scholars have suggested, sexual violence against Native American women may be happening on a much larger scale than what data from quantitative surveys have presented (Bubar, 2013; Deer, 2005). Indeed, sexual violence seems to be a critical problem in this Native American community, perhaps affecting at least one person in every single family. Due to low self-reporting rates, the fear of victim-blaming, victim-shaming, and re-victimization, and the stigmatization that surrounds sexual violence, Native American survivors may be hesitant to disclose their experiences to researchers, thus creating a situation where quantitative surveys report one set of data but individuals from a Native American community report another. Because academic interest in studying sexual violence against Native American women is relatively new, researchers must persist in collecting data nationally as well as from smaller,

more localized survey samples in Native American communities across the United States in order to produce the most robust data possible.

However, the women who participated in this research seemed adamant that sexual violence is not just a problem for the women in their Native American community but that men and children are often sexually and violently victimized, as well. Although the frequency of rape among Native American men is unclear and relevant data is limited, one quantitative research study estimated that one-fifth of Native American men had experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetimes (Black et al., 2011). Surprisingly, these rates are remarkably similar to the estimates that quantitative research as a whole has estimated for Native American women: that between one-fourth and one-third will be sexually victimized in their lifetimes (Bachman et al., 2010; Black et al., 2011; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Therefore, it is necessary that future research explore and attempt to document the frequency, characteristics, and circumstances that characterize the sexual victimizations of Native American men.

The unique strength of this Native American community is its people and their close relationships. Participants described community members as having a deep affection for one another and conceived of community members, through literal familial ties or otherwise, as their family. These notions of family appeared to be an integral part of participants' lives and also their sense of their own identities as enrolled tribal members and Native Americans. However, the extent to which sexual violence and other violent victimizations threatens these relationships is not widely discussed in the available literature. Apart from impeding conversations and straining community relationships, sexual violence has quite literally resulted in community members leaving the very community that has profound meaning and importance to them. In order to facilitate conversations between community members and to heal their relationships, barriers

surrounding sexual violence, such as victim-blaming and victim-shaming, must be challenged and eventually eliminated through comprehensive education, a clear focus on youth, and the creation and maintenance of safe spaces for community members. Comprehensive education would deconstruct dominant and oppressive ideologies about violence and victimization while encouraging community members to be critical of these ideologies. I do earnestly believe that, if barriers surrounding sexual violence could be eliminated, that the close bonds and relationships between the members of this Native American community could be vehicles for social change and empowerment.

The prevalence of victim-blaming and victim-shaming must be addressed in this Native American community in order to prevent re-victimizing survivors of sexual and violent victimizations. As participants and the literature indicated, survivors of sexual and violent victimizations typically encounter victim-blaming and victim-shaming from law enforcement, service providers, and community members themselves, resulting in their continued oppression and silencing. This again calls attention to the necessity of comprehensive education at all levels and the creation and maintenance of safe spaces for and tailored services to survivors of sexual and violent victimizations.

Although comprehensive education is necessary, it is imperative that such education and the broader goal of social change begin from within the community. Historical legacies of abuse, broken promises, and oppression that Native American communities as a whole have endured contribute to a continued distrust of outsiders among members of this Native American community. This distrust renders attempts from outside agencies and service providers both useless and inappropriate for community members. In her qualitative research, Bubar (2013) has concluded that Native American women are telling us that they know what they need to combat

oppression in their community. Bubar (2013) begs that "perhaps we should listen to what they are telling us and seek to fund and support their efforts adequately" (p. 539). Similarly, Jaimes and Halsey (1992) argue that Native American women come from a long history of community activism. Based on their responses, it is evident in this research that participants had a keen understanding of what areas need to be improved in their communities and how they can go about improving them. Therefore, I would agree with Bubar (2013) and Jaimes and Halsey (1992) on both fronts. One, that there is emerging activism from Native American women already happening in this Native American community, and two, that we should take what Native American women want and need in order to further their activism seriously. Thus, outside groups may provide funding and support, but, at this stage, the actual work of addressing oppressions, including sexual violence, in this Native American community must arise from community members themselves.

Additionally, we must include in our analysis of sexual and other violent victimizations against Native American communities one that acknowledges the larger processes that perpetuate violence against Native American women and community members, including sexism, racism, poverty, and colonialism. Scholars, such as Smith (2003), Deer (2004), and Bubar (2013), have demonstrated how the colonization of Native American social and gender, political and judicial, and socioeconomic systems often resulted in the destruction of social and judicial protections designed to keep community members safe from violence and in the US government's seizure of Native American lands and resources. Specifically, participants detailed how these larger processes are interwoven and interconnected, rendering Native American women especially more vulnerable to sexual and violent victimizations. Participants seemed to find it difficult to discuss problems (for example, sexual violence, intergenerational abuse, and

bullying) as separate events. Instead, many of the problems and issues in this Native American community can be contextualized within the colonial narrative and its strategies of cultural and physical genocide.

Furthermore, this research strongly suggests that researchers, scholars, and sexual violence service providers must acknowledge, validate, and legitimize the knowledge that Native Americans have of their historical oppression and how the legacies of this oppression permeate their experiences and understandings of the sexual and violent victimizations in their communities. This conclusion is derived from the works of Bubar (2013) and Poupart (2003), as well as from the connections that participants' responses had to these works. Poupart (2003) argues that, while Native Americans have a deep knowledge of their historical oppression, the dominant culture of the US denies and subsequently invalidates this knowledge, causing profound anguish. According to Bubar (2013), framing sexual violence against Native American women within colonization validates and legitimizes the experiences and knowledge of native American women and simultaneously combats their silencing within the dominant culture. To include such an analysis in our dominant narratives about sexual violence and to more appropriately reflect the experiences and knowledge of Native Americans requires a shift in our narratives about the arrival of settlers in North America, European colonizers, the development of the US as a nation, and the US government itself. As Smith (2005b) has previously argued and I myself now contend, we must view these agents and processes as perpetrators of racial and colonial violence and cultural and physical genocide against Native American peoples and nations.

Despite that the women who participated in this research were three individuals from a populous Native American community in the greater Tacoma area, their stories and perspectives

connected to the literature and previous quantitative and qualitative studies in extremely meaningful ways. Each participant had unique experiences with sexual violence and nuanced understandings of how it impacts their community but their responses strongly suggest that there is a common narrative among Native American women about sexual violence. Like participants in other qualitative studies, the Native American women in this research effort demonstrated themselves to be highly critical and acutely knowledgeable agents. Particularly, these Native American women perceived sexual violence, along with other pressing community concerns, as being shaped by the historical legacies of colonialism, the arrival of settlers, and the physical and cultural damage they have perpetuated against their communities. In order to challenge the silencing of Native American women, both in academia and in the dominant culture, I would beseech future research efforts to seek these women out and engage in dialogue with them. Without such efforts, it will be extremely difficult to ensure that the voices of Native American women are included in our narratives about sexual violence and to capture the unique circumstances that frame their understandings and goals for social change.

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