Exploring the Relationship of how Indigenous Students’ Identity Formation Affects their Aspirations for a Higher Education: From the Standpoint of Mixtecas

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**Abstract**

This research examines Indigenous Mixtecan identity formation and explores how it relates to aspirations for higher education. Little is known about the youth who grow up in the United States with an indigenous upbringing but within a Eurocentric educational and societal context. This research explores the questions: How does indigenous students’ identity formation affect their aspirations for a higher education? How does their indigenous social capital (i.e., community ties and culture) help and hinder their academic achievement? Through qualitative, in-depth interviews with six Mixtecan college students, this study examines these questions and identifies how indigenous social and cultural capitals serve as motivators to these students, irrespective of their self-identification as indigenous or not. Results include that regardless of identity, students from farm working backgrounds see their communities as a source of positive motivation and support. Further, students, who do identify as indigenous, use their culture capital to guide them through higher education, e.g., seeking knowledge of their history, understanding social injustices, and giving back to their community.

**Introduction**

Latinas/Latinos in California now represent over fifty percent of students in our K-12 public educational system (Barajas 2011; Jeffrey S. Passel Pew Hispanic Center 2006). However, Latino/Latina classification has many sub-categories depending how the individuals identify themselves within this population. In the past thirty years, immigrants from Mexico to the United States form about 30% of the total and the largest immigrant population (Jeffrey S. Passel Pew Hispanic Center 2006). This migration also reflects much diversity and includes communities that maintain an indigenous identity, those who have not yet adopted the Mexican nationality identity (Barajas 2014). These indigenous migrants retain their cultural practices, language, communal way of living, and ethnic identity. Although they have managed to integrate into U.S. society, it
has not been easy or complete. Their integration has primarily been through the work force, occupying low wage and unskilled jobs: like service and agricultural occupations (Jeffrey S. Passel Pew Hispanic Center 2006). Unlike earlier mass indigenous migrations such as those that occur as a result of the Bracero Program, which were composed of primarily men, indigenous peoples migrating in the post-NAFTA period consist of whole families that include women and children, who face the challenges of incorporation into a new American society. Children’s opportunity to integrate occurs primarily through the educational system.

The educational system has its own form of integration that has the potential to suppress the formation of an indigenous identity, while imposing the mainstream American one. Bean et al. (2007) elaborate on the institutional design of integration that forces students to assimilate into the mainstream Eurocentric culture. Ruiz and Barajas (2012) further discuss how indigenous students’ integration into public education is more complicated with overlapping and competing hierarchical cultures, which suppress those of racial ethnic minorities. For instance, as minorities with numeric majority status in schools, Latinas/Latinos students can deter indigenous students to either reject mainstream white culture and/or reject traditional indigenous cultures/identities by shaming them for their differences i.e. language, culture, accent, customs, and appearance. Barajas (2009) explains the forming of a separate identity as “Nepantla” or a hybrid identity that does not reflect that of the “traditional-home” culture or that of the dominant white culture. Furthermore, this identity which is aided by indigenous social capital and communal structure may allow for students to retain enough support to aspire for a higher education.

In 2011, the passage of the California Dream Act offered children of immigrant communities, including the various indigenous ethnicities access to higher education and a more hopeful future than their families had, one that remained largely in the shadows of the economy and society (McGreevy and York 2011). Education is one of the major pathways to help change one’s socio-economic status. Past research has been conducted on Latino/Latina student achievement, but few have explored the internal diversity of the Mexican-origin population, particularly those who identify as indigenous and have a farm work background (Ruiz and Barajas 2012). The purpose of this work will focus on the motivational factors that inspire indigenous people from Oaxaca to pursue/attain a higher education. This research objective is important given the extreme inequities that indigenous people have faced over centuries across borders, particularly in the U.S. where they are marginalized (Barajas 2009). Indigenous people are not only marginalized by their own Mexican co-nationals but also by the larger mainstream society, which homogenizes them as monolithic Mexicans and very often misclassifies their needs/abilities in academic settings (Ruiz and Barajas 2012). This study will also assess various theories’ explanatory power in making
sense of how indigenous cultural and social capital—e.g., communal resources—assist Oaxacan students who navigate both an unfriendly and unfriendly educational system. The research will first review the relevant scholarship on Mexican-origin indigenous students’ experiences within the educational system, the marginalization they face in society, educational barriers, English as a Second Language, and mentorship. The author will also review various common theories explaining educational success. This study through qualitative interviews explores how identity formation relates to educational aspirations among indigenous students and how their indigenous social capital contributes or does not contribute to their educational success.

**Literature Review**

**Educational system**

With the demographic shifts in the United States in the 1990s, when Latino and Asian immigrants surpassed European immigrants as the largest foreign-born populations, nativistic, assimilationist, and exclusionary legislation was immediately enacted with proposals such as Proposition 187 and Proposition 227 (Barajas 2012). A dialectical analysis provides us with a lens that integrates race, class, and gender to understand how legislative action alienates students from school and further promotes an insider/outsider mentality among them (Barajas 2009). Indigenous communities have been historically marginalized, not only within Latina/Latino communities but also within mainstream America which racializes ethnicities as undeserving members of the nation and denies them basic human rights: food, education, housing, health, and citizenship (Barajas 2012, 2014; Gonzalez 1994; Menchaca 1995).

Historically in agricultural rural areas in California, public schools have been failing Mexican-origin students and more so, indigenous students (Ramirez 2011; Ruiz and Barajas 2012). In poor rural California, segregated schools create an inferior education for people of color who reside in farm working communities (Barajas 2009; Menchaca 1995). The impacted people have included Pilipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Mexicans. This research will focus on indigenous people from Mexico because these communities have been a historically and continuously marginalized population in California (Barajas 2009, 2014).

Coming from a farm labor background, the author’s first-hand experience with racial-ethnic abuse in the educational system as a child, provided insights about how racial-ethnic abuse impacts identity formation. The school generally treated all indigenous groups as Mexican, though many came from diverse Meso-American regions and cultures.
Marginalization

Indigenous groups’ cultures are marginalized, which creates academic challenges for children (Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Language barriers between parents and teachers reduce students’ access to educational resources. Further, not knowing the language or practice of American culture places indigenous students at odds with more Americanized children, who ridicule the former for being different (Bean et al. 2007; Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Within the Chicano/Latino community, ethnic hierarchies also exist; this further marginalizes the students and alienates them from their more mainstream counter-parts (Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Moreover, assimilated and selectively assimilated Latinas/Latinos place indigenous students to the extreme margins, which pushes them to reject mainstream America or reject their own indigenous identities and culture (Barajas 2014; Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Portes and Rumbaut (2006) classify this acculturation path as downward assimilation or oppositional culture. This classification, however, indicates that claiming an indigenous identity is deviant or defective and responsible for student failure (Barajas 2009). Barajas (2009) uses Interactive Colonization Theory to explain that deviation from mainstream society is not defective but results in the emergence of new and hybrid identities that reflect the lives of those living in between unequal worlds. For instance, historically Mexican-origin students have been marginalized in education: experiencing lack of resources, segregated classrooms, and have been recipients of hygiene policies like bathing at school (Gonzalez 1994; Menchaca 1995). More recently, indigenous students are separated and tracked into remedial/ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms where opportunities to higher education are reduced and ESL students have limited access to college preparatory classes (Ruiz and Barajas 2012).

Educational Barriers

Students who migrated to the United States as children without documentation face many obstacles, among them are: lack of knowledge of mainstream culture, lack of mentors, experiencing hostility from the ideologies of nativism, and reduced access to resources (Ramirez 2011; Ruiz and Barajas 2012). As high school graduation nears for those who get that far, undocumented students face a reality of how to afford a college degree. Scholarships in rural farm working areas in California do exist for undocumented students; but since farm work is one of the primary industries that uses and exploits undocumented labor, the area is populated with a majority of these individuals (Barajas 2009). Thus, the number of scholarships is limited, and only a small number of these students receive them. If students have made it through the barrier of funding for higher education, the educational system presents more obstacles for students. Limited opportunities for research at the undergraduate level hinders students from gaining critical knowledge of how to do research and makes them less appealing to doctoral and
master’s level education programs (Ramirez 2011). In addition, equity programs that help first generation students’ transition into college are denied to the undocumented students, e.g., TRIO and Educational Opportunity Program because federal funding is denied to the undocumented.

English as a Second Language – ESL
The educational system has implemented programs to help transitioning Mexican immigrant students into school, but those initiating these programs rarely reflect the cultural knowledge of incoming indigenous students and fail to address their lack of literacy and written knowledge in both Spanish and English (Ramirez 2011; Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Consequently, the majority of students are placed in remedial classes that do not consider their high potential or their specific needs. This placement actually hurts their learning due to enrollment into ESL classes. The steps after enrollment slow the integration of newly arriving Mexican indigenous students and do not provide them with essential skills to enroll in higher academia (Ramirez 2011). Today, many indigenous children, who arrive from the southern states of Mexico, primarily Oaxaca, lack the cultural knowledge embedded in the ESL program.

Mentorship
The inclusion of minorities into accessible and quality public education remains challenging though the civil rights movement made some brief openings such as: the creation of ethnic studies, integrated schools, and the hiring of women professors as well as the hiring of professors of color. Although diversity in higher education has gained popularity on some campuses, the evidence that universities have become more diverse among their faculty is weak, particularly among historically underrepresented groups like Chicanas/Chicanos (Barajas 2011). In most colleges, a diversity value can be found in their mission statement but not in their hiring practices (Barajas 2011). Research shows that the majority of ethnically diverse faculty members have been historically found in African American institutions and in two year colleges (Kennelly, Misra, and Karides 1999). This poses a problem for all students, particularly those of color, entering any level of higher education. Students require culturally diverse institutions with faculty that reflect their background and/or lived experiences to be able to navigate and succeed in higher education (Ceja 2010; Ramirez 2011). Rural farm working students have parents with little to no formal education and find a bigger distance in the already large gap between student diversity and faculty homogeneity in higher education (Gonzalez 1994; Menchaca 1995; Kennelly, Misra, and Karides 1999). The inclusion of faculty members, which reflect these students’ histories and cultures, have shown to help these students excel in their aspirations of attaining a higher level of education (Ramirez 2011). The author will now review some relevant conceptual frameworks that have been used to
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explain student achievement among racial minorities, and the author will lay out the theories that will help analyze the research findings.

**Assimilation Theory**

Bean et al. (2007) explain that the school system seeks to integrate students into mainstream white culture, or in other words, assimilate them into American culture. Assimilation theory expects academic success to occur based on the ability to assimilate. However, this theory does not problematize how racial-ethnic minorities are forced to shed their culture and heritage to be integrated into mainstream society. Assimilation theory is also flawed in the context of race, class, and gender inequalities as observed in the Japanese internment camps and more recently Great Deportations (Barajas 2012; Golash-Boza 2012). In both situations, these immigrants were racially discriminated against even though both had learned the language and were contributing members to U.S. society. A notable example of racial targeting and marginalization occurred during the creation and passage of Proposition 187 in California in 1994 which required that U.S. born children be denied access to public health and education if their parents were undocumented. The targets of this bill were children who were largely Americanized, as they predominately spoke English and were U.S. born. This theory does not inform this study because it lacks empirical and theoretical support when applied to historically marginalized communities such as indigenous people from the Americas and African Americans (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Barajas 2012).

**Segmented Assimilation Theory**

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) propose segmented assimilation for understanding minority/immigrant integration in U.S. society and suggest that there are three acculturation paths that immigrants may take. The first acculturation path is assimilation, which is elaborated in the previous theory above. The second is selective acculturation, whereby immigrants retain their parents’ culture while strategically selecting culture from the host society. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2006), this path produces the greatest benefits and achievements for the immigrants’ children. The third path is downward assimilation, when the immigrant children do not reflect their parents’ nor the dominant group’s culture but form a new one. In Portes and Rambaut’s (2006) view, for example, Chicano and Cholo cultures and other creative hybridities present challenges and downward assimilation for immigrants. This assumption is problematic. If a person deviates from either being fully assimilated or from their parents’ culture, the new hybrid identity is considered an example of downward assimilation or oppositional culture (Bean et al. 2007; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

This study consists of people who retain their indigenous identity and are of Mexican origin. They generally reflect the selective acculturation path, as they
retain their traditional cultural values and are integrating into a mainstream one in higher education. However, this researcher does not classify those indigenous students who no longer reflect the parent culture or the dominant one as defective. This theory lacks analysis of the historical and structural relationships that exist between the United States and Mexico (or dominant and minority groups) and how these inequalities shape identity formation and produce new emergent identities, i.e., Nepantla, which reflect a common and normal experience for many racialized minority groups (Barajas 2009).

**Interactive Colonization Theory**

Barajas (2009) adds a unique view into immigration and migration that sheds light onto the retention of identities among transnational communities. Post-NAFTA migration saw whole communities migrate from their homelands to the United States, and when they came, they brought their traditions, culture, language, community, and communal structure, including multiple generations in the migration (Barajas 2009). This migration is unique because whole communities were involved, and their social ties transcended the nation, e.g., transnationalism. Transnational networks allow these communities to have somewhat of a foundation of support because the network provides a safety net as incoming members of a community arrive to the United States. Because these communities are marginalized in the larger national context, their culture often experiences transformations among the younger generations who experience several social and cultural contexts, e.g., they move from their parents’ culture to the dominant culture.

Barajas (2009) places identity formation of indigenous students within a historical context of colonialism, dialectical inequalities, and social interactionism (through transnational social ties). Although interactive colonization theory explains social capital, it explains it in the context of migration and national inequalities. In this study, the researcher examines how communal ties and integration with one’s own community affect aspirations for higher education. Within the context of historical inequalities, indigenous communities have been subordinated and forced to abandon their cultures and identities (Ruiz and Barajas 2012). Hence, in the educational setting, this study explores whether students that remain connected to and are in good terms with their indigenous communities have more resources to endure and protect themselves from predominately Eurocentric institutions, which continue to marginalize their existence. Like Portes and Rumbaut (2006), those that selectively acculturate are expected to do the best academically. Unlike Portes and Rumbaut (2006), those that experience being in-between two unequal worlds over time and form a unique culture and identity are not considered defective or deviant for not resembling the parent or host cultures but rather reflect a hybridity or nepantla (Barajas 2009). To further elaborate the need of affirming communities to
historically marginalized communities, the author will now discuss social and cultural capitals that indigenous students can benefit from.

**Social and Cultural Capitals**

Social and cultural capitals are used to explain ties that one has due to group membership. These memberships allow individuals to access resources that would otherwise be unattainable. One's social standings within society will enhance social mobility into upper classes or social status within the group (Ramirez 2011; Stanton-Salazar 1997). Inclusions of social and cultural capitals are important concepts to further our knowledge of how community impacts indigenous students. However, social and cultural capitals are dictated as unearned resources that are provided based on connections or knowledge that status provides. The researchers' interpretation and usage of this theory will consist of looking at the emotional and motivational forces that the respondents receive or do not receive. Community members act as a motivational force to pursue and attain higher education at a time when college has become more inaccessible to first-generation and minority students, as a result of reductions in government support to education, lack of diversity among the faculty and curriculum, higher tuition fees, and less class availability (Barajas 2011). Connectedness to and participation with one's culture offers Mexican-origin indigenous students access to various community members.

**Methods**

This study uses qualitative in-depth interviews to explore the educational experiences of indigenous students. A purposive snowball sampling technique was used to identify six indigenous students who come from Oaxaca or who are of the many indigenous ethnicities of Oaxacan descent. Gatekeepers provided further access to the population identified; gatekeepers were chosen for their knowledge of the Mixtecas. All were from the community or worked with the community within cultural settings such as: Danza (which is a cultural dance), Guelaguetza (which is a traditional cultural event) or were elders from the community. This sample includes two cohorts: The first cohort (Cohort A) has graduated from high school or obtained a GED and reported that they continue to practice and participate in their traditional culture. These individuals attended a community college, a California State University, or University of California campuses. The second cohort (Cohort B) graduated from high school or obtained a GED and attend a community college, a California State University, or a University of California campus, but the participants no longer identifies with their indigenous background. No longer identifying as indigenous doesn’t exclusively mean that one no longer expresses communal values nor practice cultural traditions; it simply reflects that the respondent has homogenized into the larger Mexican
identity or even that of the larger mainstream white culture and no longer recognizes indigenous culture as being their own. Both cohorts reported that they come from farm working backgrounds and are between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five.

The structure of the interviews and questions asked (See Appendix) were flexible to allow the participants free expression. A qualitative method was chosen to gather in-depth personal experiences from the participants. This study has no intention of generalizing to a larger group but rather to explore experiences of indigenous students in depth so as to identify and understand some of the major experiences faced in pursuing higher education. The study will focus on these factors: 1) an individual’s sense of identity, 2) an individual’s sense of community, 3) individual’s aspirations in attaining a higher education, and 4) general support networks. Obstacles during data collection were: access to population, distance between research participants, full cooperation from gatekeepers, attaining sufficient participants, and time allocated to conduct research. Although the obstacles were numerous, provisions were made to minimize complications. Gatekeepers have been designated in each of the locations mentioned: a community college, a California State University and a University of California.

**Results**

Knowledge of one’s history provides an understanding of who one is and helps to guide/reach present and future goals constructively by applying lessons from the past. Indigenous students’ understanding about how racial and ethnic discrimination in Mexico and United States have affected their group position in the larger society. Their awareness of their indigenous identity helps combat racial-ethnic stereotypes and helps to inform programs that nurture respect and equity across group differences. This knowledge also helps students by providing a healthy self-concept and self-esteem. They are able to define themselves in positive terms which benefit their levels of confidence and academic success.

When asked how their identity affected their aspiration to higher education, the students’ responses illuminate how their identity informed their academic orientation. Questions ten, eleven, and eighteen asked are relevant to answering the broader question. As one respondent put it, “Your identity gives you a purpose, and for me it helped me know what I wanted to study, when you know your identity and you know the struggles your community has, I feel that it empowers you to continue.” Another respondent also highlighted, “I needed to start learning why is it that I am being discriminated against for who I am and that’s when I started to learn more about my culture, my family, my family’s history, my families’ town, basically my heritage.” This specific respondent later mentioned,
All the answers are in your historical ancestors, and the only thing education will do is give you a strategic position to approach certain things and that’s why I am in school is to learn how the world is being ruled by the economic policies being implemented throughout the world, and how governments are trying to cope with development, economic crisis and how they are trying to better themselves... I look at it as an opportunity to see how the world functions.

While these questions did not explicitly ask about educational aspirations or motivations, these questions led to responses that illuminate what motivated students to higher education (and while in higher education). Their educational aspirations did not include individualistic pursuits of money, cars, and status; they included a contextual view of the community they come from and aspirations of how to integrate their teachings from their community and their higher education back into the struggles of the marginalized. Apparently, the hostile social context against their indigenous community has clearly affected their academic goals, and they are interested in expanding their education and using it to improve the quality of life for their community.

How does their indigenous social capital (i.e., community ties and culture) help and hinder academic achievement?

This research focused on one main factor that related all participants to each other, whether indigenous identifying or not, that being a farm working background. Their communal ties to the fields and aspects of farm worker life showed a strong association that this line of work not only marginalizes, but it also oppresses the whole community, creating shared experiences amongst participants. All participants stated that their inspiration, motivation, and desire to excel in academia are a result of their surrounding farm working communities. Questions twelve, twenty-one, twenty-two, and twenty-three (See Appendix) informed these responses. One participant who did not identify as indigenous stated:

My mother watches the children of the workers, some of them are single parents and our home has become theirs. The people in the fields work long hours and my mother takes it upon herself to feed them and sometimes take them baths when they get dirty. All of the children come from the neighborhood and we all grow together. I wasn’t too involved in high school, because I would go home and help her. She inspires me to do good in school when I feel overwhelmed with school.

Another participant stated,

It’s always my grandparents, my mom and my most direct family that I think about. My grandmother always tells me that it’s good that I study because she doesn’t want me to be struggling like her, she doesn’t want me to work in the fields, get married and struggle to survive. My mom is the same, she uses
herself as an example and says that she is not the happiest person, she says you can have an easier route.

The two other participants noted, “wow it’s amazing I’m the survivor of 500 years of genocide that I’m the survivor of so much discrimination” and “because of the migration those who are here are in poverty.” With this context, they allowed themselves to see the structure of the oppression they faced.

Some failed to draw the connection between the past and present circumstances. Although these individuals didn’t identify as indigenous, their communities operated within an indigenous framework: being very communal, sharing resources, and ultimately providing motivation for the youth. This was further expressed with the participants that recognized their communal framework as being indigenous. One participant added, “The way we address each other is respectful, no hierarchy exists”. This participant later added:

As a History and Sociology major I feel we talk a lot about the oppressed, but there is a disconnect because students just think ah yeah poor people, and some have so much privilege that they are amazed that these things happen in the U.S. and to me I think my family lives this and the value of knowing all of your knowledge doesn’t come from the institution is also empowering. So when all these things like institutional racism, difficulties with my major I think about that school is not going to teach me everything and I feel it’s my job to fulfill the other things that are missing and I do that through my community, my mom, and when my grandparents talk to me. It helps me fill that emptiness that I feel in school, even though school is good intellectually and communicating or organizing with students makes me feel happy. I feel most fulfilled when I am doing these things with my community.

Students direct involvement with their communities has given them a direct understanding of the farm work their families do and how it is oppressive at all levels: low wages, oppressive managers, and hazardous working conditions (Barajas 2009). Communities will help with the aspirations of the youth. When asked question about community’s influence on them, one respondent shared his experience about the motivational factors for pursuing higher education, specifically pointing to his experience working in the fields while school is not in session:

It always been my own community, when I’m not in school it’s like my uncle, my cousin, the father of someone I’m working with, always someone who comes from my background. They encourage me to strive for more, they give me strength, every time I’m working in either the winter or the summer they tell me not to drop out to keep going and sometimes they give me the responsibility that you are representing us, because we never had the chance, and you have the chance, no one told us that we had a chance what they actually did was take away our chances... There have been instances that the
workers have given me money to help me and farm workers don’t make shit, let’s be honest they are poor, they are basically enslaved, they live in the poorer neighborhoods, they shop in the poorer markets, and get the poorer products and yet they are still able to have faith in me and help fund my education.

Conclusion

Through genocide, colonialism, guest work policies, Structural Adjustment Acts, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Proposition 187 and Proposition 227, indigenous people in the Americas have been persistently hurt since the advancement of Europeans (Barajas 2009, 2014). Today, through legislation like California’s Dream Act, movements have sought to improve the treatment of undocumented students, but access to scholarship/financial support needs to be expanded to address the challenges of a community that has been historically marginalized. Leaders of the world are moving to traditions that have predominately resided in indigenous cultures such as sustainability, organic agriculture, and a greater appreciation for nature. We must ask ourselves this question: how is it that an impoverished community that has been historically oppressed can maneuver through a society and succeed with education? We must continue to integrate people into our society without marginalizing their indigenous culture. In their communal culture and practices the respondents shed light on how to create positive environments that help them navigate higher education and succeed in academic spaces that might not be too nurturing to minorities. Regardless of identifying as indigenous or not, all respondents credited their communities for their perseverance and success in higher education. More research on this topic is critical since little research has been published on it. With the permission of the indigenous communities, an accurate picture into the structure, values, and motivations of the community can be understood. This study’s policy recommendations include the increasing funding sources (state, federal, and private) to these marginalized communities in the San Joaquin Valley, who have given so much of their lives and labor to make this state the eighth largest economy in the world. Understanding the roots of their migration and historical experiences with unequal treatment in their incorporation into society, any comprehensive immigration proposal should be guided by this knowledge and by human rights and justice principles. Indigenous students deserve to exist with dignity, prosper without worry of material and social hardships, and follow their own dreams. Humane comprehensive immigration reform can only be created by listening to the voices of those who will be directly affected by the policy.
References


APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. How do you ethnically identify yourself?
2. What is your mother’s occupation?
3. What is your father’s occupation?
4. Have languages other than Spanish/English been spoken in your household?
5. How has having an indigenous identity shaped interactions with students in high school?
6. How has having an indigenous identity shaped interactions with students in higher education?
7. How have you been received by students while attending high school?
8. How have you been received by students while attending in higher education?
9. How have these educational experiences shaped your identity?
10. How have you been received by teachers/professors while attending high school and in higher education?
11. Can you explain any situations that you may have encountered that challenged the identity you had developed at that time?
12. How has your community shaped your identity?
13. What advice would you give to newly arriving indigenous students who want to enter into higher academia?
14. What kind of involvement in your community have you participated in?
15. If/When you feel discouraged about school who/whom do you find strength in to pursue your goals of attaining a higher education?
16. Can you list some of the cultural events you participate in as a student in higher education? How have those events changed/stayed constant over time?
17. What are some of the motivations you have in pursuing higher education?
18. How does your indigenous identity integrate with the lessons you learn in college?
19. Is there a sense of belonging in the larger community? Why?
20. Is there a sense of belonging in school? Why?

21. Is there a sense of belonging at work? Why?

22. How do your relationships to family help or hinder your educational goals?

23. How do your relationships to your community help or hinder your educational goals?