WOMEN WITH MULTIPLE IDENTITIES:
A QUALITATIVE SEARCH FOR PATTERNS OF
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG COMPLEX DIFFERENCES

DISSERTATION

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This qualitative study employed grounded theory to investigate the process of identity development for women with multiple minority status. Phenomenological inquiry provided insight into the role of spirituality in identity development. The Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID) model provided the theoretical framework from which research questions emerged and data were analyzed. The categorical Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM) was juxtaposed against the OTAID to investigate the influence of environmental factors. The six women interviewed represent various racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and religious affiliations.

Results supported OTAID developmental theory, but multiple identity development involved more complexity than described by the theory. Rather than one spiral process, as proposed by OTAID theorists, multiple identities appeared to follow overlapping, interweaving spirals of development. The OTAID model incorporates the role of the environment; this study illuminated how environmental influences are interrelated with developmental progress. Viewing data from both OTAID
and MIM perspectives provided a more complete picture of identity development. MIM categories overlapped with OTAID developmental phases, highlighting environmental influences on identity development. As individuals encountered oppressive environments (OTAID Dissonance phase) or sought strength from their reference group (OTAID Immersion phase), segmented identification with one aspect of identity typically occurred. Maturation, increased self-awareness, and deepening spirituality (describing the OTAID's highest three phases) were associated with intersected identification with multiple identities.

Environmental factors, such as the role of parental affirmation, exposure to diversity in the community, availability of resources enhancing identity exploration, and overarching sociopolitical movements, contributed to multiple identity development. During childhood, for example, parental affirmation and the exposure to different types of people provided groundwork for expanding development. The degree to which a community (i.e., school, work, or neighborhood) reflected an individual's multiple aspects of identity was another impetus for development. Experiencing oppression and discrimination resulted in powerful emotional and cognitive responses and development of survival skills. Surviving through identity conflicts spurred by environmental factors brought increased awareness and deeper self-understanding. As OTAID theorists proposed, spirituality is an essential component of identity. In this study, deepening spirituality was associated with increased self-understanding, greater self-acceptance, and connectedness to all things residing within the universe.
Dedicated to the six women who shared their life stories, teaching us of their strength and will to survive, their humility in living, and their deepened spirituality.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I say I am a Black feminist, I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my Blackness as well as my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both these fronts are inseparable.

Audre Lorde (1987, p. 26)

Audre Lorde’s statement that her Blackness and womanness are “inseparable” leaves identity theorists in a quandary. Many identity theories (e.g., Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971; Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1984; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990) focus on an individual’s membership in a particular minority group and the linear progression from a negative to a positive self-identity, as it relates to one particular aspect of identity, such as race, gender, or sexual orientation. According to these single-group models of identity development, the linear progression of identity development occurs in stages, moving from unawareness and naiveté, to a negative view of self-identity, to an immersion in one’s culture, to an integrated and positive sense of self. Recently,
researchers presented more expansive models of identity development that apply to individuals across boundaries of diversity.

Inclusive models of identity development (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Banks, 1984; Highlen, Myers, Hanley, Speight, Reynolds, Adams, & Cox, 1986; Phinney, 1992) follow a pattern of development similar to that of most single-group models. One improvement includes acknowledging the similar experience of oppression shared by individuals from different minority groups. A second improvement involves focusing on individuals’ attitudes toward the majority world as well as minority groups different than their own. Highlen and Sudarsky-Gleiser (1994) characterized the single group racial/ethnic identity models as focusing on attitudes toward: (a) self, (b) racial/ethnic group, and (c) the dominant culture. They also recognized the unique contribution of the inclusive models to incorporate attitudes minority group members have toward other minority group members. “This additional factor is related to a concept underlying cultural pluralism, that is, the right of every minority group to maintain its identity and to be respected by other minority groups as well as by the dominant culture” (Highlen & Sudarsky-Gleiser, 1994, p. 22).

Inclusive models emphasize sharing experiences across different cultural groups, overlooking the complexities and variations of subcultures within one cultural group (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Considering the types of identity models listed thus far, what models would be most appropriate for a woman such as Audre Lorde, who had triple minority status? As an African American lesbian, Lorde actively used her gift of writing and communication to educate the African American community about homophobia and sexism, the feminist community about racism and homophobia, and the gay and lesbian
communities about racism. People with multiple dimensions of their identities do not “fit” into the various models of identity development that focus on one’s race OR ethnicity OR feminist identity OR sexual orientation. Neither single group nor inclusive models of identity development would be appropriate for a woman with multiple identities, such as Lorde.

**Multiple identity models** (Highlen, Reynolds, Adams, Hanley, Myers, Cox, & Speight, 1988; Myers, Speight, Highlen, Cox, Reynolds, Adams, & Hanley, 1991; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) provide frameworks incorporating the complexities of having two or more oppressed identities.

The Self Identity Developmental Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP, Highlen et al., 1986; Highlen et al., 1988) was one of the first models to incorporate multiple identities of individuals with multi-minority status and to recognize the universality of the identity development process. The SIDMOP research team created the model to provide a comprehensive model, systematically developed and empirically validated (Highlen et al., 1986). The research team revised the SIDMOP and renamed it the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID, Myers et al., 1991). The OTAID model consists of six phases through which an individual progresses, with the progression being more complex than that of linear models. Identity is also viewed from a holistic perspective, thus allowing room for multiple identities. Another distinction of the OTAID model is its foundation of several worldviews, most notably that of “optimal” psychology (see Myers, 1988), which is based on an Afrocentric worldview.

Reynolds and Pope (1991) devised the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM), which specifically focuses on individuals with two or more oppressed identities. This model is primarily categorical, suggesting that identity
development occurs in concert with life events and personal needs. The MIM offers four general categories based on the amount of fragmentation and identification a person with multiple identities experiences. I incorporated the MIM into this study for theoretical comparison.

Statement of the Problem / Research Needs

Because the OTAID model is still in its early stages of development, several areas need to be explored in greater depth. Reynolds and Pope (1991) concluded that “...more research and exploration is needed to fully understand the multidimensional nature of human identity” (p. 179). Although “multiple identity” can refer to endless combinations of identity dimensions, for the purpose of this study, multiple identity will refer to having at least two aspects of identity with minority status. An individual who is a member of more than one oppressed group may experience multiple oppression (Highlen et al., 1988; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Highlen, Speight, Myers, and Cox (1989, p. 8) asserted many people can claim minority status, considering that

... the generally accepted norm by which people are evaluated or against which they measure themselves is how close one comes to being Anglo, middle class, male, Christian, heterosexual, English speaking, young, and mentally, physically, and emotionally unimpaired.

Within the patriarchal society of the United States of America, women automatically are assigned “minority” status. Considering the multi-minority status of women who are also ethnic/racial minorities, Jewish, disabled, lesbian or bisexual, a multitude of women have at least two aspects of identity constituting minority status. Highlen and Sudarsky-Gleiser (1994) proposed, “As the number of multiple identities increases, a concomitant rise in
contextual challenges occurs” (p. 24). In this study, I examined the complexities of identity development for women with multiple identities.

Another important area that has not been fully addressed is the progression through the phases of identity development. Many theorists (e.g., Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971; Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1984) have used a Western, linear progression; others proposed categorical models (e.g., Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994) of identity development. Some proponents of linear models have acknowledged points at which an individual may stagnate or recycle through past stages of identity development that had supposedly already been resolved (e.g., Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989; Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovsky, 1991). The OTAID model provides a more complex vision of identity development characterized by an “expanding spiral” (Myers et al., 1991). The spiral refers to the endpoint of development being similar to the point at which it began. Both the beginning and the end reflect an interconnectedness to the circle of all life, with the difference being a rich amount of self-knowledge gained from self-exploration and life experience (Myers et al., 1991). In this study, I addressed questions raised by Highlen and her colleagues (1988) of how women with multiple identities integrate the various aspects of themselves, and how those aspects of identity impact and interrelate with each other throughout the developmental process. Is one aspect of identity addressed before another? Do the processes of acceptance, exploration, and integration occur simultaneously? How do prior identity issues, such as accepting a positive African American identity, influence the process of working through and integrating another dimension of identity, such as being bisexual or elderly?
Myers and her colleagues (1991) described such issues through the example of an African American elderly woman:

As she travels on the road to self-knowledge and self-acceptance, she will realize that the individual identities (i.e., African American, woman, elderly person) as affected by the individual oppressions (i.e., racism, sexism, and ageism) are truly interrelated and interdependent coming from one source, the suboptimal worldview. The separate identities and “-isms” are not really separate at all. The experience of being African American, female, and elderly cannot be parcelled and divided anymore than the individual can be divided into distinct components. As such the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Each aspect is manifesting itself as an opportunity to more fully inform the true nature of self (p. 59).

A third area of research revolves around the tenet that the OTAID (Myers et al., 1991) model is a pancultural developmental model and not merely a zeitgeist model reflecting the current emphasis on multiculturalism (Highlen et al., 1986, 1988; Myers et al., 1991). Developing an instrument to empirically investigate the OTAID model, Sevig (1993) concluded age was a potential source of cohort effects. Sevig (1993) found significant correlations for age groups on all scales but one (Scale 4, Internalization) and concluded that the patterns associated with cohort effects demonstrated that age influences identity development and that “… the socialization associated with different generations may be an underlying factor (independent of age)” (p. 162). To address Sevig’s (1993) emphasis on socialization across generations, I interviewed participants with a wide age range.

Finally, I explored the nature of the OTAID model’s highest phases of development, to contribute to the limited research about the role of spirituality in identity development. Previous identity models are based on a European American worldview (Akbar, 1989; Myers, 1988; Myers et al., 1991) and do not
consider an alternate worldview that incorporates beliefs of other cultures. The OTAID model’s highest phases represent an alternate worldview based on Afrocentric and Indigenous peoples’ beliefs (e.g., Lakota Sioux and Aborigine), and metaphysical traditions found across cultures and time (e.g., Taoism, Sufism, Christian Mysticism). Sevig (1993) also concluded that high levels of education and income were correlated with scores reflecting the final two Phases of the OTAID model. I explored the impact of education and socioeconomic status on participants’ identity development.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I define terminology used in this study. Second, I present an overview of identity development literature, focusing on the progression from single-group models (e.g., Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971, Helms, 1984), to inclusive models (e.g., Atkinson et al., 1983, 1989; Banks, 1984; Sue & Sue, 1990), to multiple identity models (e.g., Highlen et al., 1986, 1988; Myers et al., 1991; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). I identify major limitations of single group and inclusive identity development models. These limitations include unidimensional perspectives of identity, a Eurocentric worldview, zeitgeist models, and methodological concerns. Myers and her colleagues (1991) created the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID) model. They addressed primary limitations of single-group and inclusive models of identity development and provided a pancultural model of identity development. Because identity theorists have given minimal attention to multiple identity development, I highlight the few studies which have investigated multiple identity issues. Briefly explaining qualitative research
methodology, I provide insight into my reason for pursuing a qualitative mode of inquiry. Finally, I identify unresolved issues related to multiple identity development and transform them into research questions guiding this study.

Definition of Terms

Minority refers to “... a group of people who because of physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination” (Wirth, 1945, p. 347, cited in Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989, p. 8). Thus, minority status can actually describe a large group of people who are oppressed by society because they do not hold the values, norms, and mores of the “dominant societal view.” These norms include belonging to those who are “... White, middle class, male, Christian, heterosexual, young, and mentally, physically, and emotionally unimpaired” (Highlen et al., 1986, p. 7).

Multiple identity can be defined as belonging to more than one oppressed group (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Although the term could also be applied to individuals who belong to groups who are not oppressed by minority status (i.e., White and middle class), this study will use multiple identity as a representation of individuals who have multiple minority status and thus belong to more than one oppressed group.

Multiple oppression occurs when an individual is a member of two or more oppressed groups (Highlen et al., 1988). Thus, the complexities of multiple identities often result in a profound experience of oppression. For example, a Chicana bisexual woman experiences racism, sexism, and
heterosexism within the larger society, and is further oppressed by the 
homophobia and patriarchy that exist within her own ethnic group. In 
addition, within the lesbian community, this woman would also experience 
oppression in the form of racism and biphobia (the fear of and lack of respect 
for bisexuality).

**Oppression** was defined by Reynolds and Pope (1991) as “… a system that 
allows access to the services, rewards, benefits, and privileges of society based 
on membership in a particular group” (p. 174). Individuals with access to 
these services are members of a majority group, such as men, European 
Americans, and heterosexuals. Although oppression is often viewed in terms 
of racial minorities, Highlen et al. (1989) stated that the basic foundation of 
oppression applies to all forms of oppression, including “… sexism, agism, 
heterosexism, anti-Semitism, etc.” (p. 3).

**Race/Ethnicity** is a term used in this study to identify an individual’s 
racial and ethnic background. “Race” typically refers to physical 
characteristics, such as skin color, hair type, and facial features and has been 
criticized for its arbitrary nature (Zuckerman, 1990). “Ethnicity” represents a 
shared culture including “familial roles, communication patterns, affective 
styless, and values” (Triandis et al., 1980), nationality, or language. One 
example of the complex interaction between race and ethnicity can be 
represented by Latinos who “… can be of any racial (Negroid, Mongoloid, 
Caucasoid) or national (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, Chilean) origin” (Highlen, 1994, 
p. 72).

**Spirituality** is “… reconceptualized to be an essential aspect of being” and 
thus, spiritual development is a fundamental component of identity 
development (Myers et al., 1991, p. 57). Using an African conceptual system,
Myers (1985) described reality as a combination of both the material and the spiritual: “Everything becomes one thing, spirit manifesting. Spirit refers to that permeating essence that is known in an extrasensory fashion (e.g., energy, consciousness, God)” (p. 34). This belief is evident in the African concept of an “extended self,” in which self incorporates ancestors, those who are unborn, all of nature, and the surrounding community. Investigating the mystical roots of various religious traditions, the OTAID research team incorporated the shared beliefs across religions in the tenets of the Transformation phase. These tenets include an extended sense of self, a recognition of the interrelatedness of all things, an understanding that their reality is based on spiritual awareness, a holistic appreciation of their culture and history, an understanding that all life events encourage growth, and a true acceptance of all life forms (Myers et al., 1991).

**Worldview** is defined as “... how a person views the world, or more specifically, how an individual construes her or his relationship to the world, including nature, institutions, people, things, etc.” (Highlen et al., 1988, p. 4). More specifically, in terms of multiple identity development, Highlen et al. (1986) stated that an individual’s worldview “... may be construed as the spectacles or filters through which she or he evaluates and makes sense of life experiences in terms of the oppression he or she encounters” (p. 7).

**Overview of Identity Development Models**

**Single-Group Identity Models**

Black racial identity was the focus of the first racial identity development models to emerge more than twenty years ago. Thomas (1971) and Cross (1971) independently formulated theories of Black racial identity, but because
Cross’ model was further developed and operationalized (Parham & Helms, 1981), the “Negro-to-Black conversion” (Cross, 1971) became the primary theory of reference for Black racial identity development. This conversion consists of four stages, from the first Pre-Encounter stage, characterized by “pro-White” and “anti-Black” attitudes, to the final Internalization stage, that involves having a positive, stable sense of self as a Black individual and a pluralistic perspective through which to view the world.

Cross’ (1971) theory was the primary model for many of the single group identity development theories that subsequently emerged and described similar processes for gay men and lesbian women (Cass, 1979), Whites (Helms, 1984; Ponterotto, 1988; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994), feminists (Avery, 1977; Downing & Roush, 1985), and Latinos (Ruiz, 1990). Although each model has distinct terms representing each stage, Sevig (1993) described a generic process shared by the single-group models “… where a person initially denies, devalues, or lacks awareness of identity, questions meanings of identity, immerses in the group culture, and comes to a realization that the once exclusive definition of identity is only one part of many identities” (p. 27). Researchers (Highlen et al., 1986; Reynolds, 1989) recognized that in the past 20 years, the emergence of various frameworks for identity development have reflected the social movements most prominent at that point in history. Each single-group model corresponds to the prevailing social movements. For example, Cross (1971) developed his model during the civil rights movement. Avery (1977) devised her feminist identity model during the women’s rights movement. Reynolds and Pope (1991) maintained that the 1980s trend toward a “rainbow coalition” was also reflected in the identity literature, with the emergence of inclusive frameworks (i.e., Atkinson et al., 1989; Banks, 1984).
Inclusive Identity Development Models

Inclusive models describe a process of identity development similar across racial/ethnic groups (Banks, 1984; Phinney, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990) as well as across all oppressed categories of identity, such as race, gender and sexual orientation (Atkinson et al., 1989). The influence of Cross’ (1971, 1978) model is evident in the five stages of the Racial/Cultural Identity Development (R/CID) model (Sue & Sue, 1990), which is based on the original Minority Identity Development (MID) model (Atkinson et al., 1989). The R/CID consists of an initial alignment with the majority perspective, called Conformity, followed by a contradictory experience or recognition evidenced by Dissonance, and the reverse in attitude characterized by Resistance and Immersion, in which the minority culture is unconditionally appreciated and the majority culture is depreciated. The rigid attitudes are questioned within the Introspection stage as some balance between group allegiance and personal autonomy is attained. Finally, the Integrative Awareness stage represents an integrated self-concept and the ability to appreciate those within other minority groups, and the ability to appreciate those within the majority group who are also active in addressing oppression.

Atkinson et al. (1993) observed that although individuals from various minority ethnic groups retain their unique cultures, “… the fact that they may have been subjected to various forms of physical, economic, and social discrimination suggests that they share a common experience that affects how they view themselves and others” (p. 27). Regardless of the particular minority status, minorities realized their connectedness to each other. Highlen and Sudarsky-Gleiser (1994) recognized that the inclusive models incorporate the attitudes minority group members have toward individuals in different
minority groups. This is unique. “This additional factor is related to a concept underlying cultural pluralism, that is, the right of every minority group to maintain its identity and to be respected by other minority groups as well as by the dominant culture” (Highlen & Sudarsky-Gleiser, 1994, p. 22).

Critique of Single Group and Inclusive Identity Development Models

Unidimensional perspectives of identity. The single group and inclusive identity models have contributed a great deal to the psychological literature, but they must be viewed with critical lenses to assess their functionality in today’s pluralistic society. One of the major limitations of these models is their unidimensional perspective of identity. This perspective ignores the complex identity issues for individuals who belong to more than one group and thus, “… create an incomplete and, therefore, inaccurate picture of the multiple layers of identity and oppression” (Reynolds & Pope, 1991, p. 175).

Many of the single-group models present a narrow and unrealistic perspective of identity. For example, the instruments used to operationalize Black (Parham & Helms, 1981) or White (Helms & Carter, 1990) Racial Identity Attitudes consist of items that are based on interactions with one other racial group only. Helms (1990) intended to create a “Black-White“ model of racial identity, but the model leaves no room to incorporate attitudes toward other races, sexual orientations, and ethnic groups different than their own. Highlen et al. (1986) noted that models of racial/ethnic identity usually failed to examine differences — both outside of and within one racial/ethnic group. This lack of attention to these additional dimensions of identity sustains a narrow and more limiting perspective of identity. Even the R/CID (Atkinson
et al., 1989) fails to address the more complex experience of individuals with multiple minority status.

**Eurocentric worldview.** A second limitation of most identity models is the Eurocentric perspective that views identity development through segmented, linear, and dichotomous lenses (Akbar, 1989; Myers, 1988; Myers et al., 1991). The appropriateness of a Eurocentric perspective is questionable when it is applied to individuals who are from other racial/ethnic groups (Myers et al., 1991). Akbar (1989) and Nobles (1989) criticized the Cross (1971) model of Black racial identity development because it was based on a Euro- rather than Afrocentric worldview. Rather than fitting various minority groups into the dominant worldview, Myers and her colleagues (1991) extracted commonalities across worldviews to create a universal, pancultural identity development model.

**Zeitgeist models.** A third limitation of the identity models is their reflection of the "zeitgeist," or social climate of a particular era. Authors (Highlen et al., 1986; Myers et al., 1991; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) have noted the concurrent emergence of identity models with social movements focused on civil rights (e.g., Cross, 1971; Thomas, 1971), women's rights (e.g., Avery, 1977; Downing & Roush, 1985), and gay pride (e.g., Cass, 1979). This emphasis on the role of the environment, whether stated or implied, limits the amount of participation an individual has in her or his own identity development (Akbar, 1989; Highlen et al., 1986; Myers et al., 1991; Nobles, 1989). Contrasting these temporal models of identity development, Highlen et al. (1986) proposed a more universal process independent of social movements.

**Methodological issues.** In addition, methodological concerns about identity development models must be addressed. First, the theories are
primarily based on clinical or anecdotal observations that have not followed a
rigorous qualitative or quantitative research regimen. In short, many of the
theories (e.g., Cross, 1971; Downing & Roush, 1985) have no theoretical
foundations and were not systematically developed (Highlen et al., 1986).
Cross’ (1971) model of Black racial identity development was foundational;
newer models emerged for other races (Helms, 1985; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990),
sexual orientations (Cass, 1979), and feminists (Avery, 1977; Downing &
theory of Nigrescence as a theoretical basis for their developmental model,
thus using a foundation lacking empirical support. Researchers typically used
quantitative methodology to gather empirical support for instruments
measuring the stages of the model (e.g., Helms & Carter, 1990).

The rapid surfacing of various White racial identity development models
and accompanying instruments caused some researchers to question whether
or not the “cart [instrument] was leading the horse [theory]” (see Rowe &
Hill, 1992). Although Rowe & Hill’s (1992) critique specifically addressed a
model of multicultural training for majority counselors (Sabnani et al., 1991),
similar arguments could be applied to many identity development models
(e.g., racial/ethnic, sexual orientation, feminist). Many instruments have
reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) much lower than the 0.80
recommended for research and even lower than the 0.70 recommended for
research in a newly developed field of study (Nunnally, 1978). For example,
researchers continued to use instruments measuring Black and White Racial
Identity Attitudes, such as the RIAS-B (Parham & Helms, 1981) and the
WRIAS (Helms & Carter, 1990) despite their reported low Cronbach’s alpha
coefficients ranging from 0.50 – 0.79 and 0.55 – 0.82, respectively.
Because new developments in identity literature were not systematically approached, narrow, inaccurate conceptualizations emerged. Sevig (1993) noted the lack of follow-up studies to investigate validity. Some studies (i.e., Finley, 1993; Rowe et al., 1994; Tokar & Swanson, 1991) revealed poor construct validity and internal reliability of White racial identity instruments. Despite these findings, Helms’ (1990) theory and instrument (Helms & Carter, 1990, 1992) have already generated a bulk of invalid information within the psychological literature and continue to be the primary models of reference in quantitative studies.

Schatzman (1991) emphasized the importance of using qualitative research methods, including dimensional analysis and grounded theory techniques, when investigating previously unexplored phenomena, as well as basic psychological and social processes. One model that continues to use qualitative methodology to solidify its theoretical foundation is the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development model (OTAID; Myers et al., 1991).

Multiple Identity Development Models

The previously mentioned models do not address pertinent issues for people who have multiple identities. Recently, more theorists (e.g., Highlen et al., 1988; Myers et al., 1991; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) have recognized the importance of moving away from identity models that compartmentalize specific aspects of a person’s identity and have focused on more comprehensive multiple identity development models. With the steadily growing number of individuals of mixed racial heritage, for example, models of biracial identity (see Poston, 1990; Root, 1990) have been introduced to the field of psychology. Building on the co-existence of two different identities
inherent in Root’s biracial (1990) model, Reynolds and Pope (1991) devised a Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM) for people who belong to more than one oppressed group.

The Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM; Reynolds & Pope, 1991), provides four possible outcomes of identity resolution that depict the lifelong “… movement among [italics added] these options … based on personal needs, reference group, or environment” (p. 179). Reynolds and Pope’s (1991) model does not focus on the progression from a naive to an integrated self, or negative to positive self identity. Rather, this model recognizes that given the context of an individual’s life, she or he may identify with any of the four possible options for identity resolution: (a) passive acceptance of one aspect of self that is assigned by society, (b) conscious identification with one aspect of self, (c) segmented identification with multiple aspects of self, and (d) intersected identification with combined aspects of self. This approach allows for flexibility within an individual’s development, but it does not support an overarching, universal process of identity development for all people who are oppressed.

The Self Identity Development Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP; Highlen et al., 1986, 1988) addresses various limitations in the prevalent identity models. The SIDMOP provides a universal pancultural model applying to all identity groups. Using an *emic* approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the SIDMOP research team interviewed individuals from various races/ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic classes, as well as individuals with physical disabilities, to gain insight on their experiences of oppression. Highlen et al. (1988) delineated three unique contributions that the SIDMOP adds to identity development literature. First,
this model identifies the complexities surrounding multiple oppression, defined as a person's membership in two or more oppressed groups (Highlen et al., 1988, p. 3):

For example, a black woman, who is also a lesbian, is a member of three oppressed groups. Each oppression has unique issues for the woman to deal with (being Black, a woman, and a lesbian), and the combination of oppressions — ‘black lesbian’ — provides a unique set of issues as well.

A second contribution was the clear emphasis on the “psychology of world view” (Highlen et al., 1986). This is primarily based on Afrocentric literature and Eastern philosophy; Eurocentric psychological literature (such as developmental theories, identity development models of oppressed peoples, and the person-environment interactional model); and the individual experiences of research team members (Highlen et al, 1986). A third contribution to the identity development literature is the SIDMOP’s incorporation of the “worldview of peoples ... that the nature of reality is the unity of spirit and matter” (Highlen et al., 1988, p. 3). The SIDMOP was based on Myers’ (1988) optimal psychology model that stems from an Afrocentric perspective. The SIDMOP was further revised and its name changed to the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development model (Myers et al., 1991).

**Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID)**

The OTAID model is based on optimal psychology (Myers, 1988), within which “… the unity of humanity is acknowledged culturally and historically as spreading from Africa; thus the presence of spiritual-material unity is a pancultural phenomenon” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 58). To further support the notion of a pancultural model, the research team found integrative themes within African, Native American, feminist, and Eastern philosophies, and the
Creation Spirituality beliefs within Christianity (Myers et al., 1991). Tenets of the OTAID model addressing limitations of previous identity models include: gaining a deeper understanding of the “true essence of self,” that consists of a holistic, rather than fragmented identity; developing through a predictable sequence in an “expanding spiral,” rather than following a linear or categorical model; understanding how identity development interacts with the sociocultural environment; and incorporating individuals’ relationship to the universe, or “worldview,” rather than only focusing on attitudes (Myers et al., 1991).

**Developmental Phases**

The OTAID model consists of 6 phases that represent the unlearning of a suboptimal system under which we have been socialized (Myers et al., 1991). This unlearning occurs through self-knowledge and self-discovery and results in a return to the initial stage, with the primary difference being the presence of self-knowledge (Sevig et al., 1994). **Absence of Conscious Awareness** (Phase 0) represents infants’ unawareness that they are beings who are distinct from their environment and may be summarized as “It is” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 59). In **Individuation** (Phase 1), “The world is the way it is,” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 59) and people experience separateness, but do not question how the suboptimal conceptual system has shaped their conventional beliefs about groups different than their own. Exploration of social group membership begins in **Dissonance** (Phase 2) as a person begins to wonder who she or he is. Self doubt accompanying this exploration often emerges from an aspect of themselves that is not validated by the dominant society. Individuals often internalize the negative societal views or try to disassociate themselves from
the negative self-definition, causing self-examination to be painful, if engaged at all. In Immersion (Phase 3), a person focuses her or his energy on others from the same social group who share the experience of being devalued for their group membership. Immersion in their group’s culture often fosters feelings of pride and a sense of reclaiming the identity that had been devalued by others. As a result, the “others,” who are members of the perceived dominant group, are regarded with negative feelings, such as anger, distrust, and rage, and efforts are made to avoid, ignore, or reject norms and values of the “others.” Internalization (Phase 4) reflects a more stable sense of self, in which a person’s group identity is “… recognized as just one of many components of self-identity” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 59). This multidimensional understanding of identity often results in increased tolerance and acceptance toward others who do not threaten their sense of self.

Although the OTAID Phases resemble previous identity models, the final two Phases distinguish the OTAID as a pancultural and universal model of identity development. With a deeper understanding of oneself, Integration (Phase 5) represents a shift toward changing assumptions about the world. At this point, an individual recognizes that oppression is caused and maintained by the suboptimal conceptual system. This acknowledgment results in a deeper sense of community, which includes a diverse range of people and greater unconditional positive regard for all of life. Transformation (Phase 6) may be simply, yet profoundly summarized by three words: “It is I” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 60). This final phase reflects movement into the optimal worldview, with a realization that all life is interrelated and interdependent, and an ability to “… define … reality based on spiritual awareness rather than external circumstance” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 60). Individuals in
Transformation have an expanded self-concept, which includes ancestors, the unborn, nature, and community. Individuals in this phase also have a deep understanding and appreciation of their cultures and history. Viewed through optimal lenses, “negative” experiences are understood to be natural occurrences within life and provide opportunities for continued growth and self knowledge.

Validation and Empirical Support

After rigorous qualitative theory development (see Highlen et al., 1986; Highlen et al., 1988; Myers et al., 1991), the SIDMOP foundations of the OTAID model were supported empirically by Reynolds’ (1989, 1991) studies of validity. Reynolds’ research provided support for the SIDMOP tenet that each Phase is distinct and occurs in some recognizable order. Validation tasks performed by African American and Asian American participants did not differ, offering preliminary support for the tenet that SIDMOP is a pluralistic model, at least across several ethnic groups (Myers et al., 1991).

Using the SIDMOP as a basis, Jecman (1989) developed the Female Identity Development Scale (FIDS), and administered it to 452 university women. Eleven scales obtained internal consistency reliabilities greater than 0.70. Poor reliabilities on five subscales resulted in refinement of the FIDS (Highlen et al., 1991) corresponding to the revised SIDMOP, or OTAID model. The revised FIDS was administered to a larger (N = 668) and more diverse (women from the university and the local community) sample of women. With the exception of Internalization (0.44), the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) were greatly improved: Individuation (0.82), Dissonance (0.83), Immersion (0.74), Integration (0.76), and Transformation (0.84).
A recent addition to the literature is Sevig’s (1993) Self Identity Inventory, an instrument with excellent psychometric properties that operationalized the OTAID model. Sevig (1993) investigated construct validity using: (a) confirmatory factor analysis, (b) scale intercorrelations, and (c) correlations with the Tolerance scale from the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1987) and the Belief System Analysis Scale (Montgomery et al., 1990). The factor analysis produced high goodness of fit indices (0.9 or above) for every scale. Correlations with external scales demonstrated predicted patterns of results, including a fundamental distinction between the last two scales (Integration and Transformation), as stated in the OTAID model (see Myers et al., 1991). Although less consistent, scale intercorrelations provide partial support for the theory-based predicted relationships (Sevig, 1993). Reliability estimates suggest good internal consistency (0.72 – 0.90) and test-retest reliability (0.72 – 0.92).

Unresolved Issues of Multiple Identity Development

Multiple Identity Development

The common experience of having multiple identities has been addressed by several researchers (e.g., Chan, 1989; Highlen et al., 1988; Loiacano, 1989; Myers et al., 1991; Page, 1993; Poston, 1990; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Root, 1990; Sevig, 1993). Multiple identities have been addressed from a variety of perspectives. Some researchers have tried to determine which aspect of identity is most important; others have focused on exploring an integrated identity. Dill (1983) investigated the interactions between race, sex, and socioeconomic status, asserting the importance of socioeconomic status in shaping values shared across racial groups. She also concluded that ethnic
minority women were more committed to their ethnic identities than they were to their political identities. Because multiple identity development has only recently gained attention in the psychological literature, initial explorations following an emic approach, (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) would most effectively uncover rich sources of information. This information would contribute to solid theory development.

Segmented identities. Some individuals identify with the multiple dimensions of themselves, but approach the multiplicity in a segmented fashion (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Several studies emphasized the degree of alliance individuals hold for each primary identity. Dill (1983) found that ethnic minority women were more committed to their ethnic identity than they were to their political identity as women. Fundamental conflicts exist for Japanese American gay men because identifying as gay is equivalent to rejecting their culture by rejecting the centrality of heterosexually created family and the most important role as fathers who carry on the family line (Wooden et al., 1983).

Chan (1989) conducted a qualitative study of Asian American gay men and lesbian women (aged 21-36) to determine which dimensions of identity the respondents identified with most often and in what situations. She found that none of the 35 respondents attended social/political events in the heterosexual Asian American community. Most (n=26) reported attending mainstream lesbian and gay events. When asked to describe their community and identity of choice, a majority of individuals answered from a segmented perspective (n= 20 lesbian or gay, n=10 Asian American). Chan (1989) suggested that factors related to identity affiliation for gay and lesbian Asian Americans include: (a) perceptions of homophobia in the Asian American
community, (b) perceptions of racism in the lesbian/gay community, (c) disclosure (or lack thereof) to their family and community, and (d) affiliation with Asian American lesbian/gay community. Chan (1989) concluded that, “Because identity development is a fluid, ever-changing process, an individual may choose to identify and ally more closely with being lesbian or gay or Asian American at different times depending on need and situational factors” (p. 18).

**Intersected identities.** The most complex option, identity intersection, involves identifying with the combined aspects of a multidimensional identity. This intersection necessitates identifying as a new group (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). With biracial children, recent trends encourage the use of interracial labels to identify the children and to foster a sense of possessing a “doubly rich” heritage (Kerwin et al., 1993). Loiacano’s (1989) qualitative exploration of gay identity issues for Black Americans revealed that one of the major themes was the need to integrate both identities and to receive simultaneous validation from both communities.

Espín (1987) identified two difficulties that result from an integrated multiple identity as a Latina lesbian: (a) fear of stigma in the Hispanic community, and (b) loss of support as a Hispanic within the mainstream gay community. Chan’s (1989) study of gay and lesbian Asian Americans revealed that a minority of respondents view their multiple identity from an intersected view. For example, only seven individuals were classified as identifying with neither or both identities. Because the study did not separate those who identified with neither identity, the number of intersections may be even fewer. When asked about attending social and political events, only 9 of 35 claimed that they attended events specifically for Asian American gays and
lesbians. The lower number could possibly be a result of the lack of availability of events.

**Developmental Process versus Typology**

*Linear stagewise progression.* The linear view is represented by the models (see Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971, 1978; Helms, 1990; Downing & Roush, 1985) that present a stage-wise progression from negative to positive self-concept. Some theorists (e.g., Helms, 1991; Parham, 1989; Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovsky, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990) have proposed flexibility within the seemingly rigid linear process. Parham (1989) recognized that early theories of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971) implied that development and resolution of racial identity is constant over time, that individuals progress through the stages in a linear fashion, and that racial identity is resolved as soon as the cycle is complete.

*Aberrations within linear models.* Parham (1989) proposed two additional alternatives of development, including stagnating at some point of the process and "recycling" through various stages of racial identity. Parham (1989) defined recycling as "... the reinitiation of the racial identity struggle and resolution process after having gone through the identity development process at an earlier stage in one's life" (p. 213). Recycling can be experienced differently, depending on a person's stage of life and the developmental tasks that accompany it (Parham, 1989).

Other major theories have provided examples of recycling, or instances when the linear process of development may be interrupted or stalled (i.e., Atkinson et al., 1983, 1989, 1993; Helms, 1990; Sabnani et al., 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990). Atkinson et al. (1993) emphasized points for consideration related to
their MID model, including individual variations that may exist (such as
reversal in direction and skipping stages) and the continuous nature of
identity development, which is not accurately described by stages. Sabnani et
al. (1991) suggested that movement through a theoretical linear model may,
"... in reality ... be more complex, marked by loops into previous stages at
various choice points" (p. 82). They presented a flowchart to depict the choice
points that may emerge as a result of life events. Although theories typically
were presented as linear models, more recently, researchers (e.g., Atkinson et
al., 1993; Helms, 1991; Parham, 1989; Sabnani, et al., 1991) have included
"exceptions to the [linear] rule."

**Typological models of identity development.** After examining White
racial identity development models Rowe et al. (1994) asserted, "... if so many
exceptions are explainable, covering forward, backward, or no progression
across stages, the utility of conceptualizing the process as a developmental
stagewise progression must be questioned" (p. 132). These same questions
may be applied to all linear models of identity development. Rowe et al. (1994)
presented a model of White racial identity development that is based on
categories, or "types ... of intercorrelated racial attitudes that characterize the
outlook of various individuals" (p. 134). Thus, a person's "type" does not
follow a developmental progression, but emerges based on specific life
experiences, (i.e., social conditions).

Reynolds and Pope (1991) presented a similar model that specifically
addresses the complexity of multiple identities. They proposed four different
"... options for identity resolution that occur within a dynamic process of self-
growth and exploration" (p. 178). The first two options are characterized by a
person with multiple identities who identifies with only one of them either
passively, thus accepting society’s views of their identity, or actively, through conscious choice. Two other options distinguish how a person recognizes the multiple identities within her- or himself: in a segmented fashion or with intersection. Reynolds and Pope (1991, p. 179) emphasized the “dynamic and fluid nature of this identity development process” that varies based on personal needs, reference group, and environment.

**Expanding spiral of identity development.** Highlen and her colleagues (1988) brought attention to the highly complex process of identity development that must occur for individuals with multiple identities. An Asian American lesbian, for example, would not likely move through three linear processes (Asian American, female, and lesbian identity development), without one affecting the others. If they occur consecutively, which process occurs first, and how do the other resolved or unresolved identities impact an identity currently being examined? If they occur simultaneously, how do the processes interact? These questions remain unanswered by the single and inclusive identity models.

The OTAID model addresses these questions by presenting a theoretical “expanding spiral.” This spiral reflects the variable length of time an individual may spend within any given Phase. The amount of time depends on factors such as the intensity of a person’s experiences, her or his self concept and past experiences, environmental press, and the zeitgeist (Highlen et al., 1986). Highlen and her colleagues (1986, p. 8) suggested that,

> An individual does not ‘recycle’ through previous stages for different oppressions, although patterns characterizing previous stages may repeat themselves. However, the person uses the World View of the stage he or she is experiencing at the time to deal with any new oppression.
Theoretically, the conflicts involved in “working through” an oppression are more quickly resolved when an individual works from within the context of a higher OTAID Phase, such as Integration or Transformation.

**Universal Human Identity Development**

Inherent, although not expressly stated, within the notion of a linear model is that identity issues are explored and resolved as a part of human development. Parham (1989) acknowledged potential “stagnation” during identity development, but also maintained that the other two alternatives include continued progress toward self-actualization, either stage-wise or recyclical, throughout a lifetime. Referring to autobiographical excerpts of two African American heroes (W. E. B. Du Bois and Malcolm X), Parham (1989) identified a process of recycling through various stages of Nigrescence and attaining self-actualization in the later stages of their lives. Although making one of the few efforts to include older individuals in conceptualizing identity, Parham (1989) did not do so with empirical support and did not incorporate women into the biographical accounts (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Parham (1989, p. 195) stated, “Black/African self-identity is an entity independent of socially oppressive phenomena: Black/African identity is actualized through personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are rooted in the values and fabric of Black/African culture itself.” Parham’s statement is consistent with other theorists’ beliefs (Highlen et al., 1986, 1988; Highlen & Sudarsky-Gleiser, 1994; Myers et al., 1991) that identity emerges from an inner source during the course of life.

Conversely, Rowe and her colleagues (1994) asserted, “… there is nothing in nature, similar to the Piagetian stages of mental operations, that orders the
stages of White identity development and nothing other than our imposed ethics that imbues the stages with ordered levels of desirability” (p. 132). Although Rowe et al. (1994) expressly discussed White racial identity development, their supposition may apply to other models of identity development as well. Although compelling, Rowe et al.’s comparison of Piaget’s well-established stages of mental operations to the recent developments within White racial identity development did not provide equivalent standards by which to measure the two different models. Their conclusion that universal identity development does not occur in nature needs to be addressed by further empirical research. I addressed this question by investigating patterns of development emerging in the context of the OTAID model.

The Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM, Reynolds & Pope, 1991) provides a useful framework to discuss various perspectives of multiple identity development as conceptualized by the OTAID Model. For example, this study searched for recurrent themes that emerged by acknowledging only one identity at a time, while hiding or de-emphasizing other identities. As described in the MIM, the focus on one identity would reflect relating to multiple identities in a “segmented fashion” (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). The OTAID model is developmental, and the MIM proposes movement among each option throughout a lifetime. This study investigates both developmental and typological conceptualizations of multiple identity formation.

**Qualitative Research Methodology**

Polkinghorne (1984) stated, “... deductive reasoning is weak when it works with events in which the parts are complexly interrelated and with
concepts with loose boundaries” (p. 425). Identity development itself is a complex process. When multiple layers of identity co-exist within women and result in multiple oppression, the process of identity development and integration is even more complex. To contrast the large amount of deductive/quantitative research that has investigated identity development, qualitative research is needed to provide additional “lenses” allowing researchers to view identity development from a different, more illuminating perspective (Polkinghorne, 1984).

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) critique of quantitative methodology provides support for a qualitative study of women’s multiple identity development. “Context stripping” often occurs with quantitative approaches, sacrificing richness of experience for precision (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A quantitative approach would be detrimental for a study investigating the complex interplay among various dimensions of identity. Another problem with exclusively quantitative methodology is the “etic/emic dilemma.” In contrast to an etic (outsider) approach, which often concludes that some pathology or deficiency exists, the emic (insider) approach “… emphasizes the importance of viewing behavior from the cultural framework or context in which it occurs” (Speight et al., 1991, p. 21). Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasized the ability to draw forth an emic view, when using qualitative data. Considering the unique perspectives of women with multiple identities, it is imperative to hear their voice. A third area of concern can be demonstrated through the single group and inclusive identity development models, in which the group data obtained from quantitative studies often do not apply to individual cases, such as women with multiple dimensions of identity. Finally, quantitative studies that focus on verifying a priori hypotheses often do not include room
for divergent thinking, which is essential during the initial phases of theory development, which is needed in the current study of multiple identities.

**Phenomenology and Grounded Theory.** It is especially important to utilize a phenomenological research methodology when the goals of a study include discovery and exploration, and focus on experience and meaning (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992). Patton (1990) asked a question exemplifying the nature of phenomenological inquiry, and may be applied to major foci of the current study: “What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon [multiple oppression] for these people [women with multiple identities]” (p. 69). Because the OTAID model was developed using inductive qualitative methods, my research design employed a phenomenological approach to elaborate on theoretical components in need of further investigation, such as the nature of multiple identity development and the highest phases in the model.

**Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology for developing theory, that”… evolves during actual research … through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection”** (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). The OTAID model has been evolving since it first emerged as the SIDMOP model (Highlen et al., 1988). As Strauss and Corbin (1994) stated, grounded theory methodology may serve two purposes: (a) initially generating theory from the data, or if grounded theory already exists, (b) elaborating and modifying the theory as “… incoming data are meticulously played against them” (p. 273). Studying the nature of multiple identities, the identity development process, and the Integration and Transformation phases, I employed grounded theory to elaborate on the OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991).
Summary

The complexity of identity development has become more evident through twenty-five years of research. Acknowledging this growth and recognizing an expanded definition of human diversity, theorists have presented identity development models of greater complexity. Myers and her colleagues (1991) presented a model not only addressing multiple identities, but also incorporating spiritual development as an essential component of identity development. My research questions addressed multiple identity development and spirituality using the OTAID model as a theoretical framework. I also compared the developmental OTAID model with the typological MIM.
Research Questions

1) What is it like for women to experience multiple identities?

2) Are there similar patterns of development across different identities?

   a) For whom and under what circumstances does a subsequent pattern occur, in which one oppressed identity is worked through a process before another oppressed identity is addressed (Highlen et al., 1988)?

   b) For whom and under what circumstances does a concurrent pattern occur, in which multiple identities are addressed simultaneously, yet may also be moderated by environmental and social pressers (Highlen et al., 1988)?

3) How do women with multiple identities proceed through the identity development process?

   a) How do aspects of multiple identities impact each other throughout the identity development process? (For example, when a new identity must be incorporated into the sense of self that has already been established)

   b) Is there a pattern of which aspect of identity is acknowledged and worked through first?

   c) What prompts consideration of another aspect of identity?

   d) Can the Multidimensional Identity Model (Reynolds & Pope, 1991) provide a framework that is compatible with and applicable to multiple identity development suggested by the OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991)?

4) Is the “predictable sequence” of development posited by the OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991) reflected in the experience of women with multiple identities, or do zeitgeist and typological models more accurately describe their experiences?

5) What is the nature of Integration (Phase 5) and Transformation (Phase 6)?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this chapter, I present four components of the study’s methodology: (a) describing participants, (b) establishing trustworthiness, (c) collecting data, and (d) managing and analyzing data. The participant section includes descriptions of sampling methods, participant demographics, and ethical treatment of participants. Establishing trustworthiness, I address credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, all of which are counterparts to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I also present methods of data collection, including descriptions of the investigator, setting, and interview protocol. Finally, I describe elements of data management and data analyses, including transcription methods, the process of condensing transcripts, theory-based coding, identification of emerging themes, code clusters, and individual profiles.
Describing this study’s design and results, I incorporated writing styles which most effectively communicate the study’s qualitative methodology. Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 167) emphasized that

... Writing in the first person singular fits the nature of qualitative inquiry. When reporting research methods, your “I” is particularly appropriate ... The presence of your “I” in your text reflects your presence in your research setting. Your “i” says that yours is not a disembodied account that presumes to be objective by virtue of omitting clear reference to the human agent ... Use “I” in the sense of saying that you were present; it is well for both writer and reader to remember this fact. Moreover, it would be foolish for you to hide behind veils of awkward sentence construction, particularly when your ideal is graceful, clear, and cogent writing.

Following this advice, I used the first-person singular voice when discussing research methods involving my observations and decisions.

Participants

Sampling

Searching for common patterns of identity development for women with multiple minority status, I aimed to interview women with different racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status backgrounds. A critical dimension of grounded theory is that “... multiple perspectives must be systematically sought during the research inquiry” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280). To insure the diversity of participants’ backgrounds, I employed “purposeful” sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) to interview participants whose life experiences would contribute to my primary research questions.

It was essential to interview women with various types of minority status who also had enough life experience to reflect on their identity development. Because the final two phases of the OTAID model include spirituality as a
central component of identity, participants' spirituality was an important consideration during sampling. Selection criteria included: (a) being a woman from an oppressed race (non-European-American) or ethnicity (non-Christian), (b) being a lesbian or bisexual woman, (c) viewing spirituality as central in her life, (d) self-identifying with at least two minority identities, and (e) offering some variation in educational level, age, and socioeconomic status compared with the other women.

"Maximum variation sampling" (Patton, 1990) focuses on obtaining a highly diverse sample, finding common patterns that emerge across variations, and decreasing the likelihood that theoretical saturation would be falsely attained. I prioritized selection criteria, giving highest priority to women with racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation diversity. An equally important priority, albeit more difficult to assess, was the centrality of spirituality in her life. Because of this difficulty, I relied on personal contacts and secondary referrals from a peer research group to contact four of the six participants. I contacted one participant after observing her perform a public Native American ceremony. The final participant was a snowball referral, meaning one participant provided the name and phone number of a woman she thought would be a potential participant.

Considering prioritized selection criteria, colleagues and I brainstormed, producing an initial list of 22 potential participants. From this initial list, I excluded women with unknown spirituality. As women agreed to participate, subsequent sampling decisions were affected. Initially, a heterosexual, African American woman and a heterosexual Asian Indian American woman agreed to participate in the study. Striving for maximum variation, I attempted to contact Jewish or Hispanic participants, as well as lesbians with different
ethnic backgrounds. A secondary referral, an African American lesbian, declined participation in the study. I contacted a local Native American organization for potential participants, but despite several phone messages, was unable to obtain a referral. At a public event, I observed a Native American lesbian performing a Native American spiritual ceremony. She agreed to participate in the study, becoming the first lesbian of color to participate. Because all three of the participants were under 50 years old, I contacted two nursing homes to add generational differences. I obtained one referral. Because a nursing home staff member could not fully describe the older woman’s spirituality and because I viewed diversity in race and sexual orientation to be a higher priority for this study, I did not pursue this referral. A research colleague referred me to a heterosexual Hispanic woman. I contacted her by letter and several phone messages. She did not respond, which I assumed to be a decline of participation. Learning about a Native American spiritual community from a colleague, I pursued a referral to include another participant who practiced Native American spirituality. A heterosexual, Native American woman from this spiritual community agreed to participate, and she provided the name of a Caucasian woman who was also a member of the spiritual community. I pursued this “snowball” referral because it provided an opportunity for negative case analysis. Being Caucasian and heterosexual, this participant presumably had one minority identity — being female. Of the nine women who were contacted, three declined participation, making for a 67% participation rate.
Demographics

The six participants represent a variety of cultural differences across race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability status (see Table 1). On the demographic questionnaire, participants listed their racial and ethnic backgrounds as “African American,” “Asian Indian American,” “Caucasian/Amerindian,” “East European/Jewish,” “Native American,” and “White.” One woman lived in two countries, six years in India during adolescence and the rest of her life in the United States. Participants’ ages were 24, 33, 33, 42, 44, and 47. The mean age was 37.2 years, with a range of 23 years. Two lesbians and four heterosexuals were represented. Participants defined their socioeconomic status (SES) while growing up: one woman described her childhood SES as “poor,” two women described having a “lower middle class” background, two women described their childhood SES as “middle class,” and one woman defined her childhood SES as “upper middle class.” One of the seven women had 100% disability status. Educational levels were higher than the general population, with three women having a graduate degree, two women with college degrees, and one woman with some college education. Occupations of the participants include administrative assistant, counselor, homemaker, residential caretaker, teacher, and volunteer. Three of the six women identified their religious affiliation as central components of their identities: two were Dakotah Sioux and one was Nichiren Daishonin Buddhist. Three of the six women were not affiliated with an organized religion, but considered their spirituality to be a central component of their identities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Disability Status</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>SES current (past)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lila</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Asian Indian American</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>graduate degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rickie</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>college degree</td>
<td>100% Physical</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>&quot;poor&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delisa</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>graduate degree</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Middle-Upper Middle Low-middle (blue collar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>East European/Jewish</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>graduate degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Caucasian/Amerindian</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>some college</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dakotah Sioux</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>college degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dakotah Sioux</td>
<td>Low (Middle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Participant Demographics
Ethical Treatment of Participants

This study was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at The Ohio State University. I followed guidelines for working with human subjects in research throughout the study. Contacting potential participants by phone and by letter, I outlined the goals, methodology, and duration of their involvement in the study. The letter emphasized their voluntary participation, as well as the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix A). Participants were informed that both interviews would be audiotaped and transcribed, with direct quotes used as the primary raw data. Following this initial letter, I made phone calls to determine their interest and arrange a time and place for an interview. After participants verbally agreed to be involved in the study, I sent a second letter restating my research objectives; highlighting general areas that I would ask them to discuss; emphasizing the methods by which recorded interviews would be made confidential and anonymous; and confirming the time, date, and location of the first interview (see Appendix B). A consent form (Appendix C), demographic questionnaire (Appendix D), and an interview priming list (Appendix F) were included with the letter to enable participants to prepare for the interview and to facilitate focused questioning during the semi-structured interview.

After the interview, I “cleaned the data,” which involved extracting identifying quotes from the transcript. Each participant received a cleaned transcript of their first interview and was asked to double-check its content for identifying information. An example of cleaning data included replacing specific references (i.e., name of a city, name of an organization) with a generic
name preceded by an asterisk (i.e., *city, *organization). Corrections were made in the follow-up interview. After the second interview, I sent a summary of their two interviews, which included paraphrases and direct quotes. Each participant reviewed a summary of her interview — presented as individual profiles in the “Results” chapter — to check for identifying information. I asked each participant to provide a pseudonym to provide both continuity and anonymity in any display of data. For this second member check, five of the six women provided feedback and pseudonyms, which were incorporated into the “Results” and “Discussion” chapters. One woman requested that I use her real name, rather than a pseudonym, when presenting her individual profile. I created a pseudonym for the woman who did not respond to the second member check.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Credibility

A counterpart to internal validity, credibility addresses how close the presumed reality represented by the researcher matches the constructed reality of the respondents. I employed the following techniques to verify the accuracy of the match between realities: peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks.

Peer debriefing. The purposes of peer debriefing include posing questions to assist in understanding the researcher’s role in the inquiry; facilitating hypotheses-testing; assisting in methodological decisions; and through a confidential, professional relationship, reducing the psychological stress of conducting individual research (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Peer debriefing occurred on several levels throughout the research process.
I met regularly (12 hours total) with two groups of research colleagues during the design and data collection phases of the study. During this collaborative effort, we shared methodological techniques and analytical strategies. Shared resources included qualitative research literature, examples of field notes, data collection techniques, and analytical strategies.

This collaboration helped me make informed decisions about the research process, such as: (a) using two tape recorders to prevent loss of interview data; (b) using at least two forms of participant sampling; (c) obtaining secondary referrals for potential participants; (d) choosing a semi-structured, rather than open-ended, interview format; (e) examining a model set of field notes; (f) choosing how to incorporate multiple perspectives in the study; (g) selecting HyperResearch computer software for data analyses; (h) practicing coding procedures; (i) coding data based on the expression of an idea (ranging from one sentence to long paragraphs) rather than line-by-line coding; (j) removing remotely identifying data from cited quotations; and (k) gaining exposure to writing styles through research models.

I also met individually (35 hours) with my research adviser and a research assistant to discuss data collection, data analyses, and emerging themes. Specific decisions influenced by these meetings include: (a) choosing selection criteria for participants; (b) deciding what criteria would assist me in determining what phase in the OTAID (Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development) model each participant represented; (c) condensing each verbatim transcript to exclude extraneous information; (d) using peer coders to compare codes; (e) discussing general impressions of several transcripts; (f) streamlining the coding procedure, using research questions and emerging themes as codes; (g) identifying emerging themes; (h) incorporating MIM
(Multidimensional Identity Model) as a theoretical comparison to the OTAID (Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development) model; (i) emphasizing purposeful follow-up communication with participants; and (j) including individual profiles in the "Results" chapter.

As a member of the OTAID research team, my adviser’s theoretical insight was invaluable. She read each individual profile and my theoretical notes. Her comments were incorporated into my data analyses and conclusions. For example, based on participants’ statements, I coded an emerging theme as the incompatibility of religion. In some individual profiles, I listed the theme as "the incompatibility of Christianity," and included that theme as support for the Transformation phase. As an expert in OTAID theory, she identified the inconsistency of my statement with the OTAID model. In OTAID theory, Christians who embrace the mystical aspects of Christianity reflect the Transformation phase. As a result, I refined this code to incorporate the perspectives of all six participants without excluding Christians. The revised theme is "the incompatibility of modern, mainstream religion with current spirituality."

**Negative case analysis.** Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 238) defined negative case analysis as “… the process of revising working hypotheses in the light of hindsight, with an eye toward developing and refining a given hypothesis (or set of them) until it accounts for all known cases." In this study, I incorporated three methods of negative case analyses, (a) participants, (b) coding, and (c) theoretical perspective. I hypothesized identity development of the Caucasian, heterosexual woman to be different than the identity development of women with multiple minority status. Because she identified Dakotah Sioux spirituality as a central component of her life, I could compare the role of
spirituality for single versus multiple minority status. Her data are presented in the “Results” chapter with indented paragraphs and the heading “Negative case analysis.” Secondly, each transcript was coded and analyzed for evidence that supported and contradicted themes. Throughout the “Results” chapter, I highlighted contradicting data in separate paragraphs labeled “Discrepancy.” Finally, I analyzed the data using two different theoretical perspectives: developmental (OTAID; Myers et al., 1991) and categorical (MIM; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Analyzing the data from two different theoretical lenses, I compared commonalities and differences.

**Member checks.** Participants not only produced initial data, but also provided support for data credibility through member checks. This process of “... testing hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and interpretations with members ... from whom the original constructions were collected ... is the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, pp. 238-9). In this study, member checks contributed to the trustworthiness of the data by verifying the accuracy of representations of their interviews and helping refine interpretations of the overall data.

Before the second interview, I sent a follow-up letter (Appendix I) and a copy of the first interview transcript for the participant to review for accurate representation and identifying information. The first portion of the follow-up interview was spent receiving feedback from participants regarding accuracy and anonymity. The duration of feedback ranged from a couple minutes — one participant made no changes, saying she didn’t care if anyone knew her identity— to 25 minutes, during which a participant reviewed each page. I summarized and paraphrased full transcripts, creating an individual profile for each participant. Sending a letter and response form (Appendix N) with
each individual profile, I requested feedback on the profile’s accuracy and anonymity and responses to my theoretical notes. Five of six participants returned their feedback forms. I incorporated their responses following their respective profile, under paragraphs labeled “Member check.” Lila, for example, provided insightful feedback for two theoretical conclusions, stating that her “high context orientation” was another reason she had difficulty describing a pattern of identity development.

**Transferability**

Parallel to external validity, transferability is a means of “checking the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 241). Researchers commonly use thick description to “… provide as complete a data base as humanly possible to facilitate transferability judgments on the part of others who may wish to apply the study to their own situations” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 242)

**Thick description.** Thick description involves carefully describing the context (including place, time, and culture) in which working hypotheses were relevant (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Individual profiles, for example, begin with a description of the interview context and my observational comments on my interaction with each participant. Following each profile, my theoretical notes describe how that participant’s interview informed working hypotheses. Thick description also involves using verbatim quotes to provide more complete communication used by each participant. The in-depth nature of this qualitative inquiry targeted a diverse group of participants to ascertain interview data focusing on the unique experience of individuals and extricate common experiences shared across diversity (Patton, 1990). Depth, rather than
breadth, is especially important during the exploratory stages of theory development. An exploratory approach was most appropriate for asking questions that had not been adequately addressed in the psychological literature, such as the experience of having multiple identities and the role of spirituality in identity development.

**Dependability**

Dependability, the counterpart to reliability, emphasizes the stability of data over time. In quantitative research, the researcher plans a design prior to the study, and follows each step to completion. In qualitative research, the researcher designs a more flexible methodology, allowing the data to inform the research process. Qualitative approaches to dependability include “…methodological changes and shifts in constructions are expected products of an emergent design … [and] are hallmarks of a maturing — and successful — inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 242.) These changes in methodology need to be tracked and reported, so that outside reviewers “can explore the process, judge the decisions that were made, and understand what salient factors in the context led the evaluator to the decisions and interpretations made” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 242).

**Dependability audit.** The dependability audit documents the logic of the research process and methodological decisions. The dependability audit was interwoven throughout this chapter to depict the flow of its emergent design. Changes are documented in indented paragraphs with the heading, “Methodological change.”

**Field notes.** Field notes enhanced dependability. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) delineated three types of field notes: (a) observational, (b)
methodological, and (c) theoretical. I created a set of field notes to provide structure and format for completing notes following each interview (see Appendix J). Observational notes are descriptive, and capture nonverbal expression, participants’ approaches to the interview, and situational variables affecting the interview (i.e., feeling ill or tired). Methodological notes document the process of data collection and data analyses, as well as changes and suggestions for the study’s emergent design (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The content of methodological notes is presented throughout this chapter to provide the context in which methodological revisions occurred. Theoretical notes assist in conceptualizing themes and categories that emerged from the data and in analyzing data throughout the research process. Theoretical notes written after each interview followed a standard format (see Appendix J). I wrote additional theoretical notes free form during peer debriefing, transcription, and coding. Continuous consideration of the data encouraged more theoretical insights during analyses. The content of my free form theoretical notes is incorporated into the “Results” and “Discussion” chapters.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability, like its parallel criterion of objectivity, is the assurance that “data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 243). The confirmability audit provides a means for outside evaluators to trace the data to original sources and to confirm the process by which the data were compressed and rearranged (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Incorporating external coding into data analyses enhanced confirmability.
External coders. I coded all six interviews. To address potential “blind spots,” each cleaned transcript was also coded by at least one of five research colleagues. A 22-year-old, Caucasian, heterosexual female coded Lila’s interview; a 48-year-old Caucasian, bisexual female coded Rickie’s interview; and a 32-year-old Hispanic, Jewish, heterosexual female coded Kay’s interview. These colleagues used open coding for these three interviews. Open coding allows any code to be assigned to any section of the transcript.

Methodological change. After coding all interviews, I had a comprehensive list of codes based on research questions and emerging themes (see Appendix L). I provided this coding list to external coders for the remaining three interviews (Delisa, Randy, and Pat) to use a common coding language. My list of codes used numbers. I converted the numbers to letters and symbols for external coders. Their codes were listed in a different order, to prevent influence of my number codes, which were listed on the transcript the external coders used. Working from the same list of codes enabled me to determine the percentage of coding agreement, thus enhancing confirmability. External coders received a full transcript, with some text bracketed (representing text that I coded) and some text unbracketed. I asked the external coders to list a code for all data they thought was relevant, whether or not it was bracketed. If coders listed a code for unbracketed material, I re-examined the research relevance of data I had originally excluded. If coder disagreement was present, a third coder examined that section of text, providing a third opinion as a tie breaker.
Using the structured coding system, three external coders coded interviews. The same 22-year-old European American, heterosexual female who did open coding, also used structured coding for both of Delisa’s interviews, Randy’s first interview, and the follow-up interviews of Rickie, Kay, and Pat. A 24-year-old Hispanic, Jewish, heterosexual female coded both interviews of Randy and Pat.

Using two coders, the level of coding agreement ranged from 32.9 % to 66.7 %, with a mean level of agreement of 50.7 %. Because the percentage of agreement was lower than desired, a third coder (a 29-year-old European American lesbian) served as a tie breaker for the three interviews with agreement rates less than 50 %. She coded sections of text with discrepant codes for both of Delisa’s interviews, Pat’s first interview, and Randy’s follow-up interview. If either coder agreed with my codes, it was considered an agreement. Because this research involves my interpretation of the data, I focused on the amount of agreement between external codes and my own. Of the data included in the results, the percentage of agreement for the three interviews rose using three coders (68.4 %, 57.3 %, and 51.4 %). Including these three interviews with three coders, the coding agreement across the six participants rose. This combined coding agreement ranged from 51.4 % to 68.4 %, with a mean level of agreement of 61.3 %.
Data Collection

The Investigator

As a European American, bisexual woman with middle class and Roman Catholic background, data collection and analyses were influenced by my cultural background and experience. My interest in and extensive training, research, and coursework focusing on multicultural issues contributed to the selection of my dissertation topic. Because of my training and personal experiences of discrimination, I have insight into issues surrounding identity development in the face of oppression. Despite this awareness, my view remains limited, particularly regarding experiences related to racial and ethnic minorities, non-Christian religions, low socioeconomic status, and physical disabilities. Data collection and analyses reminded me of the influence of the environment and sociopolitical events. This emphasis was related to the influence of the OTAID and MIM theories, as well as my feminist perspective, which emphasizes the role of environmental causes of oppression.

My graduate training in counseling psychology assisted me in creating an atmosphere of trust and respect during the interviewing process. Other interviewing skills, such as asking focused and thoughtful follow-up questions, assisted participants in providing rich accounts of their identity development.

Setting

I requested to meet participants in a quiet, private place conducive to conversation and recording. Each participant decided what setting would be most appropriate for interviewing; four of the six women chose their homes.
Two women selected professional office settings. Of the six follow-up interviews, I conducted two over the phone, one in a professional setting, and three in participants’ homes.

**Interview Protocol**

**Initial interviews.** To improve the initial interview guide (Appendix E), practice interviewing techniques, and test recording equipment, I conducted two initial interviews not included in data analyses. The first interview was recorded with one tape recorder, resulting in the loss of four brief intervals during the interview when the tapes were turned over. My methodological notes indicated that it was “somewhat difficult to maintain focus.”

**Methodological change.** I recorded future interviews with two battery-operated tape recorders to safeguard against losing interview data as tapes were transferred. Considering areas for improvement, I incorporated the following methodological observations into future interviews: (a) test the recording equipment before starting the interview, (b) include spirituality in the brief introduction given at the beginning of the interview, (c) develop criteria to determine each participant’s phase in the OTAID model (see Appendix H), and (d) develop selection criteria for future participants.

During the second initial interview, I did not maintain focus on the research questions. Asking more pointed questions and interrupting more often would have helped maintain focus. These process observations were incorporated into future interviews.
Methodological change. Because I had some difficulty maintaining focus on the research questions during both initial interviews, I created an interview priming list (Appendix F). I sent this priming list to all six participants preceding their interviews to provide adequate preparation time. This change increased my ability to maintain a focused interviewing style.

Methodological change. Discussing the interview format with a research colleague, I revised the interview guide (see Appendix G) and used it for the six remaining interviews. Revisions included adding a written introduction to begin each interview. This introduction included: (a) addressing the purpose of the study; (b) defining minority status as any aspect of identity that is discriminated against systematically in the larger society, through “-isms” (i.e., racism, sexism); (c) emphasizing the points to be covered in the interview, including how each aspect of identity impacted her life, how different identities emerged, how they interact with each other, how she felt at different periods, and how spirituality was incorporated into her life; and (d) reminding her that the interviewer will be active during the interview, to ensure that each area is covered within our limited time. Further revisions to the interview guide included adding spirituality as an interview topic in the “Patterns of Development” section. I defined environmental influences more accurately to include family, relationships, and community, as defined by the participant. I added political involvement to further define the topic of societal influences. I revised the fourth
section, “Integration and Transformation Phases,” by adding a question about community involvement and replacing the phrase “challenging life experiences” to “growthful life experiences.”

Semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview provides a standard set of questions and a flexible format that enables an interviewer to maintain focus and to generate follow-up questions not included in the interview guide (see Appendix G). Unlike a structured interview, a semi-structured interview provides latitude for an interviewer to delve deeper or spend less time on particular topics, depending on the interviewee’s responses. The semi-structured interview facilitates the “discovery mode” (Guba, 1978) essential in exploratory research while maintaining an overall focus on the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews in this study consisted of the following common elements: (a) a self-definition of her identity; (b) critical incidents she recalled being important to her identity development; (c) reflections on the pattern of her identity development; (d) thoughts about how one aspect of identity influenced other aspects of identity; (e) descriptions of environmental and sociopolitical influences on her identity development; (f) definitions of community and oppression; and (g) elaboration on growthful life experiences; (h) the role of spirituality throughout her life. Depending on each participant’s focus, questions were adapted and added. For example, Lila, Rickie, and Randy recounted many incidents in their childhood influencing their identity development, but Kay and Pat spent less time discussing their childhood.

Methodological change. In her first interview, Delisa used a metaphor to describe her process of identity development.
Because of the metaphor’s clarity and utility, I asked the other five participants, in their follow-up or initial interviews, to choose a metaphor best describing their identity development process. Additional questions and themes which emerged during data collection and influenced subsequent interviews included (a) the suppression of some aspect of their identity, (c) the role of emotion in their identity development, (d) isolation that was externally or internally imposed, and (e) the relief involved in naming a previously unknown identity or oppression.

Direct quotations, obtained from verbatim transcripts, provided rich sources of raw data (Patton, 1990). Using the revised interview guide (Appendix G), first interviews ranged from two to three hours, with a mean duration of 2.25 hours. All first interviews were conducted in person. At the end of each interview, I asked participants to include anything that was not addressed during the interview.

**Methodological change.** The last hour of the third interview was recorded by only one tape recorder because I had not brought extra standard size cassettes. Interview data remained intact because the microcassette recorder had enough tape for the latter portion of the interview. For all subsequent interviews, I brought at least two extra tapes of both micro and standard sizes to ensure each interview had two recordings.

Follow-up interviews occurred, on average, 6 months after the first interview. The length of time between interviews ranged from 4.75 to 7.5 months. Four of the six follow-up interviews occurred in person and two were
conducted over the phone. I recorded phone interviews using a telephone adapter connected to the microcassette recorder, which was powered with an electric adapter. The two follow-up phone interviews were more difficult to transcribe, because the telephone adapter created a lower quality recording.

I designed follow-up interviews to enable me to ask pertinent research questions to obtain information not fully addressed in the first interview. Field notes taken from the first interview assisted me in formulating questions for the second interview. Specific questions guiding follow-up interviews are presented in the results section, in the context section of participants' individual profiles. Additional sources of follow-up questions were based on themes that had emerged in other interviews.
Data Management and Analyses

Data Management

Qualitative research involves analyzing an enormous amount of data throughout the research process, thus shaping and focusing the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Twenty-one hours of interviews were transcribed verbatim. Reviewing hundreds of transcript pages enabled me to view the data as a whole, recognize common themes, and note individual differences. Theoretical notes provided a space to record theoretical formulations, ideas, and reflections on the data.

Transcription. Following interviews, tapes were transcribed verbatim. An undergraduate research colleague and I transcribed all data, each typing approximately 50% of the material. I trained my undergraduate colleague by demonstrating use of the transcribing machine, providing a model transcription, and creating written guidelines for paralinguistic emphasis and verbatim transcription (see Appendix K). Paralinguistics — communication beyond word content such as tone, pitch, emphasis, pauses, and laughter — were noted in parenthetical statements. Words requiring additional emphases were underlined or all letters were capitalized.

After transcribing an interview, the transcriptionist reviewed it while listening to the tape to check accuracy and to add paralinguistic notations. While listening to the interview, I reviewed transcripts completed by my colleague to verify accuracy, correct pieces of transcription that were difficult to understand, and add paralinguistics remembered from the actual interview.
This repeated review of taped interviews enabled me to view the data as a whole and refine theoretical formulations.

Noise interference (i.e., family members making background noise) prevented me from transcribing small bits of data, ranging from one word to a couple sentences, for Kay and Pat's transcripts. I listened to the second recording, made on a standard size tape, often enabling me to fill in the gaps. In some cases, these small bits of interview could not be heard on either tape. In one instance during a second review, a short piece of interview (approximately 1 minute) was accidentally recorded over while using the transcribing machine.

**Methodological change.** After recording over that piece of tape, all other tapes were locked, by pushing in the recording tabs, preventing future loss of data.

*Methodological change.*

As a result of peer debriefing, I decided to condense transcripts. To manage the quantity of data, extraneous material was excluded from the data analyses. Exclusion criteria included data that did not address research questions and did not reflect an emerging theme related to the research questions. Pat, for example, was describing her career development and discussed an interesting field trip she took in college. I judged details of the field trip to be extraneous to my research questions. I simultaneously streamlined and coded hard copies of each transcript.
Data Analyses

I investigated common patterns and dimensions of multiple identities, age, and alternate worldviews using “dimensional analyses.” HyperResearch software provided assistance in coding and accessing data. Schatzman (1991) delineated three phases of dimensional analysis — designation, differentiation, and integration.

The designation phase consists of identifying general themes within the data. I developed seventeen codes based on research questions and new themes that emerged during an interview. Examples of codes and subcodes (in parentheses) based on research questions include (a) Multiple Identities (family influence multiple identities); (b) Developmental Patterns (subsequent pattern, concurrent pattern); and (c) Integration and Transformation. Examples of codes based on emerging themes include (a) Role of Emotion (anger, sadness, shock); (b) Suppressed Identity (lost voice); (c) Role of Religion (religion incompatible); and (d) Environment (impact of community, impact of sociopolitical climate). The final code list included original codes based on research questions, emerging themes, and sub-codes (see Appendix L). To assist in conceptualizing dimensions and properties with similar characteristics, I created eight code clusters (see Appendix M). For example, the Integration and Transformation cluster included the following codes: Integration, Transformation, Transformation quote, Transformation contra, Spirituality, Spirituality not present, Alternative to religion, and Religion incompatible.
The differentiation phase involves choosing a perspective most fully explaining the phenomena. I incorporated both the OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991) and the MIM (Reynolds & Pope, 1991).

The final integration phase represents a connection between the dimensions that were initially categorized and their relationship to the context of the emerging theory (Schatzman, 1991). I integrated theory-based codes and emerging themes within the context of the OTAID and MIM models in the “Discussion” chapter.

**Theory-based coding.** Using grounded theory to expand the OTAID model, I used an exploratory approach within theory-based inquiry. Theory-based codes, derived from research questions (see Appendix L), were assigned to portions of text that addressed the research questions. Often, multiple codes were assigned to the same portion of text. Once coded on the hard copy of the condensed transcripts, the codes were transferred into HyperResearch, a computer software program used for data management and data analyses. I also coded data using a MIM perspective, to juxtapose against analyses from a developmental perspective.

**Identification of emerging themes.** After each interview, I recorded themes that arose in an individual’s interview in my theoretical notes. If a topic, such as “10 motherhood,” was emphasized by a participant during her interview, it was considered a potential emerging theme. If that potential theme emerged in subsequent interviews, then it gained credibility as an emerging theme. For example, three women discussed recognizing an aspect of identity or oppression that was previously unknown. Lila felt that way about her Indian ethnicity in the United States, Rickie with her lesbian sexual orientation, and Delisa with understanding the mechanisms of racism. After
creating a code ("15 naming identity or oppression"), the code was applicable to Kay’s recognition of her Native American ethnicity. A similar emerging theme occurred with the code “suppressed identity.” After one interview, I noted Lila’s experience of feeling numb and isolating herself when she feels oppressed. Rickie and Delisa both described suppressing their identity and losing their voice. The code and subcode emerged as “8 suppressed identity” and “8a lost voice.” I discussed emerging themes with my adviser (a member of the OTAID research team) and with my undergraduate research colleague. They also identified how interview data informed the research questions.

Emerging themes included (a) the difference between being a visible vs. invisible minority; (b) the role of emotion, particularly anger, sadness, and confusion; (c) the suppression of identity; (d) the role of religion; (e) the impact of motherhood; (f) the sense of isolation; (g) the relief gained through naming an identity or oppression; (h) the tendency towards nonconformity; and (i) not feeling oppressed as an individual. Criteria for an emerging theme consisted of originating from the data collection or analyses and being endorsed by at least three of the six participants. The “Results” chapter incorporates emerging themes in the context of research questions and presents themes that were identified but do not fit into the context of research questions.

Code clusters. The designation phase of data analyses in this study consisted of clustering codes into eight categories, including (a) multiple identities, (b) identity components, (c) developmental process, (d) environmental influence and Multidimensional Identity Model, (e) Integration and Transformation, (f) naming identity and oppression, (g) isolation and suppression, and (h) survival. The code clusters were based on research
questions and were devised to assist in analyzing data related to a similar phenomenon (see Appendix M).

**Individual profiles.** I created an individual profile for each participant, including the context of the interview, a brief demographic description, a chronological summary of her identity development, and theoretical formulations. Because identity development is this study’s focus, the “chronology technique” of text organization was appropriate (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The chronology incorporated information germane to the research questions in each developmental segment: (a) childhood (2 - 11 years); (b) adolescence (12 - 20); (c) early adulthood (21 - 35); (d) middle adulthood (36 - 60); and (e) current life situation (Santrick, 1987). Incorporating paraphrases and brief quotations from the transcript, I presented individual profiles using a first person narrative. Although unconventional, use of first person gives a more natural voice to tell each participant’s story. Divergence from conventional dissertation format is consistent with the openness of qualitative inquiry and provides a more suitable form with which to present interview data (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). I excerpted the context of the interview and the theoretical insights from field notes, presenting them in my own voice, again using first person singular. This voice served as a reminder of the human element in perceiving and interpreting each interview and a means to avoid awkward sentence construction (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).
Summary

The qualitative methodology provided ample opportunity for interaction with the data, participants, and colleagues. As described in this chapter, the structured, but flexible methodology enabled me to shape the study as it progressed and deepened. This interaction actually reflected the identity development process. As I interviewed each woman, new ideas emerged, expanding my investigative spiral. Previously supported data were confirmed and challenged, providing deeper awareness. The following chapter presents the results of my multi-faceted investigation.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

I first present the life experiences of six women representing diverse cultural backgrounds in the form of individual profiles. Next, I address the research questions by finding commonalities across participants, identifying outlying or contradicting data, and describing themes that emerged through data analyses. Finally, I present data using both developmental (Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development; OTAID; Myers et al., 1991) and categorical (Multidimensional Identity Model; MIM; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) theoretical perspectives.
INDIVIDUAL PROFILES

Each woman’s interview data are presented in an individual profile that summarizes important events influential in her identity development. I paraphrased and extracted direct quotes to more closely represent each woman’s voice. Preceding each profile, I describe the context in which the interview occurred; following each profile, I present my theoretical comments, which were based on the interview data. I address the credibility of the data by reporting the content of member checks and peer debriefing.

Lila

Contextual Field Notes

The interview lasted two hours and fifteen minutes and was held, without distractions, in a private, quiet room in Lila’s work environment. Lila was open, cooperative, and very expressive with her face and hands. She was in the midst of a work deadline, and said she felt stressed, but she appeared present during the interview. Lila appeared to be prepared for the interview, often referring to the interview priming list. The interview flowed smoothly and felt as if it were on auto-pilot. Hearing her story, I was amazed at her strength and faith in her internal self.

The follow-up interview, nearly six months later, was held in the same location and lasted one hour. Again, there were no distractions during the interview. Lila made suggestions to clean the data further, corrected misspellings, and clarified content of the transcript. She thought the interview was “very thorough.” Follow-up questions asked in the second interview were identified after the first interview: (a) gain more information about how the sociopolitical climate influenced her identity; (b) ask about her interest in
Buddhism, which she mentioned after the first interview had ended; (c) reflect on incidents in her life that remind her of an earlier experience; (d) question if any part of her identity feels resolved; (e) discuss political involvement.

Demographic Description

I am a 24-year-old, Asian Indian American, single, heterosexual woman from a “middle class” background. Currently, I am a teacher, with a graduate degree.

Chronological Summary

Childhood. Growing up without many Asian Indian American classmates, “I would hang out with the African American students, because we were all brown. And I was like (chuckling) O.K., we’re brown. I guess I’m supposed to go there (laughing).” I remember an instance when I was just as unfamiliar with my culture as my classmates were. It was December, and my third-grade classmates asked if I celebrated Hanukkah or Christmas. I had never heard of Hanukkah, and I was confused after they described it, because it sounded a lot like Christmas. At that time, I wasn’t aware of the religious aspects of the holidays. At home that night, I asked my dad what holiday I celebrate, and he said I celebrate Diwali because I’m Hindu. I didn’t know what it was, so I memorized what he said, and told my friends the next day:

... and they just kind of looked at each other and said, “Well do you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah?” (Laughter) and I was like “Christmas!!” (laughing) ... ‘cause I knew what Christmas was. (Laughing) It was like this thing in December where you get presents (laughing). And there’s a Christmas tree and you put all these ... shiny things ... and lights on it. (laughing)

Before going to India, my knowledge of being Indian was “very primitive” and “almost like what mainstream folks” think being Indian is
about. I remember being confused by “double messages” from my father. He would encourage me to be proud of my culture, speak the language, and celebrate Diwali. At the same time, he would “have a “derogatory attitude towards other Indians.”

After my mother had returned to India, my father and brother would say “mean things” about her. Because she was my “idea of what an Indian woman is,” I felt embarrassed and had a lot of negative associations about being an Indian woman. As a result, I received “…all these weird conflicting messages, negative messages about being an Indian woman.” Outside of my family, I received the “…very strong message … that sons are better than daughters.” I observed these messages in the movies, in other families’ differential treatment of their children, and in customs. For example, Indians give out sweets when something good happens, but “…when the son is born, you give (pause) ‘Pendas’ which are made out of milk, which are more expensive. And then when girls are born you give ‘burfee’ which is not as expensive. So, even to that point, it’s very clear.”

**Adolescence.** When I went to India, I was “thoroughly confused,” but “…it was … this really great time to go there” and it was “a prime time to grow.” My belief that life is a learning experience made a “huge impact” on my experience living in India. In the boarding school, my friends were my main support system so I was receptive to learning from them what it meant to be Indian, such as being known by your family. The more I learned about being Indian, the more I realized what was missing in the United States:

When I went to India, all of a sudden I saw parts of me being reflected. And because it felt so good, I would notice “this is being reflected”, and realize, “this is part of being Indian”. I did not realize that when I was [in the U.S.], that every time I took a
step, I hesitated (pause) because I did not feel I was welcome in
this place. Even though I was born here.”

Living in India during adolescence, my female identity became a focus.
Learning about Indian history and culture, I began to receive positive images
about women:

“[India] had all these very strong women in the history …
Learning that being a mother, is something that is of tremendous
value. And that the earth is … our mother … All these things
that were so powerful and so meaningful, and so in my gut, that
I was allured to, were all female things

I also began to feel conflict between my Indian heritage and my American
nationality. Being raised in an individualistic society, I felt “uncomfortable”
because I did not fit into the Indian “collective.” When I voiced my feminist
opinions against the sexism within the Indian system, I was confronted by
statements such as: “… ‘Oh, you’re very Western,’ … ‘You’re betraying your
culture’ and … ‘Oh, so you’re not even from here’ “

Religion was another source of conflict for my feminist identity because
people would legitimize sexism through religious teachings. “I hated it so
much that I completely turned away” from religion. For me, Hinduism was
“… more of a culture than a religion.” At that time, I viewed myself as
“philosophical” rather than spiritual. Looking back, I now “… recognize it as
spirituality. That it’s more than just philosophy. It’s a part of my life.”

Exploring my ethnicity more in depth during adolescence, I searched for
the origins of sexism in my culture. In the process, I became interested in
Shiva, a god who was “…. half man and half woman, and was complete … and
is … very powerful … and started … classical Indian dancing … Music and art
[were] all associated with this god, so I was interested in this one.”

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After I had returned to the United States, I viewed animals differently. In India, cows, goats, sheep, and donkeys were “right in your face” and I would feed them and pet them every day. The animals were “part of my memories of India.” Before I lived in India, I was unaware about the foods I ate. I remembered “… this cow looking at me, and their eyes, and [how] they’re just … these beautiful things.” I decided there was no way I was going to eat this, and my first year in college, decided I was going to be a vegetarian.

Early adulthood. While taking a humanities course in college, I identified conflict with my American and Indian heritage. The American part of my identity understood the Western ideas discussed in the class. Individualist nonconformity “… fit in with ‘don’t be sexist, and don’t be racist, and don’t be homophobic (pause) and don’t be classist.’ … It fit in, to not conform.” Existential theory, stating that ultimately we are alone when we die, didn’t fit with my belief that “… the ultimate (pause) thing was to be connected … [to] everything.”

In college, I was highly involved in the women’s resource center and in a group focusing on community and ethnic awareness. I became interested in “comparative cultures” and as I increased my knowledge about the Asian American political movement through classes, realized that “… all of this [was] just really grabbing me at this very (pause) deep level … and [I was] meeting more people who were thinking along the same lines.” I began getting more involved in such activities once I knew that “… I had this ethnic heritage that is something to be proud of, that I draw strength from.”

As I became more aware of the injustices of oppression, a surge of anger arose and I began “fighting” the injustices. I would confront people who said something racist, sexist, or homophobic, saying “I’m here. And I’m not going
to let you say this. I’ve taken enough, and I’ve had it with you all.” This anger
gave me “a lot of energy to wake up.”

Current life situation. Recently, an enlightening movie “cleared up” the
major conflict that had prevented me from feeling proud of both my ethnic
heritage and my womanhood:

... this [Muslim] woman was saying that Western people have
used (pause) the sexism, that I experienced, the oppression that I
experienced, to put down my race. Or my ethnicity. And that,
made, so much sense to me! .. JOY, is what I felt ... because, I
was in so much turmoil with this conflict between my gender
part and my ethnic part and I was like, “I am not getting the
middle ground here!” (Laughing) Something isn’t fitting!

Since returning from India, people from all racial groups have labeled my
culture sexist because they have heard about female infanticide, dowry, and
preferential treatment of sons. I would have to answer “yes” to their
questions, but tried to tell them about positive aspects of Indian culture, such
as guaranteed paid parental leave from work and a female Prime Minister.
They would still conclude that something was wrong with my culture. I
would reply, “ ‘Excuse me! But, isn’t there an extremely high rate of domestic
violence in the United States? Among European American couples?’ ... You
can’t say that this is all ... one culture. It’s all over the world. It’s everywhere.”

My anger, which I call “the dragon,” has played different roles
throughout my life. Although the dragon used to be my primary identity, it is
now only part of me, because “...I’m more than the dragon, the fire.” At one
point, I didn’t know the dragon existed. Now that I know the dragon is there,
”... sometimes it’s allowed to come out.”

My difficulty answering the question how I define myself “... probably is
cultural because (pause) ... I see things more in terms of context, rather than
‘this is what is, and will be for at least some period of time.’ “I contribute to and am influenced by the environment. As it changes, so do I. For example, “I don’t see [my heterosexuality] as something that (pause) I need to hold on to.”

I “always saw myself as being open to differences,” and as time has passed, my openness has “broadened.” Like a kaleidoscope, “... all the different things ... [make] it beautiful.” Diversity is not something to be tolerated, but celebrated because “... you should be happy to have these differences.” In addition to seeing the importance of differences, I also see “commonality and universality.” We interact with every living thing on earth, and we can “learn from each other and give to each other.” I am vegetarian because I don’t need to eat animals to survive. I respect animals, and don’t like jokes about them.

My concept of community incorporates “different dimensions,” including “...the whole world ... the universe ... And then, Indian American ... Asian American.” In general, I choose to spend time with people “who are similar to me,” but that can sometimes cause a false sense of security. Seeing the “big picture” makes me realize that “there just aren’t enough of us sometimes.” As a result, I feel scared and unsafe. To allay some of my fears, I remind myself that “... change happens with groups of people, not just one person. And so, I’m part of a group. That whatever happens to me, might happen to me for the group.” Because I feel unsafe in the current sociopolitical climate, my development has been “... slower and cautious and not as free. I think one of the things I want most is to be free.”

At some point, I know “... it’s up to the universe.” I also believe that “If worse comes to worse it’s a learning experience ... Something’s got to be good out of this.” I am “grateful” for my life so far. I wouldn’t have changed
anything in my life, because I wouldn’t be the same person if it had been different:

I want to be who I am ... I have a long way to go ... in terms of growing, just like everybody else does. And at the same time, I want to have that long way to go. I want to have things to work through. Or else life would be boring (laugh).

Theoretical Field Notes

Main themes identified after Lila’s interviews included (a) feeling confused by the mixed messages she received about her identity; (b) experiencing conflict with various aspects of her identity, depending on her environment; (c) feeling a sense of belonging with people who have similar perspectives; (d) becoming more specific in her definition of ethnicity as she developed (brown skin, Indian, Asian American, Asian Indian American); (e) viewing anger as a source of power; (f) having respect for all life forms (as evident in her philosophy about being vegetarian); (g) recognizing her connection to the universe; (h) accepting people with diverse backgrounds, and broadening in that acceptance as she developed; (i) not conforming to mainstream society, across contexts; (j) realizing that individualism does not fit into her way of being; (k) viewing context of the environment as a means by which to define herself (l) recognizing and accepting the power and mystery of the universe in her own life; (m) viewing life as a learning experience; and (n) being spiritual, but not through organized religion.

Lila appeared to represent the Transformation phase, with the centrality of spirituality, the break from organized religion, a broad acceptance of cultural differences, a respect for all life forms, a feeling of interconnectedness throughout the universe, and a sense that life was a learning experience.
Despite her young age, her motivation and conviction may have helped her to proceed through the developmental phases more quickly. Environmental influences also may have propelled her through OTAID phases.

From a MIM standpoint, Lila appeared to have an intersected identification with her multiple identities. She also described a segmented identification with one highlighted identity in past situations. As a child, for example, she felt as if she were living different lives at school, in her family, and in the Indian community. She had difficulties defining her identity, stating that it was too fluid for her to answer. She also appeared to struggle with questions about themes or patterns in her identity development thus far. 

_Her young age may have contributed to more difficulty identifying patterns in her identity development._

As her profile revealed, the context of Lila’s life greatly affected her identity development. In the United States, her ethnicity was most salient; in her family, gender was highlighted, and in India, socioeconomic status, American nationality, and feminist ideology were focal points. Using the MIM model is especially appropriate, given Lila’s high context orientation.

Emerging themes identified after Lila’s interview included having an intuitive understanding that aspects of her identity (i.e., spirituality, power, sexism used to denigrate her ethnicity) existed prior to having a conscious understanding of them. This conscious understanding included having a language with which to describe it, and helped her to resolve conflicts and grow. These emerging themes were converted into the codes “Naming identity” and “Naming oppression,” with subcodes, “relief through naming” and “clarity through naming.”
Credibility

Member check. Lila’s comments regarding her individual profile addressed accuracy and theoretical formulations. She did not make any changes regarding identifying information and made one content correction. Her correction (italicized on page 68) involved changing “church” to “religion.” She addressed two theoretical comments (page 73), stating that her “young age AND high context orientation” contributed to her difficulty identifying patterns in identity development. With some knowledge about identity development theory, Lila did not believe she was in the Immersion stage, suggesting:

The dynamics of explaining my culture to a non-Asian Indian may have influenced my descriptions. Also, the main part of Immersion that does not seem to fit for me is the fact that I see the standards of Indian culture to be as limiting as standards of European culture.

Peer debriefing. Reviewing Lila’s profile and my theoretical notes, a member of the OTAID research team challenged my statement that Lila was repeating an Immersion phase with her ethnic identity, stating that Lila could also be “proud within her current perspective.”
Rickie

Contextual Field Notes

This three-hour interview was held in Rickie’s home. Several interruptions (phone call, pet) occurred, but did not detract from interview content. Rickie stated that she was tired, had a full schedule, and was “spreading [her]self thin.” I was excited to have another interview after a long break between interviews. Rickie maintained frequent eye contact; appeared open, self-confident, and determined; and used humor and sarcasm as she talked about some parts of her life. At some points, it seemed as if she were “performing” as she discussed painful childhood events. I was amazed by her story.

The follow-up interview was held in Rickie’s home six and one-half months later. Lasting 90 minutes, the interview was based on questions that emerged after the first interview: (a) How has economic status influenced her identity development? (b) What was her first remembered experience of and reaction to sexism, racism, homophobia, and able-ism? (c) What differences existed between her visible and invisible minority statuses? (d) What image would she use to describe her identity process over the course of her life? (e) How would she characterize her various processes of identity development? (f) What influenced her Native American identity development? (g) How did her disability status influence her identity development? Rickie stated that she was not concerned about anonymity, and had no additional suggestions for cleaning the data. She also provided a one-page summary that she had written, describing her “spiritual self.”
Demographic Description

I am a 47-year-old Native American lesbian with “100%” disability status. I have no religious affiliation, but I’m spiritual. I have a college degree and currently work as a volunteer administrator of two non-profit organizations. I am married to a Jewish woman, and have two adult children from my first marriage to a man. I grew up “poor” and worked “since I was twelve years old.”

Chronological Summary

Childhood. From the moment I entered the world, I had two handicaps. I was born premature, at one pound fourteen ounces. My grandmother gave me a Native American name meaning “small deer in the woods.” The second handicap was the name I received from my parents, a boy’s name that I “... had to fight for all my life.” When people said I couldn’t have that name “... I used to punch ‘em in the nose and (pause) tell them that my name could be *boy’s name*.” My four-month isolation period in the incubator prepared me for the disconnection I felt from family members. “Raised on and off” by my grandparents and parents, I felt like I didn’t belong anywhere. At seven years of age, when I had polio and was in a hospital for about two and a half years, my parents never came to visit.

Living in the South, several aspects of my identity were discriminated against: “... because I’m not all White and I’m not all Native American, and because [of my boy’s name] and because I’m short. And because ... I was crippled ... That was long before I ever knew I was a lesbian.”

I survived severe physical abuse as a child. My father knocked out my teeth, and broke my back, neck, and arm at different times. From a very early
age, I “planned my survival” by plotting to kill my father and grandfather, who I later remembered had sexually molested me. My intense anger had to be “venied” somewhere, and as a result, “I was a bully. Not many very small people are bullies.” My father “toughened me up (pause) to survive.” Suppressing memories also helped me to survive.

During my angry years, spirituality played no role in my life, but religion did. I attended Catholic school and joined the Catholic church in fourth grade because I “... had a great need to belong to something.” I sang in the church choir and was involved in several other church activities.

**Adolescence.** Growing up, my Native American heritage was absent because my parents “... spent their entire life passing as White, because it was easier to be White than it was Native American.” My father is half Black Foot and my mother is Cherokee. Despite my parents' denial, my grandmother taught me about my heritage through stories of my great grandmother, who was a medicine woman.

My family members are “bigots.” In addition to my own unfair treatment, I saw how they treated others who were different. I didn’t like the unfairness, so I “... chose not to treat people that way.” In my early teens, I marched with Martin Luther King and protested the Vietnam war because I “believed in the causes” and because “... they gave me a sense of belonging to something.”

In high school, I was surprised when I had my first sexual fantasy about being with another woman — in this case, my best friend.

**Early adulthood.** Working in stereotypically male jobs, I was determined to keep my job, but it was “... an uphill battle ... when you have to do [the job] four times better than the next person because you’re a woman.” Although I was able to succeed, I “hated the injustice in it.” My anger transformed from
"... angry and volatile and active, to angry and passive. And I suppressed everything for about five years. I could not raise my voice. I could not (pause) appear to get angry, at anyone, and it was all inside of me, and it was eating me up. And then I (pause) kind of exploded."

Before I realized that I had enough strength to make it through life, I "tried to check out (slight chuckle) many times" by drinking myself to death or "anything else that I could use to end up in La La Land, so I didn’t have to think." Another way I survived was developing multiple personalities. Over time, I integrated my seven personalities so that I can use them when needed.

When I began dating the man who I eventually married, we were living in different cities. During that time, "one or two" of my personalities developed, enabling me to be an artist during the week and a stereotypical woman on the weekends:

My hair was fixed (pause) I had makeup on (pause) I wore those horrible high heels (pause) with pointy toes and my feet are square— (chuckle) That was painful! In fact I broke more heels than most people ever owned (pause) because I fell off of them all the time ... I played the part of (pause) whatever my [boyfriend] wanted me to be. I was absolutely miserable (pause) but I didn’t know how to get out of it ... I played that part, every (pause) single (pause) weekend

Once we were married, I continued to play the "dutiful wife." During this time, I lost my voice and could not talk "much above a whisper," which I understood was a "... way of (pause) of repressing the other part of me. The part that I felt (pause) more comfortable with ... as a ... free spirit, and (pause) a slob." After we divorced, I told him that I didn’t appreciate the categories he tried to place me into. Emphasizing my mechanical, rather than domestic,
talents, I reminded him that "... I made it through home economics because I could fix the sewing machines, not because I could sew on them."

Before my memories of childhood sexual abuse surfaced, I was sexual with men "... mainly because (pause) I was still punishing myself ... Physically it was painful, but emotionally it was painful too... And I didn’t know why. I just knew that I (pause) probably needed to be punished again today." After my marriage ended, I dated an African American man, but shortly thereafter had begun to realize that "everything was ok" when I was around *female friend, and I "... had never ever in my entire life felt that."

As my "... subconscious said ‘O.K., it’s safe now,’ " memories of childhood started to "... come out in bits and pieces ... for the last (pause) eighteen years." I don’t remember "large spaces of my life." Because of my hardships throughout life, for "... the first 27, 30 years ... I didn’t really want to live. And then the last 18 [years] ... I didn’t want to die. And there’s a difference." Motherhood was a turning point because I realized that I was responsible for my children’s care, "...and somewhere along the way, it changed my life!"

Although I was married in the Catholic church and had my children baptized, I had increasing difficulties with religious teachings. Because I had lived with so much fear in my life, I "... couldn’t understand (pause) teaching kids to fear anything, much less something, that was supposed to be good ... If you do this, God will strike you down ... with lightning!" " I left the church after I went to a priest with my husband to address his extra-marital affair:

[The priest] told me the reason my husband was having an affair [was] because I wasn’t smart enough to talk his (pause) talk ... I told [the priest] what he could do with himself in the corner ... [and] I got up and walked out ... and never set foot in the church again.
Prior to recognizing my lesbian identity, “... oppression in general was like a way of life.” Because I gave birth to two children, I didn’t question my womanhood. My sex was more prevalent with the stereotypical male jobs I had, such as refinishing appliances, cars and houses; spray painting houses; teaching art; and working as a greens keeper. These struggles were necessary because “... it made me (pause) appreciate the fact that I was an individual and that I had broken almost every rule, and the only reason I hadn’t broken the others is because I didn’t know about ‘em.” At that point, I knew I was Native American, but hadn’t explored it.

At twenty-seven, I became “instant friends” with a married woman who continued to love me “when other people would have normally abandoned a person.” During my period of insomnia, she offered to give me back rubs to help me sleep. Rather than sleeping, I was awakening — sexually. Because I had “never been turned on,” it took the entire week to discover that the back rubs were sexually exciting. I felt scared, comparable to what a teenager might feel being attracted to someone for the first time:

... It was that (pause) quick and innocent ... it wasn’t like ‘I think I’ll be a lesbian today’ because I didn’t have a clue. But I knew right away (pause) that this is what had been missing (chuckle) ... I thought ‘Wow, (pause) this is pretty cool. I think I’ll stay this way.’

Moving into a loving relationship, I didn’t know that my feelings were valid because “... it was the first time I had ever felt anything like that towards another human being ... and I had to give myself permission to feel that way, which was the hard part.” Accepting her love was even scarier.” Although she was married to a man and did not consider herself a lesbian, we maintained a relationship over a period of many years.
I knew that "... Being straight was really painful." I knew that lesbians are discriminated against and "treated like dirt," but if being a lesbian "does not cause me pain, ... then this was better." I was so used to being oppressed, that I would rather be happy and oppressed. When I took the "first step" of accepting myself as a lesbian, "... it was actually the first time I ever accepted myself as anything." When my parents found out about my lesbian identity, however, they were not accepting and planned to take my children away. Back then, there was enough of the "old stuff" that would have sent me "on a killing rage to make sure that it didn’t happen." The next best thing I could do was leave the state, so I did.

After I had accepted myself as a lesbian and moved to a new city, I felt misunderstood by heterosexual friends. After joining some women’s groups, I talked with other lesbians who understood my experience. I was a founding member of the *local gay and lesbian organization,* which led to an increased sense of community with other gay and lesbian individuals. My "wife" and I were married in "the first Native American Jewish ceremony, where we did the rings and then we broke the glasses."

When I was 32, I began to explore my Native American heritage by reading and participating in ceremonies and Pow Wows. Reading about my heritage, I learned information that had not been taught in school. I learned a more complete story of Christopher Columbus through my own research:

He single-handedly ... destroyed an entire civilization. Between disease, and between the fact that [Native Americans] would go up into the mountains to get gold, and would come back and wouldn’t have the gold that he wanted— He’d cut off their noses, their ears ... their hands, their feet (pause) and let them bleed to death, as punishment. (pause) He took ... ten Native Americans back [to Spain] as slaves! And that was ... the prize,
that Isabel got ... And each time he went back, he took back more. That’s who Columbus was.

I discovered that my heritage was also a story of survival, my ancestors “… made it through the Trail of Tears … And I think that those things are handed down. Even if you don’t know it.” My survival is a “tool” I can use to “… help other people survive.”

As I explored other cultures, I observed that “… [taking] the best out of … everybody’s culture, you end up pretty much with what the Native Americans believed in the first place. Equality.” Compared to the sexism I found in many religions, I was proud of the matriarchal history of Native American culture. I didn’t become spiritual until after I “got in touch with my heritage,” which taught me to be in tune with nature and other animals. I recognized that “in nature, there’s a purpose for everything. In life it’s harder to find out what the purpose was.”

In order to perform legal ceremonies, I became a minister of the “Native American ministry.” Knowing that I would have more difficulty becoming a judge as a “Native American lesbian, disabled whatever” in this county, I decided to become a non Christian minister.

**Current life situation.** Incorporating Native American culture into my daily activities has helped me “get in touch” with my heritage. For example, I use my Native American name for public purposes, read medicine cards, and use sage, cedar, and sweetgrass in my ceremonies. I am excited about our upcoming vacation for the Cherokee national holiday, and hope to meet Wilma Man Killer, the principle chief of the Cherokee nation.

All the groups I belong to — lesbians, Native Americans, and women — are oppressed, but “… as an individual, I do not feel oppressed. Because I
don’t think someone can oppress you if you don’t let them … Right now, I will not allow that, because no one has the right to control anything that I do.” I struggled between external and internal forces of oppression, but it was easier to self-impose oppression on my invisible minority status:

I could assume, based on experience, what was gonna happen if somebody found out. The visible handicap, people were blatantly oppressive. Blatantly prejudiced … You [self-]impose a little bit because you let it happen still. But you know already, because people are doing it. They don’t come up to me and say “I’m assuming you’re a lesbian, so I’m going to oppress you.” But they do say “You are short and you’re in that wheelchair, and I’m not gonna see you and I walk into you at the mall. And when you say ‘Excuse me’ I’m going to ignore you.” I’m right there! I’m running over their feet! And they STILL don’t see me. People choose not to see certain things. People who don’t like disabilities. They think … that might happen to them.

I think people oppress what they’re afraid of, such as disabilities and homosexuality. It’s the “stupidest thing I’ve ever heard,” but people think if they get near me, they’ll BE me.

I have resolved some of the anger I felt toward my abusive father, realizing that as he lost his violent edge, I could separate him from his past behavior: “I can hate what he did. I can be reminded every day that I have a ache or a pain, because I have arthritis in the places he broke. But as a human being, I respect him for doing what he’s done with his life. So I can deal with him on that level.” I learned to hold on to enough of my past to learn from it, educate other people, and not let it happen again. Even though it was “unfortunate” I had to experience difficulties in my life, “there was a reason” for them. Now I can say that throughout my life, “… everything that I went through helped me to get through something else … I don’t think I looked at it that way then. But I’ve come a long way.”

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My Native American perspective aligns with liberal political values. We value caring for our own people, and because we’re all connected, our own is everybody. If someone can’t care for themselves, someone else has to care for them.

... In a tribe situation, whoever was less fortunate with their (pause) worldly goods or if they (pause) were orphaned … they were taken care of. And the elders were taken care of (pause) and they were wise and they (pause) they’re asked to (pause) spread their wisdom, until the day they die … And (pause) I think that (pause) our government could learn a little bit from this

Many people who are oppressed spend so much energy living and surviving, so while I’m able, “I will fight for (pause) rights for everyone … I can lead a march, with someone pushing me in my chair. And I can be strong for more than myself.” Oppression is everywhere, and I “feel” other people’s oppression. “I understand it because I know it.” I wouldn’t have participated in all the different protests and marches “… if I hadn’t felt, a basic need for everybody to be equal. Because in the Native American culture, everything, everybody is equal.” In fact, before Christianity was brought to Native Americans, gays and lesbians were “revered” because they “were storytellers, and teachers and shamans and medicine men and medicine women … I like that about my culture. I’m sorry that Christianity got in the way!” Anyone who is in touch with their Native American heritage “cannot be a Christian.”

I “… don’t believe in anybody’s god.” It is easier for me to believe in the “… idea of a great mystery … It gives more room for appreciation, instead of worrying.” The “freedom” I experience is a result of not being “… influenced by external things, only by internal things. Because there’s a lot of information in there, all I have to do is process it.” My spiritual belief is based on the
equality of all things because “... it’s easier to believe” and “... it comes closer to what I really feel.” People focusing on what they need—a piece of paper or space for a road—are quick to chop down trees, but “... if they cut down one too many trees, all of civilization will die. That’s how important that tree is. That’s how important we are to that tree. We need each other. And that’s the same with everything.” Our neglect of nature is similar to our treatment of fellow human beings: “If you treated people the way you wanted to be treated, with kindness and compassion, then we wouldn’t have war, we wouldn’t have poverty, we wouldn’t have anything that was negative. (pause) But we do.”

I also see how similar people are to each other. My theory is that “Everybody has an indigenous heritage ... Every part of civilization, was primitive, at one time.” The difference then, is that Native American history is “shorter ... not because we weren’t here, but because nobody else was here (pause) to write it down.”

Theoretical Field Notes

Main themes that emerged in the interview included (a) emphasizing her identity as a survivor and fighter; (b) working through her anger and depression first using destructive then healthy outlets; (c) discovering that her Native American spirituality was incompatible with Christianity; (d) breaking rules and mores; (e) feeling different from others; (f) recognizing oppression but not experiencing it in her own life; and (g) learning that unconditional acceptance and love helped her turn around.

As part of her survival, Rickie seemed to learn how to get what she needed. An incredible amount of personal work and her heritage of ancestors
who were “survivors,” helped her survive a long, difficult life journey. Because she recognizes oppression everywhere, she “chooses her battles.” Her abuse history appeared to overshadow the development of her lesbian and Native American identities. Throughout her life, perhaps the most urgent issue received attention.

She demonstrated several characteristics of the Transformation phase, including understanding oppression at an institutional level, being involved in activities to fight oppression for many different groups, having an expanded sense of self that includes her ancestors, viewing life challenges as growthful, believing Christianity is incompatible with her beliefs, practicing spirituality connected to her Native American heritage, believing in the interconnectedness of all life forms, and viewing spirituality as a central component of her life.

Using the MIM, Rickie’s life appeared to be segmented in her past. First she dealt with separate issues of being a girl and having disabilities. As an adult, she focused on her sexual orientation, followed by her Native American heritage. She explored her Native American heritage from a more intersected perspective, in which Rickie explored the role of women and the history of gays and lesbians in Native American history. Rickie appeared to recognize the complexity of her integrated roles. Her identity appears to be intersected at this stage in her life.

Credibility

Member check. After reading her individual profile, Rickie was satisfied with the accuracy and anonymity and had no changes in either category.
Delisa

Contextual Field Notes

The first interview, held in Participant Delisa’s office, lasted two hours and fifteen minutes. One distraction, a phone call, briefly interrupted the interview. Delisa appeared open, friendly, and relaxed. Delisa said that she did not want to think about the discussion topics too much prior to the interview. At the end of the interview, Delisa stated that she felt “more centered.” I felt sleepy for the morning interview and at times, felt distracted while planning questions to ask. I recalled “feeling stuck” because some of Delisa’s answers were vague and abstract. Using Delisa’s metaphor helped provide a common language to access additional information. I was surprised that Delisa did not feel that race and racism were salient while growing up. I was awed by Delisa’s experience of being centered and drawing upon the spirits.

The follow-up interview was conducted over the phone seven and one half months later, and lasted 60 minutes. Delisa stated that the transcript was “a little embarrassing to read.” She provided specific feedback for further cleaning of data and expressed concern about anonymity. Follow-up topics (identified in field notes after the first interview) guided the interview: (1) How long has Delisa experienced feeling the ancestors? (2) Gain more information about her first realizations of sexism, (3) Gain more information about how Delisa understood racism at different points in her life, (4) How does she feel about others who are different, including different sexual orientations, (5) How are racism and sexism connected? (6) Additional
information about her sexuality, and (7) How has her reaction to discriminatory behaviors changed over the years?

**Demographic Description**

I am a 33-year-old African American, heterosexual woman currently separated from my husband. Both of my parents work in professional occupations, so I grew up in a “middle-upper middle class” home. I have a graduate degree and am a counselor.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** As a child, race was not salient, but my family always affirmed my African American heritage, especially what I was exposed to culturally. From elementary school until eighth grade, my primary group of friends were Black. My first experience of racism, in fourth grade, was vicarious: “I can remember [a brother and sister] being teased, so viciously. And I hadn’t a clue, why ... But, I recognized that for some reason [they] were being teased because they were Jewish. That they were perceived as being different from the rest of us.”

Growing up, I couldn’t do certain things, such as wear pants to school, because I was a girl. I noticed more differences based on sex — but accepted those differences.

I felt conflict going to *Christian church* when I was younger. Although “I didn’t know this intellectually at the time, I just couldn’t buy into the fact that I had come into this world with sin. That by the mere fact of my existence there was something wrong.” I did not regularly attend *Christian church* growing up, but from a young age, spirituality manifested itself in the form of intuition:
An early memory that I have is being 4 years old and ... I knew, without anybody telling me, that [a mentally retarded neighbor girl] was being physically abused in a horrible, horrible way. And unless you’re in an abusive situation, you don’t know anything about that when you’re 4 years old. So I wasn’t able to name it, but I knew that there was something going on that was very, very wrong. And here was a person that was hurting and there was nothing I could do about it ... And so what I found was, even though her sister was closer to my age, I gravitated towards the older sister [who seemed to be suffering abuse] and developed a friendship.

Adolescence. Junior high and early high school included a primary focus on gender, and I felt “great conflict” because “I never got dates because I wasn’t cute, and then she’s too smart.” Part of the conflict was knowing “... there was ... something going on and I couldn’t quite figure it out.” Looking back, I was “just gawky and awkward and shy.” My experience was “normal” and “part of adolescence.” I enjoyed spending time with my female friends because “When I was with women, we didn’t have to deal with this [gender] issue.”

During adolescence, I was aware of my race and knew that racism existed. My parents sheltered me from racism, and because I was academically gifted, I was encouraged to pursue opportunities. I recall race being a conflict within the African American community, where distinctions based on skin color hurt me:

I experienced ... hearing derogatory remarks because I was brown-skinned as opposed to light brown-skinned ... Because they were boys, it was associated with statements about my attractiveness as a girl ... I know it was really hurtful.

In high school, I noticed economic differences between my group of friends and the Black students who were bussed in to my school. The diversity of my peer group expanded when I moved to a more diverse state and
encountered Pacific Islanders, Asians, and Latinos. These encounters were not conscious expansions to my conception of race, but I approached differences with openness: "...it’s like ‘Oh! She’s Hawaiian, I’ve never met anybody from Hawaii.’ ... So if they had been from Idaho, it’s ‘Oh! She’s from Idaho’ (laugh) ... And I think ... a great deal of that is just the way that my parents raised me.” The cultural movement of the 1970’s and attending a more racially diverse high school enabled me to learn about different cultures through their music and arts.

**Early adulthood.** Attending a historically Black college “... was a wonderful, wonderful, very nurturing experience to have.” I was very involved in the campus community, my sorority, and the city’s Black community, participating in volunteer projects, tutoring, fund raisers, public service activities, and local political campaigns. During college, my perception of racism was “‘Well, people don’t like me because I’m Black’ ... It wasn’t like there was anything qualitatively different about me.”

The first time race became conflictual was during graduate school. Although I was “naive,” when I learned about researchers who “... really thought that because of my culture and the color of my skin, that I was somehow inferior.” I was shocked because I had never heard that before! The process of learning in graduate school was foreign compared to my past experiences:

I had never competed with anybody ... At “predominately Black college” all of us would get together, work together. Teachers and professors were there to insure that we got the best education possible.

In graduate school, people would say they had done an assignment well, even though they hadn’t, just to “psyche you out.” Looking back on that
experience, I would intellectualize it as my first contact with a “European value system,” which was incongruent with my entire value system. Unlike my “temporary” developmental conflict of feeling like an awkward girl, I recognized this conflict with race was “a very permanent thing” that I was “just coming into.” So the feelings were “real different.”

As a result of the clashing value systems, graduate school was a time period when “... I really lost my voice. I didn’t participate in class, I didn’t talk ...” Because I felt like all around me I was boxed in by this belief that what was going to come out of my mouth wasn’t going to be valuable anyway. So, I really shut down.” At that time, I did not know what was occurring. Because it was “not necessarily overt,” I only knew that “something crazy [was] going on.” Looking back, I understand the “mechanisms” of racism, and it is “sane again,” but the ability to “name” racism is extremely important.

Turning to my culture and value system, I got into Black psychology, to help “normalize and validate” my experiences. I socialized with the Black artistic community and began “... getting into African artistic culture.” Trying to write a research proposal, I was unable to find a literature base focusing on Black women, so I went “… to our history. And what I was able to do is, through reading our history, find out those psychological mechanisms that allow me, and many other people like me, to be here today. And it wasn’t through psychological data, it was through historical data.” I “moved out of the department,” to take courses and gather information through the undergraduate Black studies department.

My spirituality “emerged in a conscious way” through the historical research: “The spirits come through when you’re reading about … the Middle
Passage and ancestors being packed like sardines on ships ... And you’re in the [library] stacks ... by yourself.”

**Current life situation.** I continue to be impacted by “... the African-centered, Afrocentric, intellectual and political and spiritual— that whole movement on all different levels.” Reflecting on sociopolitical events throughout my life, the cultural movement of the 1970’s was most influential because it enabled people from different cultures to learn about each other. I am most aligned with the politics of the 1960’s. The women’s rights movement “... was not a part of my experience ... Women wanting the right to work made no sense to me. Because my mother always worked, and my grandmother always worked.”

Part of my community includes a geographically-dispersed group of friends. My male-female relationships have primarily been with African American men and women. “My sisterfriends, my girlfriends ... consistently and continuously affirm who I am.” I fiercely love my men and women friends. I’ve been socialized to be heterosexual, but I feel balanced in the deep love, respect, and passion I have for people as a whole. At some point in my life, I wondered about what that balance meant for my sexual identity, but realized that “nothing else in my life is cut and dry,” so why would my sexuality be any different?

Heterosexual, homosexual is a continuum for me ... It doesn’t even work as a continuum ... I really believe in the yin-yang and all of us have masculine and feminine energy. And what I find is that the people that I seek out— ... It’s more about where I am in terms of that balance and where the other person is in terms of that balance. And so, when the two people are together, is it a whole yin-yang there? ... It’s because they’re on opposite ends of a continuum, and the continuum is a line— ... Visually, that’s why it doesn’t work for me. Because it really is a circle.
I still feel conflict as a woman in the African American church “... because I just could not listen to this man standing in this pulpit telling me, you know, what I needed to do as a woman ... Morality and humanity guide my decisions rather than economics and content and material and external.” Finding a place for spiritual worship is still a struggle for me.

I turn to my heritage as a model for living: “My philosophy is like ‘Look. You weren’t on a ship from Africa to Virginia. You can get further ... And people, just like you, have gone through this before. And you’ll be just fine.’”

When I’m centered, I tap into the “spiritual energy” of my ancestors. If I’m not centered, it’s an intellectual understanding that the ancestors are there. When I’m doing healing work, I experience the ancestors’ energy, with no dimension of space or time.

Internalized oppression is an “ongoing struggle” that emerges occasionally. I am hopeful that there is a “stage beyond this.” Once I understood that “... for all the negatives that are said, there are a host of positives that you don’t even get exposed to. And once you get exposed to the positives, that really kind of helps balance that scale” of oppression. My reactions to racism have remained unchanged, but now I have a “... psychological, conceptual framework to understand what that’s about. So, the only thing that would be different, is I would say ‘It’s stupid’ in more educated terms.”

**Theoretical Field Notes**

Main themes identified after the interview included: (a) Having opportunities based on middle-upper middle class background; (b) Being influenced by integrated schools and neighborhoods; (c) Accepting others
from different races and ethnicities; (d) Focusing on appearance as a major concern in adolescence; (e) Understanding spirituality through intuition; (f) Cultural arts influencing her identity development and diversity awareness; (g) Focusing on career; (h) Not consciously analyzing her experience as a Black woman; (i) Following a circular path to return to her essence as a child; (j) Not experiencing oppression (in terms of denied opportunities); (k) Having the most affirming community with African American women; (l) Shattering stereotypes throughout her life; (m) Lacking a model of how to proceed through life; (n) Living with a combination of agency and spiritual destiny; (o) Experiencing her ancestors in different ways, depending on her activity and centeredness; and (p) Being uninterested in politics.

Applying the OTAID model, Delisa seemed to experience Immersion in college, as a nurturing experience and in graduate school, as a survival mechanism. She described a circular process of identity development, returning to the same place from which she began, after growth and with more depth. Delisa appeared to have many characteristics of the Transformation phase. Her intuition guides her spirituality, which is central in her life and does not fit within a patriarchal religion. Understanding oppression from an institutional perspective, she also views it as being connected to a European, Western value system. She accepts individuals from different racial backgrounds and seems willing to learn about their cultures. Delisa’s philosophy of living and reference to daily activities incorporate a sense of history and connectedness to her ancestors.

From a MIM standpoint, Delisa appeared to have integrated her multiple identities from an early age. She seemed to struggle with questions about how her race and sex have impacted each other, stating that it was too difficult to
separate the two. Delisa's conscious awareness of her race and gender seemed to depend on whether or not a situation consisted of some form of discrimination. In graduate school, for example, her first encounter with racism highlighted her African American identity. At that time, her female identity was present, but in the background. Even as a youth, a discriminatory situation was viewed as an African American female.

Credibility

Member check. Delisa did not respond to the final member check. She corrected inaccuracies and identifying information after the first interview.

Peer debriefing. A member of the OTAID research team reviewed my theoretical notes, commenting that my observations were “good.” She suggested providing an example of Delisa’s situational understanding of discrimination in my theoretical notes.
Randy

Contextual Field Notes

The first interview was held in Randy's home and lasted two and one half hours. She had two cats, which only provided minimal distractions. She was talkative and appeared open and comfortable sharing her life experiences. She was ill, reported feeling tired, and stated that she did not take a lot of time reflecting on questions from the priming list prior to the interview. I was allergic to her cats, and toward the end was slightly distracted by eye irritation and sneezing. I felt good about the rapport we established and the humor that came easily for both of us. She seemed focused and was able to articulate her experiences well. I sensed humility as she revealed her spiritual progress. Buddhist philosophy was intriguing, and after the interview, she showed me her altar, inviting me to chant with her.

The second interview was held over the phone nearly five months later and lasted one hour. She provided further suggestions for cleaning the data. Questions asked in the follow-up interview were identified after the first interview: (a) Specific instances of discrimination as a woman, lesbian, and Jewish person; (b) How each aspect of her identity developed throughout her lifetime; (c) How her first reaction to discrimination affected later experiences of discrimination; (d) How socioeconomic status influenced her identity development; and (e) What is central to her sense of self?

Demographic Description

I am a 42-year-old Caucasian, Buddhist lesbian. I have a graduate degree and work as an administrative assistant. I am also a “union activist” and an
active member of Soka Gakkai International (Buddhist World Peace Movement). I am in a relationship and live with my partner. My ethnic background is "East European/Jewish" and my religious affiliation is "Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism." My father was a "blue collar" worker and my mother was a "white/pink collar" worker. They divorced when I was ten years old. I grew up with a "lower middle class" socioeconomic background.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** I grew up in a "lower to moderate income area." My community was "... mixed ... in terms of religion, but not ethnicity." When I was "really young," I belonged to a temple and went to Sunday school, but my family did not remain religiously active, partially due to financial concerns and marital problems. My parents did believe in maintaining a cultural Jewish identity, so I was very "conscious" of my Jewish ethnicity. I felt separate, based on the simultaneous arrogance and defensiveness about my Jewish identity. Learning to be critical of the "majority rule," I made fun of Christmas and its "silly music." My parents used derogatory terms to talk about Gentiles and African Americans. In elementary school, most of my friends were Jewish. Although "a couple of Black kids" went to the same school, my friendships did not cross racial lines because during the late 1950's and early 1960's, "That was just not done in that community."

**Adolescence.** Prior to high school, my primary group of friends were "other Jewish kids." I was also involved in a Jewish youth organization and spent time at a Jewish community center. Around the age of fifteen, I began to "branch out" by spending time in a leftist, artistic area of the city. As I
explored “being rebellious,” I dated men with ethnicities different than my own.

Attending a public high school with 3,000 students, there was “a little more mixing,” racially, but I primarily spent time with people who were similar to me. According to my “upbringing,” socializing rarely occurred across racial groups. My group of friends provided a sense of community and identity that helped me feel like I was part of the majority, rather than the minority.

Around the age of sixteen, I went to my first women’s rights march and was “starting to be a budding feminist.” At the march, I remember “... being really fired up by this lesbian [who] was speaking ... And she was angry about everything. You know, everybody was angry about everything then. It was just like the beginning of having a voice and expressing all kinds of feelings about equality and repression, suppression, oppression and all of that.” That march was an important event in my life because I began to “feel conflict within myself.”

The Vietnam War had “come into full flourish” by the end of high school, and I was “pretty left-leaning at that point.” I struggled to have “more expansive” values without knowing how to pursue them. Arguing with a peer who supported Revolutionary Socialism and Communism, I realized that I was more concerned about “... the absence of violent conflict, not which social system is better for whom.”

After receiving a scholarship to attend a Jesuit institution, I entered college and became acutely aware of my Jewish heritage again. I was “totally unprepared for what I was about to encounter in college ... I was one of 12 Jews in this school. And I think it became an excuse. I think it became part of
an excuse for the identity crisis that I ended up having that year.” During this growth period, I “... vaguely remember ... that everything started to get really sped up, in terms of my radicalization, or my dissatisfaction with sticking with what I was doing.”

During the Vietnam War, I was “... doing the young hippie thing ... reading poetry ... listening to folk music ... smoking pot ... drinking ... hanging out ... in the ‘leftist artistic community.’” I was influenced by the “... whole movement ... of questioning the society and everything in it.” After getting a “crush” on a woman, “life was never the same.” My identity crisis involved “fighting” with my mother, being “obsessed” about a woman to whom I was attracted, going to the leftist, artistic community, being “freaked out” by priests at my college, and trying to do my schoolwork.

Sexuality was one component of my identity crisis. I became friends with a lesbian who organized the women’s lib meetings on campus. Another friend was a big influence in my life; realizing this friend was attracted to me, I felt “... really afraid to have anybody make a move on me ... And this would have been my first lesbian sexual encounter if I let myself sleep with her.”

Influenced by my friend, I actively explored Zionism, which was “exactly what I needed to focus on and obsess about to distract me (slight laugh) from everything else.” Midway through second semester, I decided to go to Israel. I was nineteen and believed in my plan to live in Israel, pursue a career in medicine, and “... create this beautiful life and ... be with other Jewish people forging this ... communal life [with] social justice.” I though it would be “wonderful.” Looking back, my dream was “naive.” Earning prize money for my song about Israel, I used that money to finance my trip. I left school to live on a kibbutz while studying Hebrew and working. At that time, I was really
confused about my sexuality. Although I “obsessed” about a woman I was
attracted to, I was too afraid to act on my feelings. I was also still attracted to
men, and felt “torn” about my sexuality.

*Early adulthood.* After returning home from Israel, disillusioned and
fighting constantly with my mother, I moved to a metropolitan city* and
“immediately” became involved in the women’s center. I attended lesbian
liberation meetings, changed my appearance to match the other “radical
feminist lesbians,” and the women’s center became my primary community.
At that time, “separatism was really in … and you went to get strong hanging
out with other people, other women, and other lesbians like yourself.” The
lesbian liberation group was a group of “… White chicks wanting to talk about
coming out, or help each other come out or, have friends to go to the bar
with.” Because many of the women were lesbian at the center, it felt like “a
really safe place.” Most of the women were White, and I was friends with
other Jewish lesbians. I didn’t know many African American or Latina women
then. I identified culturally, not religiously, with my friends. The familiarity of
our backgrounds provided comfort, safety, and protection. I didn’t get
involved in “other community activities” and didn’t pay attention to “local
politics.” I met my first lover, a “nice Jewish girl,” at the lesbian liberation
meetings.

As more women came to the center with different problems and needs, I
helped create a peer feminist counseling group, which was the first of its kind.
I worked with fifteen other peer counselors to “… try to figure out how to help
each other and all these women that were coming from all over the country.” I
worked, on a volunteer basis, with that counseling group for nine years; it was

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an important part of my identity. I was excited about the women’s music, such as Meg Christian’s, that had recently emerged.

During the early seventies, I believed in the feminist philosophy that “the personal is political.” I didn’t hide who I was and adopted the “radical dyke” image:

... we had combat boots and “don’t fuck with me” attitudes—
And people responded back with some kind of discriminatory or offensive remark ... It would give me permission to be pissed off. To respond with anger (pause) — At the personal affront—
... it was always hard to separate the personal insult from the political implication. Is it just personal taste, that somebody thought I was really homely looking ‘cause ... my pants were too big, and my shirt was ripped?

Feminist philosophy included the general “rejection” of patriarchal religions with “misogynistic practices.” During this period, “Very few people were exploring any kind of spiritual anything. It was all about politics.” I focused on understanding the political implications of relationships.

Because I had already been counseling other women, I decided to return to college to pursue a degree in psychology. This would enable me to “... know what the enemy was thinking” and help me “... figure out how to help women become empowered.” At the university, I ended up being most involved in the women’s studies department, taking courses and working in the office. I recognized that “... wherever I went ... I was doing women’s stuff.”

I was in a relationship with a woman who was interested in mental health, holism, and personal enhancement. As the new age movement began, I “... started moving that way.” EST training, emphasizing self-examination and self-reflection, enabled me to move more towards spirituality, as I defined it then.
The EST training environment, "... a roomful of all different kinds of people. Men, women, Black, White, Native American, Hispanic," was the first major experience that brought me out of my insular Jewish lesbian activities. I surprised myself when I realized I "didn’t hate" the male trainer and that I was learning in this "new environment."

After I had come out as lesbian, it felt like "... something was unfinished ... with men." I explored relationships with men in my late 20's after the above relationship ended, but reflecting back, realized I "... made some really bad choices along the way."

Around my thirtieth year, my involvement in the women’s center diminished as I focused on my graduate work in nutritional counseling, holistic health, and eastern philosophy. Although I was counseling others’ dietary habits, I struggled with my own eating disorder. In 1982, I was "desperate" and felt like food had "defeated" me, so I accepted a friend’s offer to chant with me. I had begun chanting, and was making progress, but felt like I would take "... one step forward, two steps back. Two forward, one back." After exploring yoga, meditation, and Judaism without feeling a strong "calling" from them, I was ready for "some kind of discipline."

As I explored Buddhism and the practice of chanting, I recognized the familiarity of a philosophy that had been present since I was young:

It was what I had already believed. Going way back to the Vietnam War ... I wanted peace as opposed to a different social system. I didn’t want to make revolution, I wanted to make peace. So, that’s what, where I was coming from most of my life even though I wasn’t at peace myself yet.
Although I didn’t know how chanting was going to help me overcome my unhealthy relationship to food, I began chanting regularly. As I continued, I began spending time with others in that spiritual community, and

... ultimately something inside me got stronger than the desire to hurt myself in the way I was hurting myself. And in a way that going to OA [Overeaters Anonymous] didn’t do, in a way that going to therapy didn’t do, because it was coming from inside. And it was more powerful than anything else I had tried. And I was getting supported enough in the doing of it, so that I kept doing it.

Before I was ready to make a commitment to Buddhism, I questioned a Buddhist woman about leaving Judaism and received the answer I was looking for: “... this practice of Buddhism within the individual was the right practice to do at this time in history. To really be able to affect more people more dramatically to create a peaceful world.” Viewing Judaism as my culture rather than my religion, I knew that becoming Buddhist “made sense,” so I “went whole hog!” The “patriarchal, monotheistic” aspects of Judaism “... would have been hard ... to pursue.” Being Buddhist is a “... big part of my identity” and I have been very active in the lay organization chanting with other people, attending activities and conventions, and participating in the young women’s fife and drum corps.

When I began practicing Buddhism, I was “being straight” but felt like I “still had this lesbian identity inside of me that I liked.” I occasionally had “crushes” on women, but was primarily dating men for a six-year period. Admitting that I wanted my life to be “easier,” I “almost married” a man whom I had dated for two years. Realizing I couldn’t marry him, I returned to dating women, recognizing that I have the potential to be attracted to men.
Middle adulthood. I changed the way I addressed differences or conflicts within my identity. In the past, if I had an experience that would highlight other parts of myself, my "blinders" prevented me from experiencing or thinking about the other parts of myself. Now, if I am attracted to a man, I recognize that it's hard, but I "... let it be. I don't just shove it away ... because it's outside of my normal identity." My identity is "... multi-faceted." I don't "... have to have one identity."

When faced with discrimination, "I think I continued to react the same way throughout my life! It's really kind of interesting." I do not believe that earlier struggles and experiences of discrimination are forgotten. Repeating a cycle of winning, getting ahead of the game, and just repeating the process when it resurfaces does not describe my experience either. My experiences of discrimination have felt more like a "thread" throughout my life and my "karma." My defensive posture, personality, and carrying around my past experiences may "make it worse" for me, causing me to be "more suspicious." I wonder if I am "... looking too hard (pause) for people to discriminate? Am I waiting for it, so I can pounce? I don't know."

I still identify as a lesbian, despite my intervening belief that I "must marry a man ultimately." My role as a lesbian Buddhist is to challenge the inclusiveness of my organization's newsletters, discussion forums, and activities. I am unsure if I have a complete sense of self yet, because I am "still working on that."

My career is another fluid aspect of identity, which I continue to explore: "I'm still asking myself at 42, 'What am I going to be next year? Am I going to stay in my job? ... Am I going to want to work for the union?' ... but I try to think that everything is built on something. And that it's not all separate stuff."
It can’t be, I’m one person.” I have tried to understand my own life in terms of mission, recognizing that life is eternal and that “... I am new, but not new, in terms of who I am.” Most of my life has been spent trying to figure out how I need to fulfill my responsibility to myself and the world, how I can “Be the kind of person who can do the most good for the most people.” With that sense of mission in mind, every life event is meaningful and has its place, and “… I try not to have regrets.”

Although my life is mostly comprised of “people more like myself … Caucasian women,” my Buddhist and union activities have expanded my social network to include men. I have also become “… more interested in acknowledging someone’s racial difference and finding out about what that is for them. What their life is like. I’m a lot more adventuresome culturally in that way.” Expanding beyond the “comfort and safety” of my own culture, I have begun exploring different forms of music, and am especially excited about African and Caribbean music.

Within the Buddhist organization, it is the group’s responsibility to ensure it provides a “comfortable place for … people to be themselves.” If an organization becomes too homogeneous, it is not fulfilling its mission and is purely theoretical. Different people should coexist “… all together … so people really (pause) can learn about each other.” My friendships have expanded in diversity, including an African American co-worker, and a Puerto Rican woman and a Pacific Islander woman in my spiritual community.

Western culture has moved away from indigenous beliefs that “we are all related.” The violence in the world reflects the distance from that belief: “... If everyone really felt like we were all related, why are we shooting each other?! Whether it’s riding around in this town, a couple of kids shooting at each
other, or in Bosnia, Serbs shooting at Muslims—” Our violence toward each other is like ”... spitting in the wind, it comes back in your own face.”

My spiritual practice is based on the idea that ”We’re all related and everything’s connected.” Because my ”... natural inclination is ... to feel alone, isolated ... in my own universe surrounded by my skin,” I daily practice feeling connected to everything. My sense of self is largely defined by my spirituality:

My essential identity is Buddha ... When I’m able to do it, my sense of self is Buddha. I’m this person who is experiencing myself as a true self. That I don’t act falsely in any way for myself. I don’t take any action that is against what I believe or feel ...Opening myself up ... Not shutting off.

Because Buddhist practice is based on universality and openness, you ”eventually open up! And be the best you can be, and not worry about these scary parts of yourself.” Studying Buddhist philosophy and practicing Buddhism ”[don’t] let me shut down, close off.”

Theoretical Field Notes

Themes identified after the interviews included (a) rebelling against societal norms and expectations; (b) gaining comfort and safety by spending time with others like herself; (c) feeling angry at society; searching for outer and inner peace; (d) exploring continuously; (e) being influenced by sociopolitical events of the Vietnam War, the women’s movement, and the lesbian, feminist movement; (f) gaining a sense of identity through various organizations; and (g) placing importance on relationships.

From the OTAID perspective, Immersion seemed to be prevalent in the first portion of her life, with increasing complexity. Initially, she immersed herself in Jewish culture through the youth organizations and her group of
friends. The emergence of her feminist identity was followed soon thereafter by her lesbian identity. Immersion was evident in her involvement at the women’s center with other lesbian feminists, and her group of friends, who were also Jewish lesbian feminists.

Finding Buddhism seemed to mark a shift in her focus. After years of searching and some unhealthy coping behaviors, she found a spiritual practice that aligned with her values of world peace. She no longer seemed to need the insular protection of a homogeneous group.

Randy reflected several tenets of the Integration phase. Becoming Buddhist appeared to help her shift assumptions about the world. Most of her life, Randy acknowledged the link between oppression and the Western, patriarchal system. Recently, she has expanded her sense of community to include a more diverse group of people, emphasizing the importance of learning about each other. Having little exposure to racial diversity, she has only recently begun to explore different cultures. This exploration began to occur after she had been chanting for ten years, after she found a spiritual path that was aligned with her values. Her European, individualistic worldview seems to clash with the Eastern religion she practices. Throughout her life, though, she was drawn to communities.

Randy’s current beliefs reflected tenets of the Transformation phase: Her practice of Buddhism is a central component of her life; she recognizes that all life is interrelated and connected by universality; Christianity is incompatible with her beliefs; she has an expanded sense of self which includes Buddha and her karma; material wealth is not central; and she believes every life event is meaningful.
From a MIM perspective, Randy appeared to be highly influenced by environmental factors, particularly sociopolitical events. Her Jewish identity became most prevalent when it was being challenged by assumptions held in the largely Christian culture. Unlike her previous homogeneous group of friends, the Jesuit college environment enhanced her sense of difference and subsequently spurred an immersion into Zionism and her Jewish culture. Similarly, Randy’s identity as a lesbian occurred in full force during the feminist movement of the seventies. Her involvement in the women’s collective appeared to be linked to her desire to collectively pray for world peace through her Buddhist practice. Turning full circle, her desire for world peace was present, and highlighted, during the Vietnam War.

She appeared to currently have an intersected identification with her multiple aspects of identity and be at a more peaceful place than in her past.

Credibility

**Member check.** Randy did not notice any identifying information to be omitted, but she made six changes to improve her profile’s accuracy. Her changes are italicized in the profile text (pp. 97, 98, 101, 102, 105). These changes include adding descriptors, such as “in that community” and “Revolutionary.” She also clarified that the reference to friends describes two different friends. Randy reworded the description of the woman she had a relationship with and clarified that her relationships with men began in her late twenties following a lesbian relationship breakup. Finally, she substituted “African American” for Jamaican.
Kay

Contextual Field Notes

The first interview lasted two and one-half hours and was held in Kay’s home. The only distractions were occasional telephone rings. I felt energized about the interview, but toward the end, began having an allergic reaction to her two cats. Kay appeared warm and open and discussed her experience through teaching about her culture. I felt positive about the interview and was impressed by her ability to live outside of society’s norms.

The 6-month follow-up interview, which lasted one hour, was also held in her home. Minimal distractions were present as two family members passed through the living room. Follow-up questions derived from examination of the first interview included: (a) How did socioeconomic status influence her identity development? (b) What is her attitude toward people with different racial backgrounds? (c) How does anger contribute to her identity development? (d) What role did seclusion from a community play? (e) How was the process of searching for her Native American heritage different than connecting with her womanhood? (f) How is the search for her Irish heritage different than her search for her Native American heritage? (g) How has her sense of community changed, and what has its influenced been?

Demographic Description and Chronological Summary

I am a 44-year-old, heterosexual woman. My racial/ethnic background is “Caucasian/Amerindian,” and my “greatest involvement is in the Indian community.” My religious affiliation is Dakotah Sioux. “... By heritage, I’m a Chippewa, by tradition I’m [Dakotah] Sioux.” I am married and have three
children. I have a high school diploma, some college education, and currently work as a campground caretaker. As a child, my family’s socioeconomic status was “middle class.”

**Childhood.** As a child, I believed I was “born into the wrong family” and had fantasies that my real Indian family would “come and get me.” When I was eight, after my parents had divorced, I learned that I did have Native American heritage on my father’s side. I thought “that’s cool ... but it didn’t answer anything” and my mother didn’t have any information to provide. Because it was easier to blend into society rather than be different in the 1950’s, my parents chose to assimilate.

Although I didn’t know it then, I grew up in a “dysfunctional family.” My father “loved his daughters too well,” and when I was six years old, “I found out, what men do.” Enduring my father’s sexual abuse was “very hard,” and I didn’t tell anyone, because I knew I would be punished. As a result, I learned at a very young age that men have power and shouldn’t be questioned. When I was eight, my mother left my father while he was shooting guns in the basement. After my mother remarried, my stepfather was also extremely violent, and he forced us to be baptized as Mormons. When I was eleven years old, Mormon missionaries came to our house telling us where the Indians came from, and why. As I listened, I thought “That’s crap.” I quit going to church as soon as I was able to leave the house because “... organized religion never did anything for me. EVER!” It really bothered me that the adults in church were not following their own teachings. “Some of the biggest hypocrites and liars I ever met were in church.”

I also felt different growing up because I didn’t play with dolls, but I “… played horses and Indians and cowboys … with the guys!”
**Adolescence.** In high school, I recalled not being “aware of what was going ... on in the world.” Living in the South, I didn’t fit in because I talked and dressed differently. Clothes and money didn’t mean a whole lot to me, and “I think I was the last one in my ninth grade class to realize that there was a group called the Beatles. I didn’t care. (chuckle)” It really bothered and confused me when two of the best artists in class couldn’t even draw me, not realizing that I had a different bone structure they were not used to drawing. Because other people didn’t share my views, it was hard to let anyone get close to me. Walking through the woods, for example, it’s hard to make other people understand that there was no purpose in randomly picking something, and killing it. “Kids in high school don’t want to hear that. That just— that makes you weird.” Books, especially fiction, were my escape.

Having money was very important in the South; the “class system” has “invisible lines” that everyone knows about. The lines defined where you fit in and “how important you were.” In some classes, teachers would call on the students with greater financial influence. People who couldn’t fit in were never allowed in, and I was always told that my hair and clothes were not in style. Having money mattered even more in the Mormon church.

I raised my younger sisters, so at eighteen, I had grown up and was ready to settle down. I married my first husband, we had two kids, but we had married too young, and the marriage quickly ended.

**Early adulthood.** My second husband died three years after we married, and afterwards I realized that he was very controlling. I had my youngest son with my third husband. He was “... a raging alcoholic like my third stepfather,” and two years after we were married, I saw him threaten my oldest son with a raised beer bottle. I ended that marriage before it developed
into the same situation I suffered growing up. It took a long time but I just learned through experience until I finally reached a "saturation point."

I had already explored my Scotch Irish heritage, and "... there's a whole tribal thing there (pause) too."

The first pow wow I attended, I did not know anyone, but realized afterwards that "... the people I connected with were the drums." The many books I read weren't answering my questions about my heritage. I went to any movie I could find about Native Americans.

A critical turning point occurred in 1983, when I saw the movie "Broken Rainbow, ... about the Four Corners area and the big mountain problem in Diné land." Afterwards, people from the group United Tribes were handing out flyers. My daughter and I followed up on the flyer, and found out that a medicine man was visiting and that we were invited to the sweat lodge ceremony. We went to the sweat lodge ceremony, and "did the whole thing trial and error," discovering afterward they held two Lakotah sweats, and were in the sweat lodge for six hours. After that first sweat lodge experience, I knew that this is what I had been looking for and I had finally "come home." Once I re-established the "connection" that my family had lost, I was relieved to know that as a child I was "RIGHT," I did have an Indian family who would help me find my real home. I continued being involved in the United Tribes, but finally "backed out" because I wasn't learning what I wanted to, and it was all political.

**Middle adulthood.** After three years without a sweat, I heard a medicine man talk about the importance of having a name, and knew that it was the direction I needed to go. He guided me to a holy man, who told me what earning a name entailed. The process answered a lot of my questions and
helped me realize that “I’m not alone.” I became Dakotah Sioux by tradition, because that’s what is available where I live. After looking all my life for answers and a sense of belonging, I realized there’s not much difference because “The Ways are The Ways.” It doesn’t matter what you call the connection, what matters is that it exists. One of the first things we’re told about spirituality is that “… your spirituality is yours. It’s your path.” In 1987, my son died. If I hadn’t made the spiritual connection to my heritage four years prior to his death, I “… would have had a lot harder time.”

Connecting with my Native American heritage enabled me to be comfortable with who and what I am, and to stand up to men. Prior to that, I learned from my mother and predominant society that “men were in charge” and women’s role is to please them. Society tends to expect women to “look a certain way … [and] be a certain way,” but has a different set of expectations for Native American women. Following a Hollywood stereotype, people “persist in using” the word “squaw” even after they have been informed that “it’s not a nice word at all.” If challenged, they will respond “Oh, it’s just in fun!” The Iroquois definition of “squaw” is a reference to female genitalia and Native Americans “don’t want it used.” Even children will make statements like, “You don’t look Indian.” Or “Where are your Indian clothes?”

Hollywood stereotypes are hard to get past, and movies rarely portray Native American perspectives — In “Dances With Wolves” and “Thunderheart,” the key characters were White. I laughed when my son-in-law thought we worshipped the sun; then I shared with him the reality of our spiritual beliefs.

When I was a secretary, my boss was racist, although he denied it. Behind my back, he referred to me as “Chief Wahoo,” and he used a derogatory Yiddish term to refer to an African American co-worker. I couldn’t make him
understand that his actions were inappropriate, and couldn’t "... make him understand how that felt because he just didn’t relate to it at all." It was annoying, because "I knew where he was coming from, and I’d gotten pretty much used to the idea that there were people like that."

Acknowledging that although women have more job opportunities than they had in the past, I believe that "... society can learn from Native Americans if they would listen (slight chuckle) ... having a matrilineal society is not a bad thing." Unlike mainstream culture, mothers and elders are valued highly (pause) in Native American culture. It’s an honor to be called "grandmother," because it means I am looked up to for wisdom. "Everyone has a place within the circle (pause) and no one is valued any more or less than anybody else ... and there’s no competition!" Even the children’s opinions are heard.

As a reflection of larger society, there’s an "old boy network" within the Native American culture ... but it’s not what people think it is." When women have visions and dreams, for example, men are “more prone to listen to their compatriots” and "... it’s hard to make some of these men understand (pause) that we aren’t just (pause) seeing something that’s not there (pause) or blowing smoke, or trying to fit in.” When that occurs, the women remind the men that "ceremonies don’t happen without us."

My expanding awareness of political events that impact Native Americans led me to try to increase the awareness of lawmakers. For example, the government tried to move Navajo off of their reservation in the Four Corners because of what was publicly noted as a Hopi-Navajo dispute. I wrote many letters to Congress to inform them about the Navajo’s first amendment, the spiritual significance of that land, and the underlying motives of the Peabody mining company.
Although my political involvement has decreased, the newspaper, “News from Indian Country” helps me keep in touch with political struggles Native Americans continue to have to “... maintain their culture ... [and] live their spirituality.” The persecution never stopped, but “... this is a whole part of United States societal culture that people, don’t know anything about!” I choose from among local political events, depending on the level of threat. When seven KKK members had a rally, they “posed no threat” to the thousand protesters, so I stayed home and “let the people be.” If they had posed a threat, “... we would have gotten together as a people (pause) and expressed our point of view on the thing and let it go.” I did get involved in the protest against a celebration for Christopher Columbus. We have people who are good at being involved politically, and they are valued. I have found that being involved politically takes something away from me and my spiritual connection. I have found my place with those who pray in the sweat lodge.

At one point, my husband and I were considering moving to Montana, but it never happened and “... we came to understand it didn’t happen because it just wasn’t supposed to be. HERE is a good place to be.” My family has been congregating in this area, so “... we must be doing something right.”

Native Americans have connection with generations of ancestors and knowledge of our history. People in mainstream society don’t believe that connection exists, so rather than asking The People about *local Indian mound*, for example, they “desecrated” the ceremonial place, which the Native Americans knew had nothing buried underneath. Our history is oral, and very accurate “... because it’s handed down very carefully. And it’s told and told and retold. (pause) Until you—you, know it. And you can tell it like
you were there." Mainstream society does not value oral history as much as it
values written history "... and that's a little hard to take."

Time is viewed differently, and is often referred to in terms of nature,
such as "sundown" or "when the sun's overhead." It's easier not having to
rush, because "... things'll happen when it's time for them to happen."

Current life situation. My husband is "not in any way, interested or even
connected ... to this culture— ... but he respects what I do and who I am ...
We walk parallel paths and we get together once in a while and compare
notes." In a multicultural marriage, we "look at things very differently."
Occasional "clashes" occur because he resents how much time I spend in the
Teosyepé, and I resent that he doesn't understand. The Teosyepé is my
extended family, not related by blood, but an entire group of people who I
refer to as my nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, and
grandparents. I usually refer to our Native American community as "The
People," which is a "carryover from Lakotah language. When you're referring
to a particular [tribal] nation, it's ... The People." Our Teosyepé is comprised
of "all walks of life," including college students, Vietnam veterans, the very
poor, the wealthy, people from different Indian backgrounds, and some
people without any Indian heritage.

The Native American culture is "... the most equal society that I've ever
come in contact with. And I imagine it exists in other cultures." A "huge mix"
of people attend "the best pow wow's," and I've noticed that "everybody has
the same rights." If they are not respected, the elders become unhappy,
because "... the ultimate prophecy is that ... all of humanity become one. You
can't do it as long as this kind of bigotry exists."
Although my involvement with the Teosyepé separates me culturally and spiritually, it is not a “sphere of protection.” I am even more aware of what is occurring locally, nationally, and globally. In this way, I have a better sense of what is affecting The People, and how we are affecting things outside of us. We have a “... whole different culture within a culture.” When we are together, we talk about spirituality and political events and do beadwork together. We understand an “inside humor” that largely draws on historical events, such as “Custer was Siouxed. S-I-O-U-X-E-D.” and “Indians had bad immigration laws.”

I see less separation between gender roles within my own spiritual community, but in some communities, “Only men can fix the sweat lodge fire.” In my Teosyepé, the *medicine man* asks the women to build the sweat lodge fire because the women are healers. The exception is during women’s “monthly purification.” During that time, “... you don’t handle a pipe, or go into the sweat lodges— There’s a lot of things you can’t do.” Although many people view that practice as sexist, I understand it differently:

... when a woman’s on her moon, she’s considered to be on her own purification ... You have a foot in both worlds and you’re a very powerful person. And without meaning to, you could totally cancel out anything that the spiritual leader is trying to do (pause) and make it (slight pause) ineffective (pause) ... It’s not a bad thing (pause), but you have to be very careful

Usually a woman is past her childbearing years before she becomes a “medicine woman.”

Unlike larger society, where men own everything, in the Teosyepé “the woman owns the house and the land.” Those who participate in ceremonies bring a gift or food to the women and help clean up afterwards. Although some of the men help clean up, “most of them won’t.” Emotional expression is
“encouraged” among The People. “Men cry and are not ashamed of it. Because that’s who they are.” I am involved in trying to establish a women’s society. I relate mostly to other women “following these [Native American spiritual] ways.” Not all of the women have Native American heritage, but living at home, they all feel “... alone in the middle of a crowd (pause) because we’re really spread out” geographically.

A woman’s role isn’t that “clear cut” in White society. Although the battle to define roles spills over into the Native American culture at times, “… even the men are aware of what’s going on.” Sometimes the older men are the ones who will stand up to say this isn’t the way it is done. Compared to life in mainstream culture, living the Native American way is easier: “It’s just the way I’ve always been. It’s open. It’s very giving.”

Before I made a “connection” with my Native American heritage, I “… didn’t know who I was” and had “no real truth.” I had problems with organized religion, because it taught that “There’s only one way” and I would notice that members of the congregation would say one thing, but act in a different way. In the Teosyepé, “your spirituality is yours. It’s your path. It’s what works for you.” My spirituality is who I am. When I “became more spiritually connected,” my awareness increased and my “circle of impact got bigger.” I do not “walk blindly,” but notice what’s going on outside. Even though I’ve lived in a rural area for five years, I have never come close to hitting a deer “because I know they’re there.” If I see a deer when I’m driving, “I’ll stop … and then the deer will give me a choice. Either he will go across or he’ll stand there and wait (pause) and let me ease on by.” When I go outside, I don’t just see grass, but notice where things live, hear the uniqueness of each bird’s song. A short Sioux prayer, Matakawasi, means “all my relations” and
acknowledges “your connectedness to everything else.” This prayer is an integral part of most ceremonies. Matakawasi teaches very quickly that “... whatever you do is going to affect something else or somebody else,” which will eventually affect you. Considering the interrelatedness of all life, previously unimportant local and global events took on a new relevance. People are learning that lesson “a little late with the rain forest.” It’s sad that the predominant culture has lost their spiritual connection to the land, because “... it’s so fulfilling and enriching to have that (pause) and know it’s there.”

My spirituality is no longer a “one day a week thing ... it’s an everyday thing.” At one point, I didn’t even have the once a week religious practice. I lived by ethics, but it is no comparison to my current spiritual beliefs. “I just have to say God is in everything and ... it all has life. Even rocks, have life.” Now that I’m no longer “walking through life blindly,” my life is “... a lot more complicated, but a lot richer, and fuller. There’s a reason to be. (longer pause) It’s just—I could never go back to the way it was. (pause) Because the way it was so empty, in comparison. I’m just glad it’s here.”

We have a prophecy that the birth of a white buffalo calf, representing White Buffalo Calf Woman, signals a time for unity. Our *holy man* went to see the first non-albino white buffalo calf born in 61 years. While in Minnesota, he “… saw representations from just about every religion there is … There was Star of David. There was Muslim, (pause) Hindu. Everything. Everybody that could come, left something.” Part of Native American prophecies talk about a “time of purification” that has “been here for some time, and it’s accelerating,” as evidenced by the increase in volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. I am accepting of this time, but realize “It doesn’t have to be this way if people would change.” I don’t believe people will change, because
"They don’t understand that they are living, on a living entity [the Earth] (pause) And like a dog that has too many fleas, she will shake everything off."

Theoretical Field Notes

Main themes identified after the interview included (a) feeling out of place most of her life; (b) knowing something was missing, but being unable to name it; (c) gaining a sense of interconnection through her Native American spiritual community; (d) being influenced by *holy man and *medicine man; (e) feeling connected to nature throughout her life; (f) placing little importance on material things to attain happiness; (g) exploring her ethnic identity as a mature woman; (h) knowing that modern Christian religions were incompatible to her belief system; and (i) valuing herself through living the Native American way.

She appeared to represent characteristics of the OTAID Transformation phase based on the following manifestations: a worldview and spirituality connected to traditional Native American ways; the incompatibility of modern Christian religion; little importance given to material wealth; an understanding of institutional oppression (including laws, education, and media); an acceptance of others with different socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; the recognition that all life is interconnected; an extended sense of self, which includes nature, all life, and previous generations; and the belief that all life events are meaningful for growth. Kay’s life appeared to shift dramatically once she made a spiritual connection with her heritage. Her self-definition changed from being an outsider to being based on spirituality and spiritual community.
From the MIM standpoint, Kay’s womanhood and ethnicity currently seem to be intersected across various situations. The point of intersection appeared simultaneous; valuing her Native American heritage enabled her also to value her womanhood for the first time. Growing up, she progressed from a passive acceptance of her female identity to a conscious awareness of the unfairness associated with sexism. After accepting her Native American heritage and womanhood, Kay described specific situations in which either aspect of identity was highlighted, reflecting a segmented identification. For example, when individuals and media perpetuate stereotypes of Native Americans, Kay’s ethnicity is at the forefront of her awareness.

Credibility

Member check. After reading her individual profile, Kay was satisfied with the accuracy and anonymity and had no changes in either category.

Peer debriefing. A member of the OTAID research team read Kay’s individual profile and my theoretical notes. She reminded me not to oversimplify two Transformation tenets. I described one tenet as “little importance given to material wealth.” By adding the phrase “…to attain happiness,” she cautioned me not to imply that individuals with money are excluded from the Transformation phase. The distinction is made in the purpose material goods serve. Her second refinement addressed my interpretation of Kay’s reference to the incompatibility of Christianity. She reminded me that “Christians can be in OTAID Phase 6 — [they] just have to embrace the mystical aspects of Christianity (Matthew Fox, Marianne Williamsen, Course in Miracles).” Based on her comments, my revisions were incorporated into the theoretical notes and italicized.
Pat

Contextual Field Notes

The first interview lasted one and one-half hour, and took place in Pat's home. Pat appeared focused on the interview, until the latter half when her children awoke. She was open and was inquisitive about the study. Before the interview began, she discovered some of the women I interviewed were lesbian, and commented that “in many Native cultures, gays are considered to be sick, and could possibly be healed.”

Being female is her primary minority status, but during the interview, she described discriminatory experiences related to low socioeconomic status. The low economic status seems to be more related to her husband’s current unemployment, so I question whether low socioeconomic status would be a second minority identity. I also question blind spots I may have, coming from a middle class background. I was surprised that Pat said some of the same ideas and examples that Kay used. Realizing they are in the same Teosyepé, the synergy of ideas in their community and the “holy man’s words may have been represented in the overlap of the two interviews.

The follow-up interview, which lasted one and one-half hours, was conducted in Pat's home six months later. Her children sought attention from both Pat and I, causing some distraction. The following questions were identified after the first interview: a) Growing up, what was her understanding of being White and being female? b) How did socioeconomic status play a role in her identity development? c) How did sexuality play a role in her identity development? d) How did spirituality play a role in her
identity development? e) What role has anger played throughout her life? f) How has minority status impacted her throughout her life? g) How has her sense of community changed?

**Demographic Description**

I am a 33-year-old Caucasian, heterosexual woman who is married and has two children. I have a college degree and currently work as a “housewife.” My religious affiliation is Dakotah Sioux. I grew up in a “single parent family” with a “lower middle class” socioeconomic status.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** My parents divorced when I was five. Because there wasn’t a man in the house, I did some of the tasks that are traditionally male duties, such as fixing things around the house. Growing up, I was a tomboy and “didn’t need boys hanging on me.”

My first and only conflict with race occurred when I was nine years old and my sister started dating “a Black guy.” *My stepfather — who was not my stepfather at that time,* was “very prejudiced” and although our family had been “real close,” it really broke us up. I was too young to realize what was going on, but because I knew my mother was hurt and because my family had been broken up, I had “a real hard heart against Black people.” I didn’t call people names, but I just felt “an emotional hatred” directed only toward Blacks.

**Adolescence.** My tomboy years continued into high school. I walked and dressed like a guy, and I hated starting my period. I thought it was a curse. I didn’t really date boys in high school. My sexual orientation development was “basically normal, natural,” but my mother asked me once if was gay because I had no boyfriends. Just because I was a tomboy “... does not mean that I
wanted to be a boy and liked girls. I resented the way girls were treated and I did not like feeling vulnerable so I put on an act — I wanted to show I was strong.”

I was brought up Lutheran, but around the age of thirteen, I started losing interest in going to church. At Sunday school, I remembered being confused by their contradictions: “... they talk about the fire and the brimstone, and then all of a sudden they’re talking about God being a loving God.”

I had never shown any interest in Native American culture until I turned thirteen and dreamed that I was a warrior who was stabbed in the back during a Native American council meeting. Ever since that dream, I have been interested in Native American culture and knew that I didn’t want to be “a part of the norm.” After reading a fictional book about a half-blood Native American, it seemed like “... everything turned on like a light” and then “I couldn’t get enough about Native American stuff.”

When I was sixteen, I realized that “the color of skin doesn’t matter ... it’s what comes from the heart.” I realized that “it’s not worth it” to have hard feelings against someone and it wasn’t fair to allow those hard feelings to be directed to the entire race. I wouldn’t want someone to judge me in that way. I didn’t have friends who were Black, but my anger had been resolved toward the Black race.

After high school, I went to a technical college and “Joy of joys! (laughs) They had pow wows right there, at the college grounds.” The first day at college, I met “some girl who ... danced at pow wows.” The following spring, I had the chance to start dancing at pow wows. My friends introduced me to a man “that did Indian activities” and as we talked, he helped me get more involved in the spiritual side of Native American practices. Through this man,
I eventually met *holy man (who taught our Teosyepé’s spiritual leader) and learned about the spirituality of the Dakotah Sioux.

I have never questioned my sexual orientation. I began dating in college and was confused about a man’s reaction to me. After a date, “I threw my arms around him and gave him a kiss. Because that’s how I felt about him.” The next day at school, he ignored me and I thought I had done something to “turn him off.”

When I was twenty, I met an interesting man who taught me about myself and nature around me and encouraged me not to “take the blame for everything.” One time, I returned to talk with him, and I was in a situation where he easily could have raped me. I don’t know what stopped him. I figured that God intervened, and the man must have realized I didn’t enjoy what he was doing.

*Early adulthood. My first marriage was never consummated because “It always scared me when we tried ... I finally found out ... I didn’t love the guy.” I respect him because “he never forced me [to have sex] when he had the right to ... as a husband.”

I went to college for *law enforcement, and I was one of the first women in *state to enter this profession. At times it was difficult being in a male-dominated field. When I began training, the men weren’t supposed to tell dirty jokes or use vulgar language around me. We were trained not to use “excessive force.” I voiced concerns I had as a female officer that an unarmed man would have an advantage if I was unable to use a weapon under their “excessive force” rule. In a first aid class, a male co-worker practiced putting a splint on my leg, and made a comment as he pushed the splint near my crotch. A couple of the other guys chuckled and I “... probably turned all shades of
red, but I didn’t open my mouth.” I was too shy at the time to say anything, but if it had happened now, “I’d a probably reamed him up one side, down the other some way. Or pushed the board back at him and asked him how it felt. (speaking quietly).” Another incident occurred during an out-of-town event. Seven of us were drinking beer in a hotel room at the end of the day. They pressured me to drink, and after several rounds, one of the guys said “Hey!! Look around here ... There’s 6 of us and only one of you!” I don’t know why I had picked a chair in the corner, but I knew it was a bad situation at that point. A couple of guys I already knew helped me make an exit by going to get a pizza.

Getting involved with Native American spirituality has helped me become more comfortable as a woman. I don’t see my sexuality as a limitation, and I realize that women seem to be “more in tune with the earth” and more aware of the little things in life that need to be important. I also realize that although men and women have different roles, it doesn’t matter whether you’re male or female. “A friend helped me to understand my womanhood differently. Viewing the menstrual cycle as God’s way of showing a woman she is able to have children and purify her body, I no longer consider the menstrual cycle to be a curse.

Because women aren’t allowed around sacred objects and cannot participate in the sweat when they’re in the midst of their own purification, some may feel that the Native American society is male-dominated. The first couple times I went to a Native American spiritual conference, one of the men had some problems with his medicine bundle. I wasn’t involved with any ceremonies because I was on my moon, or on my period, which the leader calls “being sick (slight laugh).” A couple men asked me questions, trying to
find out if I had been around the bundle. I basically told them, "How dare you ask that, because I know better!"

It's balanced, though, because the woman owns the teepee, and "... if she gets pissed off at her man, she takes his things and throws them out and that's it. (slight laugh)" Grandmothers are revered, "What they say sometimes, is law." Native American society is male-dominated in the historical sense, because the man is stronger and puts himself in danger to feed the family. The woman takes care of the family and prepares the food. These roles still exist today, for the most part.

Recognizing that the color of skin doesn't matter helped me to resolve my anger and to accept my sister's marriage to a Black man. I realized that "... as long as love is involved, then, it shouldn't matter." Society needs to learn that, but unfortunately, I don't think it ever will. I disagree with people who say that interracial marriages are "not fair to the children." Society isn't fair to the children. As long as the parents love their children, they can't be blamed for how society treats them. I'm closest to my biracial niece and nephew, and "I'm very proud to have them by my side, and I don't care what color they are." I was kind of bothered that my sister labeled my nephew Black. "If he's half Black he's half White. That's the way it should be."

Gays and lesbians are human beings too. I have known a couple of gays/lesbians and worked with a good friend who was once lesbian. "I am turned off by blatant demonstrations of affection done in public and also by outrageously dressed gays/lesbians, but they are who they are." Homosexual orientation "does not happen in nature," and "I don't necessarily believe same-sex marriage should be legalized."
Having White skin and following the Native American way can be frustrating sometimes, but I still feel part of the community. Although it’s never happened to me, I have heard that some Native Americans say “You can’t dance in a pow wow because you don’t have a green card.” I don’t understand that, because “Who cares what color skin you are, as long as you are there being who you are. Being a human being.” I don’t go to pow wow’s to see how many races are there ... I go there to dance, ... to be in a social time and see people I don’t get a chance to see everyday.”

I went to a Sun Dance in South Dakota in 1987 with three other guys who had some Native American background, with only some physical features that looked Native American. One had collar-length black hair and light skin; one had blue eyes and wore his hair in a ponytail; and the other one had lighter skin, blond-brown hair, and tattoos on his arms, and basically looked like a biker. When we stopped in a small town cafe, “I have never in my LIFE! felt (pause) the tension like we did that day. Everybody else in there you could tell were good ole boy ranchers.” They were all White men older than 45 and must have thought Indians were “coming into their realm.” At first, we didn’t feel the tension, but everybody else was throwing it at us. I wasn’t scared, and I thought it was kind of funny because there’s no need for that. If we had gone to some reservations, the opposite reaction might have happened, where they might have thought we were a few White people trying to be Indian.

My blood relatives are still my blood relatives, and my mother has been a very important person in my life who has given me my “basic beliefs ... and my basic ideas in life and how things should be.” My spirituality is another thing that has changed my life and “my faith in God is stronger than it was when I went to church and had four walls around me.” My husband and I
both follow this Native American way, and our mothers disagree with our beliefs. Although my mother disagrees, she accepts it because I’m her daughter. Trying to get my mother to understand, I remind her that I believe in God and because Jesus is a part of God, then I believe in Jesus and the Holy Spirit anyway. I just don’t use their names.

Society treats people differently depending on their economic status. Even my mother, who is kind-hearted, makes negative comments about a homeless person with dirty clothes. If I can’t help that person out, I don’t look down on them or condemn them for being homeless. I don’t worry about what I wear because “I could care less what other people think about me … This is me.”

My biggest life challenges have been “Keeping sane (laughter) … [and] keeping a good outlook on life,” which is difficult “… with the way things are.” Actually, “I don’t think I’ve had a challenge,” except when “… I had to decide whether I wanted to continue on being a law enforcement officer or if I wanted to become who and what I am today. And what I believe in, and my morals.”

Current life situation. My husband and I are on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) now and we have used food stamps for a year, because his horse shoeing business has been so slow. I don’t like being on any type of assistance. It seems degrading and I feel embarrassed, wondering how the cashier and the people behind me feel. I won’t buy anything with food stamps at some places because they would remember me. “I don’t want to be one of those people who (pause) are taking advantage of the government, and of the taxpayers.” I don’t agree with third and fourth generation welfare people. I also see that schooling does not guarantee that you’ll get a good paying job.
Recently, we had an incident of not being known in society. My husband was being trained through a county work program to become a commercial truck driver. Just before he completed training, he was given a speeding ticket, and we didn’t realize our insurance had just expired. As a result, he lost his license for 90 days and I might have to go back to work. “I would rather be the one here to watch the kids. Because, now I’m still nursing [my] daughter.” It’s going to be hard to put that all aside, especially when it seems like he wouldn’t have gotten a ticket if he had been a doctor or a policeman’s wife. “If you’re poor, you’re dirt. And you don’t count.”

I feel excluded from White mainstream society, partly because of society and partly by choice. The norm is “getting to the point were it’s abnorm too.” Because I don’t believe in “the systems” anymore, I want to do “in-home schooling.” Although I was never made fun of, I have seen it and don’t like the direction things are moving nowadays. Kids, without meaning to, can be some of the “cruelest people on earth.” I want my children to grow up knowing that color of skin, religion, and beliefs don’t matter because any human being is important. Although our mothers disagree, saying that they need the social contact, I don’t want my children to be made fun of or to have peer pressure to make fun of others. Once you’re in the system, it’s very hard to get out and creative children are only allowed to learn one way. “And that doesn’t go with me. There is more than one way to get to God. And there is more than one way to learn.” The White man came with a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other and told the Indians “If you don’t believe this way, then here’s death.” The same thing is happening today in Ireland and Bosnia.

“I don’t consider myself a White … I consider myself a human being.”

Color of skin has nothing to do with how we treat each other as human
beings. I’ve been reading a book emphasizing that “we all bleed red … and have two arms, two legs, and a mind and a heart.” Some people, who have disabilities, may lack some things, but they’re still human and they aren’t any different. I try to remember to “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” I don’t have any anger toward Blacks anymore. There’s no reason to keep bringing up the past. My family is still my family. As it grows, I go with it instead of against it. When I look back on my anger, it was selfish because it felt like my family was taken away.

Anger is “expending your energy in (pause) a useless way.” There is a moment of feeling anger, but “you either deal with that person on a one-to-one basis, talk it over and get it worked out, or you let it go. You know. Just don’t let it bother you.” My life is stressful at times, when the kids have been screaming, but “It’ll be gone the next day.” I’ve realized that if you can’t do anything about it, worrying is not going to do you any good physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. “The only thing you gotta do is let it go and let God take care of it.”

Theoretical Field Notes

Main themes identified after Pat’s interview included: (a) resolving her major conflict about race by focusing on the universality across human beings; (b) identifying conflicts related to being a woman in her male-dominated occupation and in the Native American community; (c) becoming increasingly involved in Native American activities; (d) describing society as unfair, particularly regarding socioeconomic status; (e) distrusting societal “systems,” such as education and law enforcement; (f) placing spirituality as central; and
(g) becoming more comfortable with her womanhood as a mother and as a person practicing Native American spirituality.

From the OTAID perspective, Pat primarily reflected tenets of the Internalization phase. Pat's anger toward Blacks as a child stemmed from her perception that her sister's Black boyfriend split up her family. This anger was consistent with the Immersion phase. Anger associated with her early racial conflict seemed to have dissipated into a tendency to minimize race. Downplaying racial and cultural differences may characterize the Internalization phase, in which a person recognizes multiple components of identity. Stating that she doesn't identify as White is consistent with her tendency to downplay race, including her own. Perhaps the stable sense of self characterized by the Internalization phase is reflected in Pat's spiritual beliefs, the focus on universality, and her identification with women.

Pat articulated more discriminatory events based on her sex, but appeared to have a stable sense of herself as a woman, as in the Internalization phase. Curiously, she did not articulate a period of Immersion with women. Referring to men in her spiritual community, "[She] felt resentful toward the men who questioned [her] about a bundle when [she] knew better than to touch it." Despite this incident, Pat did not question spiritual practices excluding women.

Pat's spirituality appeared more reflective of the Transformation phase, including the centrality of Native American spirituality in her life, the distrust of systems in mainstream society, an understanding that people who are different are treated unfairly, the incompatibility of Christianity, and the relationship to nature. Several important tenets of Transformation were missing, indicating that she does not fully represent the phase of development. Interview data that contradicted Transformation tenets included: de-emphasizing the value of
cultural differences (including race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) and making little reference to activities supporting sociopolitical causes; being most concerned about her lack of material wealth; and not referring to an expanded sense of self. Her attitudes toward gays and lesbians reflected beliefs inconsistent with the Transformation phase.

From a MIM perspective, the environment has greatly influenced Pat’s sense of self. Her involvement in the Native American community has helped her become more comfortable with her womanhood, value motherhood, and feel closer to God. Current experiences related to her lower socioeconomic status have caused her to focus on the unfairness of society.

Because her race is Caucasian and in the majority, it did not appear to be factored into most situations. Thus, the MIM model, which focuses on multiple minority status, had less relevance in analyzing Pat’s case. Her focus on minority aspects did appear to be environmentally influenced. The greatest amount of conflict about her sex occurred when she worked in a male-dominated profession. Race was only a conflict when it involved a values clash regarding interracial dating and when she was perceived to be a minority (as a White woman) in South Dakota. In both situations she did not feel she was the target for discrimination. She presently appears to have a primary conflict about her low socioeconomic status, and her focus has been on societal injustice. In each situation causing conflict, she talked about a single identity, the one being discriminated against.

Credibility

Member check. After reading her individual profile, Pat made four changes to increase its accuracy. I incorporated her changes, in italics (pp. 121,
123, 126, 132). Pat disagreed with one of my theoretical comments. I inferred that she questioned practices in her Teosyepé which seemed unfair to women. Pat stated that she doesn’t question the spiritual practices; her frustration was aimed toward some of the men in her community. I incorporated her feedback, italicized in the “Theoretical Field Notes” section.

**Peer debriefing.** A member of the OTAID research team reviewed Pat’s profile and suggested that the similarity of Pat’s answers to Kay’s could have also been a result of discussing their participation in the study.

My adviser provided theoretical comments as she read the profile. A general comment was a reminder that “‘isms occur in all racial/ethnic groups beyond European American.” Referring to Pat’s description of the misunderstanding involving the medicine bundle (p. 128) she observed “illustrations of sexism guised in ethnic tradition.” She also acknowledged how the presence of sexism and heterosexism in the “guise of culture of different groups keeps people from questioning.” In the following paragraph, she addressed Pat’s statement that grandmothers are revered, questioning whether or not age was revered across sex.

As an expert in the OTAID model, she suggested that Pat’s period of Immersion with her womanhood may have been “more subtle.” Prior to connecting with Native American “ways,” Pat viewed menstruation as “a curse.” After learning Native American teachings, she views menstruation as power, a natural means of purification, and a gift from God to women. She also reminded me that distrusting systems in mainstream society “occurs as early as Immersion!”
Experiencing Multiple Identities

Several themes emerged describing participants’ experience of having multiple identities. This section presents the following eight themes: (a) Integrated experience, (b) Uniqueness of multiple identities, (c) Not feeling oppressed, (d) Nonconformity, (e) Shattering stereotypes, (f) Role of emotion, (g) Differences between visible and invisible minorities, and (h) Isolation.

Integrated Experience

All five of the women with multiple identities spoke about their identities from an integrated perspective. Three of the women described their identities as integrated from their current life perspective. Lila and Rickie, however, described an integrated experience as children.

Delisa labeled herself as “... an African American woman, a Black woman.” Delisa’s first experience of racism reflected the interconnectedness between her race and sex:

... hearing derogatory remarks because I was brown-skinned as opposed to light brown-skinned ... I remember being (pause) very hurt. Because, they were boys, you know? (laugh) And, I knew that, it wasn’t just a taunt— ... Because they were boys, it was associated with statements about my attractiveness as a girl.

Approaching oppressive barriers, Delisa emphasized the discrepancy she feels between what she has learned and what she experiences:

So I don’t know if I [approach barriers] differently because I’m a Black woman, because I’m experiencing it as that ... Which, that in itself, I think, is a real (pause) dichotomy about how I’ve learned the world, in terms of a Western and European worldview, and what my experiences as, you know, an African woman, and Black woman. I’m experiencing it, so I’m not thinking about it (slight laugh) ... Because I don’t know, I don’t
know, I don’t know how White women do it ... I’m just doin’ it (laugh), and just trying to get through it.

Delisa also emphasized that being an African American women is “like breathing.” Because her identity is as natural as breathing,

I don’t really spend a lot of time thinking about it. I spend a lot of time maybe feeling and experiencing it ... I don’t notice that I’m breathing unless something happens, where I realize I’m breathing rapidly, or I realize that I’m congested ... My identity, who I am just kind of permeates. I don’t see it outside of myself. I don’t objectify it. ... And when I do objectify it, it’s usually that I’m being pretty choiceful about it.

Randy acknowledged that it was difficult to focus on identity development, because “there were many identities” that she couldn’t separate from each other. As a lesbian minority within her Buddhist organization, Randy identified her role in educating others: “I want to see a lesbian experience on the front page of the *Buddhist newsletter."

Kay recognized the importance of her age, in connection with her Native American heritage: “I’m also an elder (pause) which means that I’m expected to be in a position to teach and to educate.”

Rickie identified minority status from the time she was born: “I started out with (pause) two handicaps. One was a physical handicap in that ... I was born premature. I was one pound fourteen ounces ... I survived that four-month incubation period (pause) quite well. And I think that it, actually (pause) got me ready for other things ... And the second handicap is ... the [boy’s] name that they named me. That I had to fight for all my life.” As she developed, Rickie identified additional minority identities: “Being raised in the South, I ... had prejudice things against me because I’m not all White and I’m not all Native American, and because my name is *common male name*
and because I’m short. And because (pause) I was crippled ... That was long before I ever knew I was a lesbian.” As an adult, Rickie has additional identities she refers to in an integrated manner: “As a mother, a lesbian, a woman, a Native American, a disabled person, woman of color—however you term ... I feel the other people’s oppression. I understand it because I know it.”

During her childhood, Lila felt confused about multiple aspects of her identity. Her father, for example, encouraged Lila to be proud of her Indian heritage but criticized her mother. As a result, Lila received “… weird, conflicting messages, negative messages about, being an Indian woman.” Lila has struggled with the criticism her Asian Indian ethnicity receives because of highly publicized sexist practices. She was able to resolve this conflict, and responds to criticisms in an integrated manner:

... “Don’t use that sexism to put down my being Indian, because being Indian is more than, female infanticide, dowry, and treating the son better than the daughter. (slight laugh) ... In India there is guaranteed parental leave (paid) from work, and a female Prime Minister!” ... I was like, “Excuse me! But, isn’t there an extremely high rate of domestic violence in the United States? Among European American couples?” ... You can’t say that this is like, all, you know, one culture. It’s all over the world. It’s everywhere.

Discrepancy. Three of the five women with multiple identities referred to discriminatory experiences with perspectives from a single minority identity. Randy, for example, responded to specific situations with her corresponding identity: “Whether it’s as a Jewish person wanting to say ‘Don’t wish me Merry Christmas. How dare you.’ or as a lesbian saying ‘Don’t assume I’m heterosexual.’ “ Rickie addresses political issues from whichever minority identity is the political focus. She stated that she will be fighting the “moral
right ... [who] say that we [gays and lesbians] have special rights.” She also protested a local event honoring Christopher Columbus, stating that “It brought back a lot of bad memories ... I try to explain to people what (pause) reality is.” Kay described a couple experiences that specifically focus on her sexual identity, including being sexually abused as a child and reaching out “to shake a man’s hand and had him totally ignore the fact that I was there (because) I was a woman.”

With a single minority identity, Pat described a few incidents in which she felt discriminated against because of her sex. She did not discuss other aspects of her identity, such as race, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation when describing these incidents:

I was [one of the first women] in the state to become a *law enforcement officer.* And you want to talk about prejudice ... For the most part it was ok ... There were questions that I had [about using excessive force] ... What rights do I have as a female law enforcement officer? ... I was the only girl in the whole class ... I first found out (said in higher tone) that at first the guys weren’t ... supposed to cuss around me. They weren’t supposed to tell any dirty jokes. And (laughing) it’s like, “This is ridiculous!” ... And it got to the point where it was ok.

**Uniqueness of Multiple Identities**

All five women with multiple identities discussed the important role that others with the same multiple identities had in their lives. The environment was a moderating variable, because in some cases, women with similar identities may have been less available.

Emphasizing the unique experience of having multiple identities, Delisa stated that “...African American women’s experience of racism is different than African American men’s experience of racism and African American
women’s experience of sexism is different than European American women’s experience of sexism.” Delisa articulated the importance of friends who understand her situation: “... my African American women friends, my sisterfriends, my girlfriends. They are the ones that consistently and continuously affirm who I am.” When Randy's lesbian feminist identification was the “strongest part” of her identity, she “... had a large community of other Jewish lesbian friends.” Kay described her identification with other Native Americans in her Teosyepé, both men and women. Her involvement in organizing a women’s society and the separation of roles indicated that she feels most aligned with Native American women. As Lila’s view of her ethnic identity (Indian) expanded to include her race (Asian American), she emphasized the connections felt with other Asian Americans. Rickie described her involvement in a lesbian health organization and a social organization for lesbians. She did not mention other Native American lesbians who understood her situation (perhaps reflecting the lack of Native American lesbians in her community), but she did emphasize connecting with lesbians who have health concerns.

Negative case analysis. Pat, the woman with a single minority status, appeared to spend most time with her children and people who practice Native American spirituality. She primarily referred to her interactions with men, including her husband, her spiritual leader, and the men she traveled with to a Sun Dance.

Do Not Feel Oppressed

Four of the five women with multiple identities described not feeling oppressed. Rickie and Delisa, speaking from their current perspective,
described having awareness of oppression at a group level, but not feeling
oppressed as individuals. As children, Delisa and Lila described a lack of
awareness of oppression, which appeared to contribute to not feeling
oppressed. The deepening awareness of oppression is consistent with the
OTAID’s conceptualization of deepening awareness of the mechanisms of
oppression. Kay, speaking from her current involvement in the Teosyepé,
described not feeling oppressed. She was aware of oppression as a child and
young adult, so the absence of current oppression seems unlikely to be
attributed to a lack of awareness.

Rickie and Delisa acknowledged the impact oppression has on a group,
but described a different experience as individuals:

Rickie: To tell you the honest truth as an individual, I do not feel
oppressed. Because I don’t think someone can oppress you if
you don’t let them. I knew in general terms (pause)—lesbians
and gays are oppressed. Native Americans are oppressed.
Women—women are oppressed. But as a person, right now, I
will not allow that. Because no one has the right to control,
anything that I do ... In all of the different groups that I kind of
fall into, there’s a lot of people that are (pause) successfully
being oppressed by some other group that feels like, they need
to do that. (long pause) In some ways, it affects me and in some
ways, it doesn’t. Because I don’t allow it to.

Delisa: I don’t think I’ve ever experienced the -ism of [sexism]—
for me the -ism means the institutional barriers ... That
opportunities are closed to me because I’m a woman ... I do
experience being afraid to, walk down the street, the cat calls
from construction—I mean the “-ist” types of behaviors ... I
experience the "-ist" every day. But not the being denied
opportunities, because I’m a woman. I also have not experienced
being denied opportunities because I’m African American.
However, I would say that graduate school was the closest,
because institutionally, it would have been very easy for me to
drop off of the face of the earth. And, because that didn’t
happen, it wasn’t successful, it wasn’t an -ism ... Racism exists at
*graduate school* as it does in the whole world. And I
experience that racism. But the racism did not deny me an opportunity to graduate from that institution ... It's very hard for me to separate those out in my mind. Because I don't experience it as separate.

Delisa, Lila, and Kay identified specific circumstances in which they did not feel oppressed. As a young girl, Delisa emphasized her lack of awareness and thus, her feeling of not being oppressed:

I don’t think I recalled [the rule that girls have to wear dresses] as being sexist. Because ... sexism, to me implies an awareness ... And, at the time, I didn’t experience it as sexist. I experienced it as ... there are rules for boys and rules for girls ... It’s not like ... opportunities, per se, were restricted.

When she moved to India, Lila compared her confusing time in an unwelcoming United States to being welcomed in a country that felt like home:

All of a sudden I’m being reflected there in India. And, I’m finding out that ... parts of me, things that I’m doing, that are in fact, Indian. ... Even though ... I was American ... nobody treated me like I couldn’t live there (pause) in India ... I did not hesitate to take another step when I walked, because this was my land ... it was like my home. This is where I belong ... People treated me like it was O.K. to be here. All the stuff that was India that, I was realizing, that I wasn’t getting [in the U.S.].

Her feelings of not being oppressed appeared to be directly related to living in or out of the United States. After living in India and returning to the United States, Lila felt oppressed again, but had more awareness of the mechanisms of oppression. This deepening awareness is related to OTAID developmental progress.

Kay described the Native American spiritual customs that outsiders believe to be sexist. From her perspective, these customs are associated with her own power as a woman:
If a woman is on her moon, she’s having her period, she doesn’t go to sweat lodge. So one of the first (pause) statements you hear is, “Ah!! (said loudly) That’s (pause) sexism!” No it’s not. There are valid reasons for not going in. One of them being a physical reason. That heat can really cause you some problems (pause) at that time. Another being is that a woman is in her own power at that point. She’s undergoing her own purification. You don’t need a sweat lodge. That sweat lodge was brought (pause) to The People, by a woman, for the men!(pause) because they don’t have the connection that women have ... And that’s what people don’t understand ... Nowadays the women go in there too because society, is so polluted—the air, the food and everything that we—we need that purification (pause) outside of the monthly purification.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat felt that she was not oppressed in the past:

“I myself was never really put in a situation of feeling made fun of in any way.” Practicing Dakotah Sioux spirituality as an adult, she acknowledged limitations for women, but felt the reasoning was legitimate.

There are some limitations when you’re a woman in the Native American spirituality where there isn’t in (slight pause) White culture. But it’s, to me, legitimate (pause) limitations because it seems that (pause) the White culture [has] slipped away from the ... natural ways and ... listening to their bodies.

Although Kay and Pat stated the same beliefs, the difference is in the level of awareness of oppression.

**Discrepancy.** Regarding oppression, Randy stated, “I don’t know if I ever fully could say I (long pause) ... really won over feeling challenged all the time, in this culture.” When she came out as a lesbian, that was just added on to the other experiences of oppression she had as a Jewish woman. Living in two cultures demonstrated how Lila’s experience of oppression is highly influenced by her environment. Although Randy and Lila described a
different focus than the other four women, feelings of being challenged can be present in the OTAID Integration and Transformation phases.

**Nonconformity**

All five of the women with multiple identities discussed their tendency to be nonconformist, in relation to mainstream society. Randy, Lila, and Rickie indicated a specific type of nonconformity — rebellion. Randy and Lila identified their rebelliousness primarily during adolescence. Rickie described being rebellious throughout her life.

Lila and Kay described feeling outside of the majority in their youth. As a child, Lila would “hang out” with people who were different from the majority—“Jewish American, European American or other religious European Americans.” Lila and her friends “were different in some way, and we had this in common.” During Kay’s adolescence, she suggested she “must have been walking around with blinders on. I had NO idea what was going on anywhere. Even things that other teenagers were interested in … I think I was the last one in my ninth grade class to realize that there was a group called the Beatles. I didn’t care.”

Randy and Lila identified a specific point in time that moved them farther away from societal norms. Randy described a sudden transformation in adolescence:

Before high school … I was such a little goody-two-shoes … As a kid they used to call me a bookworm … I think I wanted to not be viewed that way, too. That helped later on to get into more of the adventuresome things that I got into. You know, moved [to “city] … cut off all my long hair and went from being a sort of folkie-hippie peacenik to this little budding, radical lesbian feminist within a matter of days it seems.
Lila shifted further away from conformity in her first year of college:

Changing majors was a big thing because (pause) ... ever since I was a kid, people were always [saying] “Oh, she’s going to be a doctor.” ... So here I was pre-med (pause) and doing what everybody wanted me to do (pause), even the community, my mom, my family, everybody ... Up till then I was just, I was going along with the norm, whether norm be mainstream, the norm be Indian community, (pause) whatever, I was going along with the norm.

As Lila learned about Western individualism, it fit with her beliefs about what nonconformity means: “ ‘Cause [individualism] fit in with ‘Don’t be sexist, and don’t be racist, and don’t be homophobic (pause) and don’t be classist.’ ... Anti-vegetarian. It fit in, to not conform ... And at the same time, it wasn’t fitting, completely. The, existential theory, of how, ultimately we’re going to die, and be alone ... was not (pause) fitting (pause) too well.”

Rebelliousness was a type of nonconformity described by Randy, Lila, and Rickie. Randy described her rebellious activities as a means of exploration and expansion:

I branched out a little bit when I started being a little more rebellious, and hanging out in *artistic community* with people ... my mother would not have approved of ... [I] even dated a Puerto Rican man for a while and, dated a Black man for a little while—I was into exploring being rebellious ... I started kind of sneaking off to *artistic community* when I was 15 ... And would tell my mother I was going up to the Jewish community center ... at that point I was starting to be a budding feminist.

After changing her college major, Lila saw herself as:

... a rebel (small laugh) in the Indian community. I already was, with ... the sexism, feminist thing (pause) in that sense. But now, it was like becoming more of a rebellion against the norm in the Indian community. Against the norm in society in general and ... let’s say the Indian community stuff, and the United States, and the world. I was fighting things. I was not taking things. I
was waking up and seeing things, and not accepting them the way they were.

Rickie identified rebellion throughout her life, from breaking rules as a child and adolescent, to identifying the limitations of having religious rules: “It’s easier to be spiritual than it is religious (pause) because you don’t have so many rules. (both chuckle) I don’t like rules. I like breaking rules because (pause) I don’t like being told what to do.”

Talking about her relationship with her mother, Delisa stated, “I’m not a traditional daughter ... I don’t wear dresses, I don’t like high heels, you know. (laughing)” Discussing her sexuality, Delisa identified with Alice Walker’s philosophy of being a “womanist,” which means “loving human beings as a whole, both sexually and nonsexually.” Wondering what that meant for Delisa’s sexual identity, she concluded “nothing else in my life is cut and dry either. What makes me think that this would be!”

Before connecting with her Native American spirituality, Kay experienced that “living in society for women is really difficult.” She described the overarching impact her spirituality has made, including the inability to relate to mainstream culture:

Once you make contact with that spirituality, you can’t just turn your back on it. It doesn’t go away. It’s part of you. It’s everyday life. (pause) Which makes it difficult to live with the rest of the world sometimes ... I can’t relate to [my neighbors] because (slight pause) ... most of their lives are (pause) talking about the children, crafts, or gossiping. (pause) And, I don’t relate to any of that (slight laugh).

**Negative case analysis.** Pat also identified a point at which her level of conformity shifted: “When I was little (pause) going in school I was part of the norm (slight pause) but I guess in a way sometimes I kind
of knew—especially when I started getting interested in Indians that ... my aspect was different than a lot other people. Liking Indians and wanting to find out about them, was not something that was normal.” Despite her European American background, Pat feels excluded from White mainstream society. “Part of it’s because of society (pause) but part of it is (slight pause) by choice. I don’t want to be a part of mainstream. I don’t want to be a part of the norm (pause) because ‘norm’ is — is getting to the point were it’s abnorm too.” As a mother, Pat is questioning whether or not to allow her creative child to be a part of the school system, because “Once you’re put in the system, it’s very hard to get out of. And if you have a creative child, ... they don’t continue on creativity alone ... There is more than one way to get to God. And there is more than one way to learn.”

Discrepancy. Examples of conformity seemed to be related to specific incidents. In the previous section, Randy, Pat, and Lila, described following societal norms as children and adolescents and then reaching a point at which they turn away from the norms. Delisa stated that she lives her life by destroying labels and confines. Describing her wedding provides an example of how Delisa lived within the label of conventional marriage: “[I look] at my wedding pictures, and ‘Oh my god—’ ‘That was my mother’s wedding’ (laugh) ... If it was left up to me, you know, we would have done it very differently ... That was very status quo, and it was very traditional.”
Shattering Stereotypes

Four of the five women with multiple identities (Lila, Kay, Randy, and Delisa) faced stereotypes applied toward them from individuals, society, and the media.

Lila acknowledged that the “… physical stereotype [of Asian Americans] didn’t apply to me.” In response to others’ statements that she does not match the labels under which she falls, Lila stated:

… that’s who I am. So, just like being Indian American, this is what it is all about. (chuckle) … And as much as people might say that “You don’t look Indian,” … I am. This is what an Indian looks like. This is what a woman looks like. This is what a heterosexual person is like. This is what a vegetarian is like. You know, just, all these labels. You come up with thousands, you know

Kay had a similar response to stereotypes, noting:

People (pause) outside the culture, tend to look at Native American oriented women, a little differently. They expect you to, be or look, a certain way … A lot of it’s from the younger kids, “You don’t look Indian.” Or “Where are your Indian clothes?” … There’s just so many stereotypes that Hollywood perpetuated (pause) that we’re still, trying to knock down.

Randy also responds to stereotypes with a desire to teach others about her experience:

Listen to my life. Hear something maybe, because I have heard yours all my life. You know. But not to, you know— And of course the opening part is to not be mean about it. And not be arrogant about it. You know, shove it down somebody’s throat. But, you know, for myself, the goal to just really be open and share with these people
Reflecting on stereotypes, Delisa acknowledged, “I’ve spent my life kind of living within the labels and the confines I would say ... And then destroying them.”

**Role of Emotion**

All five women with multiple identities described situations eliciting strong emotions, including anger, sadness, shock, confusion, and fear. Lila, Kay, and Rickie responded to strong emotions through numbing.

**Anger.** All five women described feeling angry about the inequality they have experienced because of their multiple identities. Lila, Randy, and Rickie identified the positive aspects of anger.

When Lila was in college, she felt angry, and would not accept discriminatory behavior:

If people would say something racist, I would not(pause) let them (pause) anymore. I would say something about it. If they said something sexist, I wouldn’t let them—If they said something homophobic, I wouldn’t let them. Not with me around. It was just like “Nooo (pause) you don’t ... I’m not going to let you say this. I’ve taken enough, and I’ve had it with you all,” and I was just (slight laugh) very angry ... and it was energizing.

Delisa becomes angry in specific situations. During Black History Month, for example, a television station called their programming “African American Saturday.” Delisa’s response “… At a personal level ... [was] ‘Wait a minute. You mean to tell me I’m only worth like (pause) one afternoon?! And why isn’t this programming on this channel ALL the time??’ … That’s hurtful!! ... My reaction is a very defensive one.”

Randy acknowledged that she also has a “tendency” to be defensive. When she was younger, Randy “used to be nasty (laugh) ... and was really
defensive most of the time.” In the early seventies, Randy insisted on being visible about being a radical dyke. Wearing “combat boots and [a] ‘don’t fuck with me’ attitude,” Randy responded with anger to people who made “some kind of discriminatory or offensive remark.” These reactions “gave permission” for Randy to be “pissed off.”

As an adolescent and young adult, Rickie needed to “vent” her anger, so she “was a bully.” Because she grew up a “fighter,” she “caused a lot of damage because [she] was very angry, and ... had nothing else to do with [her anger].” Rickie attacked men who were being abusive to their girlfriends “... because [she] couldn’t deal with who was abusing [her].”

Kay’s anger, which one doctor described as “a volcano waiting to blow,” began to surface after she moved away from her abusive household. Kay has felt “very angry” when she realized that “... some people ... have power.” She explores why she can’t have that same power: “What’s so wrong with me (pause) being able to do some of this stuff? Have an opinion. Stand up to people and be able to express my view point.” In response to racist behavior, Kay feels “annoyed” but is used to the idea that some people are like that. When people fail to adjust their “preconceived ideas and misconceptions” about her cultural background, Kay feels “frustrated” that she has to continue to address stereotypes.

Lila and Kay described the feeling associated with a release of anger. Lila recalled that her anger began the first time she spoke the truth and wasn’t believed: “I can remember feeling HOT (pause) inside. And crying, because I was so angry ... It’s just amazing, that transformation of fire into water. It just turns into tears, so fast. But inside it’s fire ... Like it’s burning things inside. And that’s why it has to be let out every now and then.”
Kay’s anger “dissolved” after she “made contact” with her Native American heritage. Kay learned that her words “can cause a lot of damage,” so when she becomes angry she cries, believing that crying is “safer” than getting angry. Over many years, Kay’s anger changed as she “… began to learn to pick what was worth being angry over.” Besides personal injury, Kay did not believe much else was worth getting angry about. Because anger was “dangerous” and “wastes a lot of energy,” Kay believes she can “… accomplish things and change things without (pause) getting angry about it.”

Lila, Randy, and Rickie identified positive aspects of their anger. Randy’s current beliefs about anger are rooted in Buddhist philosophy:

I think there’s always an edge of [anger], and I have it now too. I have to really acknowledge … that anger never disappears out of your life, ’cause it’s one of the ten worlds. It’s— whether you enlighten it…. When I’m angry, and it’s about something REAL (pause), that I need to take action about (pause), and I do it in a way that’s not (pause) harmful to myself or somebody else, then that anger was a good thing because it— it (pause) sparked me to action. Without anger we’d never probably do anything (pause) good, for other people … But there’s a fine line between when my life condition is low and I’m angry, it’s not a good thing. What I’m likely to say and do is not as good, as if I’m, I’m feeling really confident and solid and something pisses me off—it’s different. (long pause) … Being some kind of social activist or union activist or world peace activist,(pause) you gotta be angry about something to do all that.

Being the “voice of an oppressed minority” is part of Randy’s “mission.” At work, she is a “… union activist because [she] like[s] to help people stand up for themselves.” As a Buddhist, she challenges people’s assumptions that “… everybody in this culture is Christian or Jewish or monotheistic.”

Lila described her anger as a “fire,” which is a “natural reaction to oppression.” This fire is “Beautiful and dangerous and fueling, motivating,
energizing, and destructive at the same time.” It is “such a part of [her] life” that she doesn’t think she’ll “ever know what it’s like to not feel that fire.”

Rickie stated that “… anger can— can do great things for you, if you allow it to put you in the right place. (pause) And so, out of anger I (pause) survived.”

**Member check.** In Randy’s follow up interview, I revealed that among all six women, “[Anger] seems pretty important.” Randy responded, “It would make sense … Especially … looking at multiple (slight pause) minority status, you know. You’ve got a few reasons that you could be pissed off at the way people react to you (slight chuckle).” Randy also surmised that some people may “rise above” the anger and are “… more understanding of why people are, small-minded or (pause) narrow-minded.”

**Negative case analysis.** Aside from her anger toward African Americans as a youth, Pat denies “keep[ing] anger for a long time.” Interacting with others, Pat emphasized putting anger aside when it’s “ petty.” If she is hurt for some reason, she either “… deal[s] with that person on a one to one basis, talk[s] it over and get[s] it worked out, or [she] let[s] it go.” Referring to the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City, Pat acknowledged feeling angry about the innocent deaths. She has “no connection to … the men” and believes that although she “can’t do anything about it … they’ll get it in the end.” Rather than be angry with the men, Pat leaves it up to Tunkashida (God) to be the judge of their actions.

**Confusion.** Lila and Randy were the only two emphasizing the role of confusion in their identity development.
Lila and Randy articulated several times in their lives when they felt confused. As a child, Lila felt confused about “what being an Indian really was.” As an adolescent, she felt confused when Indian people accused her of “betraying [her] culture” because she expressed feminist beliefs. As a young adult, Lila’s spirituality “wasn’t fitting … with the [existential] self” she learned about in college. At that time, she also questioned how individualism and collectivism “blend[ed] together.”

Randy’s confusion appeared to surface throughout her life during times of exploration and transition. As an adolescent, she began to feel “conflict” about her sexual orientation. Randy's first year of college, she had an “identity crisis.” As a Jewish woman, she felt “really out of place” at this Jesuit institution and felt “scared to act on” the first “crush” she had on a woman. This occurred during “a time when everybody was questioning everything.” At that time, she felt “torn” about feeling attracted to both men and women. She went to Israel, hoping to “create a beautiful life,” but her divided feelings of attraction for men and women followed her. A combination of identity issues converged during Randy’s early adulthood. She became “obsessed” about losing weight, was “scared about graduating from school,” was having “problems” in her relationship, and felt “confused again about life.” After being actively involved in the lesbian community for several years, Randy became involved in a “new environment” related to her counseling work. She “started to have confusion” because she began “flirting” with men and continued to have problems with her eating.

**Sadness.** Three of the five women with multiple identities (Lila, Rickie, and Kay) described feelings of sadness throughout their identity development.
When Lila moved to India as a sixth grader, she cried after school every day for four months: “I went to the boarding school for the first time. I didn’t know what these people were doing. I didn’t know the language, I didn’t know anything.”

Rickie described having “… an internal depression.” Her past was filled with too many painful events for her “not to feel a certain amount of depression … over it.” She has “worked through” most of her past, and she is “sad for who [she] was.” Understanding her sadness and not letting go of it completely prevents Rickie from “going back there.”

Kay also experienced many painful events in her life, and feels like she has “… lived (pause) a dozen or more different lives in one lifetime.” Because she “tend[s] toward depression,” Kay doesn’t “dwell on it.”

**Shock.** Three of the five women (Randy, Lila, and Delisa) with multiple identities recalled feeling shocked when they faced a discriminatory experience for the first time.

As a little girl, Randy was “shocked and surprised” that her peer didn’t know what being Jewish meant. Even though she wasn’t angry at that time, “it felt significant” because she “remembered it all these years.”

When Lila returned to the United States as a seventeen-year-old, her “whole system was … in shock.” After a “complete numbing,” Lila became “hyperaware of what’s going on around [her].”

The first time Delisa realized that racism involved assumptions of inferiority, she was in graduate school. As she learned about researchers who believed that her culture and color of her skin revealed her inferiority, she “was shocked.” Working through that graduate program, Delisa observed African American students having “… some real struggles that [her non-
African American colleagues were not having … It was shock, it was disbelief. It was anger. It was frustration.”

**Numbing.** Lila, Kay, and Rickie described a numbing response to the experience of oppression.

Returning to the United States, Lila described her experiences of racism:

… the way I saw people treating, me, and people who look like me … in the airport just coming back. How I was treated in school, how they wouldn’t put me in the honors English class … I had to take Spanish because they wouldn’t accept [her sub-ethnic group’s language] as a foreign language.

Feeling “hurt” and “angry … there was a point were [she] just became numb.” Lila was “burning out” during this numbing period because “All [her] energy was going into blocking these emotions.”

As a child, Kay had to “suppress” her emotions, because if she cried, her father and grandfather would threaten her with violence to give her a “reason to cry.” She also “got punished for having opinions (slight pause) and for daring to get angry or question [her stepfather].” During that time, she felt “detached [and] unemotional.” During the past fourteen years, Kay “relearn[ed] how to have emotions,” because emotional expression is “encouraged among The People.”

Rickie described a more complete numbing experience as a result of her childhood abuse. She suppressed childhood memories and “have multiple personalities developed over the years” to protect herself.

**Differences between Visible and Invisible Minorities**

Another theme emerging from interviews was the difference between visible and invisible identities. Visible identities of women in this study included the following categories: female, African American, Asian Indian
American, socioeconomic status (Pat), and physical disability. Invisible identities included the following: Jewish, biracial heritage (Native American and European American), lesbian sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Lila). Women with visible identities experienced both affirmation and conflict at earlier ages than did women with invisible minorities. This early awareness may lead to earlier acceptance, or quicker progression through the OTAID phases.

Visible minority. Women with visible minority identities described being more aware of feeling different (as with ethnic identity) or having limited opportunities (as females). Lila and Delisa described receiving ethnic affirmation from their parents during childhood. At school, Lila and Rickie felt their difference more poignantly.

All six women interviewed described examples of feeling discriminated against because of their sex. Lila described struggles she had as an Indian American woman with feminist beliefs. As a girl, Delisa felt “awkward;” boys did not “value” her because she “was smart … and wasn’t attractive.” Rickie defied stereotypes of what girls and women could do, including having a boy’s name, being able to fight, fixing cars, and working in traditionally male jobs. In church, Kay was ignored by a man who wouldn’t shake her hand. Kay and Rickie both endured sexual abuse as children. Rickie, however, identified her abuse as a “power issue” rather than a sexual issue.

Visibly, Lila and Delisa reflect their Indian and African American heritage. As a child, Delisa received “affirmation” from her family and was exposed to cultural activities that included African American writers and actors. Because Lila’s ethnic identity was “focused on a lot by people who were not Indian,” she felt “very different.” At school, she gravitated toward
her African American classmates, concluding: “O.K., we’re brown. I guess I’m supposed to go there.”

Rickie’s disabilities were highly visible during her childhood. In addition to being short, she wore braces for scoliosis, used crutches for polio, and went to “learning disabled classes” because she had a speech impediment. As a result, “people laughed and made fun of [her]” and she felt “isolated.”

Regarding her physical disability, Rickie observed that people are “blatantly prejudiced:”

They do say “You are short and you’re in that wheelchair, and I’m not gonna see you, and I walk into you at the mall. And when you say ‘Excuse me,’ I’m going to ignore you ... I’m running over their feet! And they STILL don’t see me. People choose not to see certain things. People who don’t like disabilities. They think that maybe they, that might, that might happen to them.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat worked in a predominately male occupation, and was the target of sexual jokes and innuendoes. In her current financial situation, Pat feels embarrassed when she uses food stamps, a visible symbol of her low socioeconomic status.

**Invisible minority.** Rickie, Kay, and Randy described various responses to their invisible identities. As children and adolescents, with the exception of Randy’s Jewish heritage, their parents discouraged identification with their invisible identity. Rickie described feeling a double-bind situation and Kay described receiving a different response after people discover her ethnic heritage. Randy presented an image more clearly revealing her invisible identity.

Rickie, Kay, and Randy had parents who discouraged the development of their invisible minority identity. Rickie’s mother was Cherokee and her father
was half Black Foot, but they “spent their entire life passing as White,” so her heritage was “totally nonexistent.” She also inferred her parents believed, “… to be White, they felt like they had to be bigots as well.” Kay’s parents also “left [their heritage] behind, because it was easier to “blend into society than to be different” in the 1950’s. When Randy’s mother found out Randy was lesbian, “she was furious, she was freaked out. She didn’t want to let me leave the house to come back to “city … She DID drag me to a shrink!”

Randy’s Jewish heritage, however, was affirmed by her parents, who believed it was “very important … to maintain a cultural identity as Jews.” Having some “arrogance” and “defensiveness” about her Jewish identity, Randy felt separate from the “rest of the culture.” She learned to be “critical of what felt like the majority rule in [her] town.” When her environment changed and she attended a Jesuit college, Randy felt “extremely uncomfortable” and unsafe being one of the few Jewish students who attended that institution. As she began to identify with her lesbian identity, Randy felt “torn” about her sexuality and had “… nobody to talk to about any of that stuff.”

Being an invisible minority caused a double-bind, in which silence could be exchanged for protection from discrimination. Before Rickie realized she was lesbian, her marriage to a man felt “very oppressive.” When she became involved with a woman, it was the “easiest thing [she’d] ever done.” For the first time in her life, she found a “comfortable place to be.” Initially, Rickie remained closeted as a lesbian because her “children would have been taken away back then.” After she began dating a woman, their relationship was secretive because Rickie’s children did not know she was a lesbian and because the woman’s husband was unaware of their involvement. Rickie felt
isolated because she didn’t know any other lesbians. Based on past experiences, Rickie assumed she would be oppressed if someone found out she was lesbian. At the same time, she realized that staying “in the closet” was a form of “self-imposed” oppression because she could not be herself. She remained in that “vicious cycle … for a long time.”

Recognizing potential discrimination of lesbians with health problems, Rickie has been active in an organization aiming to help lesbians with chronic or terminal illness. She recognizes the importance of this group, because in some cases, “… if the truth be known about somebody[‘s sexual orientation], they would not get the care that they were supposed to be getting.”

Before Kay reconnected with her heritage, she tried to assimilate, but it felt like “… [she] was trying to do or be something [she] wasn’t.” Although she knew what wasn’t working, she “didn’t know what was right,” and life was “really hard for a while.” Kay explained that because of assimilation, “most of us [Native Americans] look just like everybody else now.” Kay observed that people “look at you different” when they find out about your background:

They look at you in that way that Hollywood taught them how. (pause) And then you have to go and try to undo a whole lot of (pause) preconceived ideas and misconceptions— And sometimes you’re successful and sometimes you’re not. When you’re not it’s because the person doesn’t want to let ‘em go, and they can do that. You just go away and let ‘em be how they are.

Kay suggested that a positive consequence of assimilation is greater familiarity with European American culture and in her case, a willingness to talk to a non-Native American about her culture. Because “a wall” divides mainstream society and traditional Native American culture, it would be “…

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very difficult to get somebody that was full, or even half (pause) blood (pause) to talk.”

Within Native American culture, some people who have lost their spiritual connection “resent people that they consider to be ‘outsiders’ doing it ... They feel [their spiritual tradition] is being infringed upon.” Within Kay’s Teosyepé, they believe spirituality “... is not something we’ve taken. It’s in our hearts ... It’s our life— It’s who we are. And, how can we ignore that? It’s— it’s not possible.”

After experiencing different levels of socioeconomic status, Lila is more aware of class. Because “it’s not a visible thing,” Lila observed that most people don’t consider socioeconomic status, especially if they are middle class.

When the invisible becomes visible: Randy was the only one whose awareness of her invisible minority identities led to increasing the visibility of that identity. Randy’s acceptance of her lesbian identity was followed by a plunge into lesbian culture. After moving to a metropolitan city, she adopted the “ ‘City dyke look.” Within a month, she cut off her hair, which was a “symbolic and rebellious” act. She wore buttons on her backpack stating “Don’t assume I’m heterosexual.” Later in life, when she became Buddhist, she had gone through a six-year period of dating men, and was essentially, “a straight person.” Coming out for the second time in 1986, Randy became one of the first visible lesbians in her religious organization.

Isolation: Four of the five women with multiple identities described feeling isolated, as related to some aspect of their identity.

Rickie began her life in isolation, as a premature baby who needed to remain in an incubator for four months. Without a stable home life, Rickie did not feel a sense of belonging from her family. During her two and a half year
hospitalization for polio, Rickie’s parents “never came to see [her].” At school, she felt alone because her classmates made fun of her speech impediment and other physical disabilities.

When Lila went to a boarding school in India, she was alone and didn’t know about the culture or language. She cried “for four months” after school because she “didn’t know anything.”

Kay also felt alone in school because she “was different,” didn’t have money, and didn’t care about appearances. Kay “had nobody to talk to,” so she turned to fiction books. Although she has “always” been alone, she feels “less alone among The People. But every one of ’em ... know[s] what it feels like (pause) to feel alone in a room full of people.”

Randy’s isolation was primarily associated with coming out as a lesbian. As a teenager, she felt “torn” about her sexuality but didn’t have anyone to talk with about it.

Summary

Having multiple identities reflected common experiences of experiencing them from an integrated perspective. Individuals experienced integration at different times in their lives. Environmental exposure to differences and identity visibility contributed to obtaining an integrated sense of self. All women with multiple identities experienced a sense of uniqueness and tended to turn to other women with similar identities for affirmation, given their availability. In environments in which women with similar combinations of identity were not present, participants found certain aspects of identity with which to connect. Nonconformity, rebellion, and shattering stereotypes were described across all participants, emphasizing the importance of emphasizing
their uniqueness and challenging assumptions, stereotypes, and labels. Accompanying the interface of multiple identities with oppressive environments are strong emotional responses and a sense of isolation.
Patterns of Identity Development

This section presents two different patterns of identity development—subsequent and concurrent. A subsequent pattern involves focusing on one oppressed identity before addressing another oppressed identity. Data indicating one aspect of identity was a primary focus are presented in the subsequent pattern of development section. A concurrent pattern involves focusing on at least two oppressed identities simultaneously. Data indicating participants addressed at least two identities simultaneously are presented in the concurrent pattern of development section. Pat's data are included, with indented paragraphs labeled as “Negative case analysis” to provide a comparison within each section.

Subsequent Pattern of Development

To compare patterns of identity development across participants, a chronological framework (childhood/adolescence or early/middle adulthood) is presented within each category of identity. Despite having multiple identities, each woman identified times in her life when sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability status was her primary focus. Regarding socioeconomic status, the two women with middle class backgrounds accepted it as part of their identity. The other three women experienced conflict with environmental factors. Women explored their sexual orientations with varying levels of depth. The two who identify as lesbian described a lengthier process of exploring and coming to terms with their sexual orientation. Only one woman had a physical disability, and she was the
only participant to describe the impact of disability on her identity development.

Sex

Five of the six participants described their female identity development without mentioning other aspects of identity. During childhood, two women (Kay and Rickie) described serious conflict caused by their sexual abuse. The other three women (Delisa, Randy, and Pat) described less awareness about the unfair treatment received as girls. In adulthood, however, increased awareness of unfair treatment occurred as they were exposed to discriminatory situations.

Childhood and adolescence. In childhood and adolescence, five of the six women described addressing their sex and gender roles. Their female identity development involved an acceptance of the limited opportunities, as well as a challenge to stereotypically female roles.

Delisa and Randy were aware of inaccessible opportunities for girls, but appeared to accept that situation. Kay and Rickie were seriously impacted by their sex because of the sexual abuse they experienced. Rickie believed “part of her abuse was sexism.” Pat, with one identity, explained her nontraditional girlhood and negative view of the menstrual cycle.

Five women mentioned their sex and gender roles as one of the first identities that they addressed. Delisa, for example, acknowledged that “… growing up I was more aware of being a woman, a girl. And that there were things I couldn’t do because I was a girl.” In Randy’s town, girls didn’t have many opportunities to play sports, but she was good at pool. As a girl, though, “You weren’t supposed to win … you’re supposed to let [the boys] win.”
Randy was “… a tomboy most of [her] life,” and her career goals were not bound by stereotypical female jobs:

I wanted to be a doctor from a very young age. And so I was real clear somehow that I didn’t want to be a nurse and I didn’t want to be a teacher and I didn’t want to be a mommy—

Kay was also a tomboy growing up, but she specifically discussed the power differential between men and women she experienced growing up:

[My father] loved his daughters (pause) too well. When I was six years old, I found out what men do … You learn early that men have this power— You know, he’s my father, and he also has this power. If I say anything, I’m in BIG trouble. (pause) Because he was heavy-handed in punishment anyway. So, at that age, I learned, you don’t question men. Well, I learned the same thing from my stepfather … He was even heavier handed, in punishment … So, I learned throughout my growing up years, that you don’t question authority (pause) at all (pause) about anything.

Rickie was physically abused by her father, and “… it didn’t take [her] long to figure out that this large person beating up on this small person wasn’t fair (small chuckle).” She was also sexually abused by her grandfather. Planning a way to survive, Rickie plotted to kill her father and grandfather “from a very, very early age.” She stated that her “whole identity was impacted by abuse.” When she was seventeen, Rickie began dating a man who “told [her] what to do and [didn’t accept] that [she] had a personality of [her] own.”

Negative case analysis. Pat described herself as a tomboy during her childhood and adolescence. Pat stated that she “walked like a guy … dressed like a guy … even up into high school.” She also believed that her menstrual cycle was “a curse.”
Early and middle adulthood. In early and middle adulthood, Delisa, Rickie, and Pat described their non-traditional female roles. Despite confidence as women, Rickie, Kay, and Pat described periods of self-doubt about their roles as women when they were in environments contradicting their own beliefs.

Delisa described herself as a “non-traditional daughter” because she doesn’t wear dresses, doesn’t strive for a stereotypical appearance, and has focused on her career.

As an adult, Rickie’s career consisted of jobs that were “supposed to be men’s jobs ... I was a spray painter. I refinished appliances, I refinished cars and houses, and painted houses, and (pause) and I was an artist and ... I taught art for a while. Then I was a greens keeper on a golf course ... I could work as a mechanic almost anywhere.”

During Rickie’s five and one-half year marriage, she “changed on the outside” by wearing make-up, dresses, and teasing her hair. During that time she went from “angry and volatile ... to angry and passive:”

I suppressed everything for about five years. I could not raise my voice ... I could not appear to get angry at anyone, and it was all inside of me, and it was eating me up.

Interacting with men, Kay recalled being overlooked as a woman while in church:

In that religion, shaking hands is a common thing ... I’ve reached out to shake a man’s hand and had him totally ignore the fact that I was there (pause) because I was a woman. And it makes you angry (pause) and it hurts. And causes loss of self esteem. You begin to wonder you know “Well (pause) am I not good enough?”
Negative case analysis. Pat felt the most conflict about her sex when she entered a male-dominated occupation in her early twenties:

I was [one of the first women] in the *state to become a law enforcement officer ... For the most part it was ok ... I was the only girl in the whole class ... of 25 ... At first the guys ... weren’t supposed to cuss around me. They weren’t supposed to tell any dirty jokes. And (laughing) it’s like, ”This is ridiculous!” (laugh). ... And it got to the point where it was, you know, ok.

Discussing the use of excessive force, considerations for females were not addressed and Pat had to ask ”What rights do I have as a female law enforcement officer?” As she trained for her job, Pat described a humiliating experience as she learned to splint a broken leg during first aid class:

[My male partner] put the [board] that went in my crotch, he, you know, he kind of— (pushed arm forward) And what do you do, when you’re in a room of 20 guys, you know, what are you supposed to say? ... He made some comment, a couple of the guys kind of chuckled. I know I probably turned all shades of red, but I didn’t open my mouth ... At the time, I was too (pause) shy (pause) to say anything (said quietly) If it’d been now ... I’d a probably reamed him up one side, down the other some way. Or pushed the board back at him and asked him how it felt. (speaking quietly).

Discrepancy. As a child and adult, Lila referred to her female identity development within the context of her ethnicity, reflecting a concurrent pattern of identity development.

Race and Ethnicity

The development of race and ethnicity appeared to follow a similar pattern to female identity development, although timelines varied widely. Shared across five participants is the presence of conflict related to their race. This conflict is related to an environment with an absence of affirmation or denigration of a participant’s race or ethnicity. The conflict appears to cause
confusion, anger, and shock. Struggling through the conflict, greater awareness of the mechanisms of racism occurs, along with anger about continued injustices. This pattern appears consistent with the OTAID model. Consistent with the MIM, the environment may modify the time frame through which a person proceeds through this pattern.

Childhood and adolescence. Growing up, the five women from oppressed racial and ethnic groups described varying levels of awareness, including a superficial understanding, a conscious awareness, and an absence of awareness.

Lila, Randy, and Delisa were all consciously aware of their ethnicity and race, but Lila and Randy described feelings of separateness and a superficial understanding of their culture. Delisa, however, was aware of her race, felt it was affirmed by her family and friends, and realized her parents sheltered her from racism.

Rickie and Kay, both of whom are biracial (Native American and European American), received no affirmation for their Native American heritage. Kay spent the first eight years of her life feeling like she “was born into the wrong family and that [she] was really Indian. (pause) And that one day, [her] real family would come and get [her].” When her parents told her that she did have Native American ancestry on her father’s side, it affirmed her sense that she “was born with a drum beating in [her] heart.” Rickie’s parents also denied their Native American heritage, and spent their lives “passing as White because it was easier.” Rickie’s heritage was “totally nonexistent,” with the exception of stories her grandmother told about her great grandmother.
Delisa was not consciously aware of her race, but received affirmation of and exposure to her culture from her parents. Her family traveled often during her childhood, during which “race and other people’s race … was not salient for [her] in a conscious way.” Within her family, though, “affirmation of who I was as an African American Black person was there all along. And particularly in terms of what I was reading, what I was exposed to culturally.”

Lila and Randy identified feeling different from other kids and having a superficial understanding of their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Lila described her group of friends during grade school: “I would hang out with the African American students, (brief pause) because we were all brown. And I was like (chuckling) O.K., we’re brown. I guess I’m supposed to go there (laughing).” Lila recalled that “being Indian was a big part of my life, because it was just, focused on a lot by people who were not Indian … [and I] felt very different from people.” Randy recalled feeling “pretty conscious of the fact that [she] was a Jewish kid amongst a mix of, you know there were Italians and Irish.” Her parents both felt it was “very important … to maintain a cultural identity as Jews.” Trying to join a Brownie group, Randy didn’t remember why she and her mother felt “manipulated,” but they had “a sense” that the members “just didn’t want one more Jew in it.” Around the age of ten, Randy told a group of girls that she was Jewish and was “surprised [an 8-year-old girl] didn’t know what that was.”

**Negative case analysis.** Pat has “a quarter of blood” of unknown heritage because “… my grandmother had a head injury … and she never told my mother who her father was.” With at least 3/4 European American background, Pat did not describe any instances of discrimination because of her race or ethnicity. Her first major conflict
with race occurred vicariously, when her sixteen-year-old sister began
dating an African American man.

My stepfather ... was very prejudiced. (pause) ... And when that
happened with my sister, then man it was like— It really [broke
up my family]— (pause) —and I had— I was— For a while
there, I had a real hard heart against Black people because of ...
the problems that it had caused ... I was too young to realize
what was going on. But I knew it had hurt my mother, and I
knew it broke up the family.

Early and middle adulthood. Participants who shared characteristics of
racial and ethnic identity development in childhood also appeared to share
similarities as adults. Lila and Randy actively sought a deeper understanding
of their ethnicity as they grew older. As they gained a deeper appreciation of
their culture, their anger about racism and anti-Semitism became more
prevalent. Delisa also sought a deeper understanding of her culture by
experiencing it at a historically Black college. Delisa’s first major conflict with
race occurred in graduate school, where she emerged from the shelter her
family and African American community had provided into a racist
institution. Kay and Rickie both actively explored a deeper understanding of
their heritage in their thirties. Despite age, all five women who attended
college recalled increased exploration of racial and ethnic identity.

In college, Lila began to distinguish between her ethnicity (“Indian”) and
race (“Asian”). Recognizing similarities with other Asian Americans, Lila’s
main focus was her “political identification with other Asian Americans.”

Randy had a renewed interest in her ethnicity, and during her first year of
college, decided to go to Israel and live on a kibbutz:

I thought “If I went to Israel, this would be a place where I could
like just create this beautiful life, and I would be with other
Jewish people, you know, forging this life, this communal life,
and social justice, and you know it would be wonderful.”
(pause) So naive!

Delisa attended a historically Black college with academic resources and educational methods emerging from Black culture. She described it as a “wonderful, nurturing” environment.

Rickie and Kay both described getting in touch with their heritage, after living more than thirty years without fully understanding or relating to it. Rickie went to college in her 30’s and lived near her mother’s family. During that time, she learned about her heritage by talking with her grandmother and finding resources in the library. Kay had also read books and watched movies to gain information about her heritage during her thirties. Kay’s first sweat lodge, however, was a transformational experience:

You step out of that, and you look up ... and you’ve been reborn. The sky is brand new. It looks like somebody took, a cup full of stars and just turned it upside down. And you feel like that for days. And you know you’ve come home ... It’s either in you or it isn’t.

Kay worked for a “racist” boss, who had a diverse group of people working for him:

... He loved the fact that he could claim somebody on ... affirmative action. (pause) ... But, then referred to me behind my back to his friends as “Chief Wahoo.” ... It wasn’t just me. There was a really nice (pause) girl— ... And she’s Black and he referred to her [using a derogatory Yiddish word for African Americans]. And (exhale) it was hard to make him understand ...how that felt— Because he just didn’t relate to it at all.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat recalled an incident when she was 25 and had traveled to South Dakota for a Sun Dance with three Native American men. They stopped in a cafe full of White “good ole boy ranchers.” She “basically look[s] White, that’s no problem.” The other
men were part Native American, so their features were not fully
pronounced.

... We walked in— I have never in my LIFE! felt (pause) the
tension like we did that day ... Everybody else was just
throwing [the tension] at us. I wasn’t scared or anything like
that. I thought it was kind of funny ... Because there’s no need
for that ... If we had gone on to some reservations, we’d have
been looked at the other way: “There’s a couple White people
here tryin’ to be Indian.” Whereas, there in that cafe, I guess it
was more like they’re Indian people comin’ into their realm.

Discrepancy. Delisa was the only woman whose race became more
“conflictual” when she became an adult. Up until she entered graduate school,
her home, school, and social environments were consistently diverse and
affirming of her race. In one of her first courses in a historically “racist”
graduate school, Delisa realized:

...that there were people that did research that actually thought
... that because of my culture and the color of my skin, that I was
somehow inferior ... I was like, “I have never heard that before!”

Socioeconomic Status

Five of the six women discussed their socioeconomic status, three of
whom had lower economic backgrounds. During childhood and adolescence,
four women described how socioeconomic status was part of their identity.
When socioeconomic status was low, participants described limited
opportunities across developmental periods. As adults, three women who
experienced lower economic backgrounds during their childhood described
self-acceptance and heightened awareness of socioeconomic status. One
woman, with a middle class background, is currently experiencing conflict
with her current low socioeconomic status.
Childhood and adolescence. Three of the four women who discussed the influence of socioeconomic status during their childhood referred to it as a part of their culture. Both Randy and Kay, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, described lost opportunities caused by their economic status. Lila, with an upper middle class background and upper class heritage, described increased awareness when her life conditions suddenly changed to low economic status. With her low economic status, Lila also described limited opportunities. Delisa, with a middle class background, noticed cultural differences across economic lines, but she did not experience conflict.

Randy acknowledged that her “basically blue collar background (slight pause), did contribute to [her] ... scrappy nature.” Randy lived in a “cooperative apartment” and she “envied” friends who lived in houses “… because they had a whole house to themselves. And they didn’t have to have ... noisy neighbors.” Randy’s mother valued education, and “There was no question that we were gonna (slight pause) be educated.”

Kay described a “class system” in the South, based on money and social position. People who couldn’t “fit in ... were never allowed in.” At school, people were “not afraid to say ... whether or not your hair was fixed a certain way, or whether or not you had the clothing that was in style at the time.”

Growing up in a wealthy area in the United States, and having parents from an upper class in India, Lila’s “culture was middle class, upper-middle class.” When she moved to India, several aspects of her life reflected her status: “I went to a Catholic school, which only the really upper middle class people went to. English, from the United States was another status thing.” Lila lived in India with her mother, who was divorcing her father and had a
difficult time finding a job. As a result, Lila had to adjust from her upper-middle class lifestyle to “living a lower class life:”

There was one point where we were in this room this big (referring to a 10’ x 15’ area) … no kitchen … there was a bathroom that we shared with other people (pause) … We were there for … a year … I think I’ve seen it all when it comes to class, at least. I’ve seen in different countries … I’ve seen upper class in India and I’ve seen lower class in India.

Delisa grew up with a “middle class, upper-middle class” background and noticed cultural differences across African Americans from a lower socioeconomic class:

I was like the first generation of … having students bussed into our school. And there was a difference between the Black students that came in to my school — … there were just cultural differences, just in terms of a different life … I think what was most salient were the economic differences.

As a child of a military officer, Delisa also noticed economic differences between herself and children of the non-commissioned officers.

Early and middle adulthood. Four of the six women addressed their socioeconomic status as a part of their identity. Rickie and Randy, both from lower class backgrounds, derived a sense of pride and saw advantages of their hard-working families. Experiencing lifestyles associated with higher and lower class heightened Lila’s awareness of socioeconomic status. Pat is currently experiencing conflict because her socioeconomic status has fallen.

Rickie acknowledged that she worked hard all of her life, and “… barely made it from paycheck to paycheck,” but focused on the fact that she “made it.” With her partner, she currently has more financial security.

Randy’s working class background gave her “another thing to be … self-righteous about. Like ‘I come from (pause) workers. People who have to work
hard for their (slight pause) few pennies every week. So don’t fuck with me.’ “She acknowledged that it was “really a false pride” in that she was “trying to be proud of something.” Throughout her adult life, Randy has felt glad that she wasn’t upper-middle class, which at one point, “was very unhip.” She was also glad that she “didn’t have to feel guilty about having money,” and recognized that she “would have been a very different person if [she] had ... a trust fund.”

Lila stated that class is “highlighted” in her awareness. Even though it’s “not a visible thing,” she focuses on socioeconomic class:

... the safety, feeling secure ... there’s always a fear there. That, it’s not always going to be there. It’s like something to work at, constantly. Like, to get food on the table ... I feel lucky ... But ... that class stuff is very real

**Negative case analysis.** Pat did not address socioeconomic status until it caused conflict for her as an adult. Her financial situation has changed in the past couple years, and she has learned that “If you’re poor, you’re dirt. And you don’t count.” Her husband, who had been trained to be a truck driver to replace his slow horse shoeing business, received a speeding ticket. Because their insurance payment was late, his driving license was suspended, preventing him from beginning work. Pat realized that he was responsible for speeding, but she emphasized the discrimination associated with appearances and socioeconomic status:

If it had been somebody who was known in society, it had been a doctor in the county, if it had been a policeman’s wife, or anything like that, he wouldn’t have gotten a ticket.
Pat has also used food stamps for the past year, but “… [doesn’t] like being on any type of assistance.” She feels like “it’s degrading” and she “… still feel[s] embarrassed, and wonder[s] how the cashier … is going to look on [her]. Or the people behind [her], how they feel.” She has been a taxpayer before, and she doesn’t “want to be one of those people who (pause) are taking advantage of the government.”

Discrepancy. Although Rickie was “always just below what they call poverty level” throughout her life, she did not focus on it as she described her identity development.

Credibility. Discussing the role socioeconomic status plays, Randy emphasized the “need to distribute wealth more … to get people on more equal footing. Then it would be obvious that we’re all the same.”

Sexual Orientation

Adolescence marked the first awareness, albeit indirect, of participants’ sexual orientations. Referring to their interest in boys, or lack thereof, five women implied they were heterosexual and did not describe personal exploration. Randy, however, was attracted to the idea of lesbian sexuality and felt conflict within herself during late adolescence. Lila was the only woman who was exposed to a positive attitude toward gays and lesbians. During adulthood, five of the six women questioned their sexual orientation. Their exploration appeared to result in an open and accepting attitude toward gays and lesbians.

Childhood and adolescence. Five of the six women did not question their sexual orientation during childhood and adolescence. Only Randy recalled feeling conflict about her sexual orientation and actively exploring different
types of relationships in high school. The other five women did not refer to much exploration of sexual orientation during childhood and adolescence.

Lila, who is heterosexual, is the only woman who observed a degree of acceptance of gays and lesbians from her family and from her religion. Lila had greater exposure to gay culture through her heterosexual father’s interests:

My dad was very interested in, the gay movement and, like the gay pride marches, he would go to all the time ... I think I translated it as acceptance (pause) for me ... I haven’t heard using Hinduism, to be, homophobic ... Religiously nobody’s ever used it. If anything it’s societal ... It’s not like, ‘this is bad and it shouldn’t exist’ but there is a sense of ‘this is not us’ ... meaning, in the family.

Around the age of sixteen, Randy became aware of lesbian sexuality:

... one of the musicians that this friend turned me onto was Laura Nyro...And ... there was this one song called “Emily.” ... By all stretches of the imagination, it was definitely a love song from her to another woman ... And this like struck a chord somewhere in my life, this song.

Despite some awareness of her interest in lesbianism, she described herself as a “pushover for boys” while she was in high school. In college, she met a friend of a friend, “... got a crush on [her]. And then life was never the same ... [She] became totally obsessed about this young woman.” When Randy was more visible about her lesbian feminist identity, she recalled a discriminatory incident: “... There I was with all my buttons on my backpack, announcing the fact that I was a lesbian feminist ... and I used to dress like a slob— And [these young Irish boys] were nasty. They probably called me a bull dyke or something.”
Rickie, who is lesbian, “… did not know [her] own sexual identity at the time … Because [she] had so much other stuff going on.” In high school, she recalled having a fantasy of “being together” with her best friend, “… and [she] had never, ever been with a woman at that time.”

Delisa and Kay did not discuss dating much in high school. Their heterosexual orientation was inferred by their sole references to dating boys and marrying men. Kay married a man immediately after high school. In junior high and early high school, Delisa recalled feeling concerned that she was unattractive to other boys, and then focusing on activities that didn’t involve boys.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat, also heterosexual, did not date boys in high school. In college, she described the awkwardness of expressing her affection for a young man.

**Early and middle adulthood.** As adults, five of the six women have questioned or explored their sexual orientation. This exploration involved opening to the possibility of having a relationship with a man or a woman. Delisa described her exploration as intellectual and philosophical. Lila and Randy explored at an intellectual and physical level. Rickie recognized her sexuality through a physical awakening. Kay denied having doubts about her sexual orientation, but was curious. Despite sexual orientation, the five women who explored their own sexuality expressed an acceptance of gay and lesbian sexuality.

Delisa, Lila, and Randy described attitudes toward sexuality that suggest an openness to loving men or women. Delisa emphasized that she was “socialized” to be a heterosexual woman:
But ... I really feel very balanced. I mean in really a yin-yang kind of way. In terms of, of the passion, love, and caring that I have for, for humans, men and women.”

Delisa wondered about her sexual identity “at some point in time.” Because nothing else in her life was “cut and dry,” she realized that her sexual orientation wouldn’t be either.

In college, Lila began to meet more gay and lesbian friends. Initially, Lila had an “intellectual idea” that the differences of gays and lesbians were “great;” but she did not have a personal understanding. She began exploring her own sexual orientation by “talking with a lot of people” and through “introspection.” She also questioned her feelings for a close friend, wondering if Lila felt “sexually attracted” to her or if she was a “potential date.” Lila kissed her, but “it wasn’t the same as it was with males ... Just, that whole nervousness and the heartbeat getting faster, and, and (pause) this chemistry I guess (Laugh) ... The energy was not connected. All that stuff. That really didn’t happen (pause) but I liked her a lot.” Lila doesn’t believe she’s “exclusively heterosexual,” and notices she likes “woman a lot more than ... men.” In fact, she stated that she’s “sick and tired of being heterosexual!!” but accepts that she is because “the tingly thing” doesn’t happen with women.

Randy identifies herself as a lesbian, but stated that her sexual orientation has been confusing:

... because I probably could consider myself bisexual on some levels, but it’s just not something I find appealing to call myself ... And I don’t pursue relationships with men, because mostly I’m not interested. So yeah I guess I’m a lesbian. But, I’ve had intense feelings for men, I’ve had somewhat passable sexual relationships with some men.
When Randy went to Israel, she was “having all this sexual confusion” and would have crushes on women, but date men. Randy suggested that she was “afraid” and “didn’t know what to do” about her attraction to women. Another period of sexual confusion occurred when she began to have an eating disorder. In a working environment with men, the “flirting” she engaged in was “appealing.” In another situation, after a significant relationship with a woman “fell apart,” Randy dated men because it felt as if “something was unfinished ... with men” and “Somehow [she] started to think that it would be safer and friendlier and more comfortable just to have ... pure friendships with women and not get all mixed up with all the romantic entanglements.” She explored relationships with men for six years, until she “came out again” in 1986. She was living with a man who wanted to marry her, but she “wasn’t quite happy enough” and left that relationship. She accepts that “part of her” feels attracted to men, but was “really happy” and “celebratory” about her decision to date women again, exclaiming “I’m back!”

Rickie’s coming out process followed a much different course. She hasn’t had a relationship with a man “since [she] was divorced, twenty years ago.” At 27, Rickie became “instant friends” with a woman who she was attracted to for some reason she “did not understand. This woman offered to give Rickie back rubs to help cure her insomnia:

Well I didn’t sleep the entire week. And it took me the entire week to find out that I was turned on because I had never been turned on before ... It wasn’t like ‘I think I’ll be a lesbian today’ because I didn’t have a clue. But I knew right away (pause) that this is what had been missing (chuckle) in— any kind of sexual, you know— I thought, ‘Wow (pause) this is pretty cool. I think I’ll stay this way.’“
Kay stated that she did not have "questions" about her sexual orientation, because she is a "firm believer" that it is "in large part, a physical attribute one is born with, not learned." She neither fears, nor seeks homosexuality. She did acknowledge a period of "curiosity" and "short exploration" in her late 20’s, which "confirmed [her] sexual identity ... as heterosexual." Kay admires "truly beautiful (physical and/or spiritual) women, but not in a sexual way."

Negative case analysis. Pat did not question her sexual orientation or describe an acceptance of gays and lesbians. Referring to gays and lesbians, Pat repeated a phrase used in her spiritual community: "they can do that." She appeared to be unfamiliar with terminology, evident in her written description of her sexual orientation: "opposite."

Disability Status

Only one of the six participants has a physical disability, which provided challenges throughout her life. As a child, she felt hurt and angry when others made fun of her. The anger appeared to provide a defense. Throughout her adulthood, her attitude toward her disability gradually shifted to self-acceptance and self-confidence. Pat was the only other participant to discuss how a person with a disability may be treated unfairly in society.

Childhood and adolescence. Rickie's childhood health problems impacted her identity by teaching her to independently fight for her survival. As a premature baby, she spent time in the incubator; as a young child, she spent over two years in the hospital with polio. She returned to Catholic school wearing braces and using crutches. She recalled feeling "isolated" as she was growing up:
I had a speech impediment and I had a hard time because people laughed and made fun of me. I mean it’s not enough that I was wearing braces and all these different things.

Rickie had a lot of anger inside of her, so although she was active with the church, the rest of her time was spent “getting into trouble” by skipping class and picking fights. Her crutches did not hold her back from wanting to fight, but served as her “equalizer.” She lifted weights and eventually “got off the crutches,” but wished it had been easier.

**Early and middle adulthood.** Rickie stated that at times, her pain is so great that she feels very handicapped and disabled. Most of the time, though, she believes that “as long as [her] brain worked, [she] wasn’t handicapped. [She’s] just physically impaired.” She admitted that she used to “only half mean it,” but now believes it fully.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat appeared to have an awareness of discrimination against people with disabilities. Discussing the cruelty of society, she included individuals who are blind or deaf as people who are treated unfairly.

**Concurrent Pattern of Identity Development**

This section provides examples of how more than one aspect of identity was addressed simultaneously for all five of the women with multiple identities. Concurrent identity development issues are presented as having a positive impact on identity and creating conflict between two identities. Specific identities are presented in pairs, to display the impact of one identity on another. Within each pair, participants are presented using references to developmental periods. Although Pat presumably has one identity, her
spirituality and her current economic situation were appropriate to include in respective sections.

**Positive Impact on Identity**

A deepening understanding of ethnicity positively impacted the following aspects of participants’ identities: sex, spirituality, sexual orientation, and age. A feminist identity positively influenced sexual orientation. Spirituality assisted two women in becoming more accepting and proud of their female identity.

**Ethnicity and sex.** Four of the five women’s ethnicities had a positive impact on their womanhood. During her adolescence, Lila gained a more meaningful understanding of her femaleness as she learned about “strong women” in India’s history, the value placed on motherhood, and the belief that the “earth is ... our mother.” Reading about her ancestors, Delisa realized in her twenties that she finds strength through the history of her African American female ancestors. After making a connection to her Native American heritage in her thirties, Kay became comfortable with her womanhood. For the first time in her life, Kay felt “Comfortable enough to stand up and talk back to men.” In “general society,” women are expected to look and act “a certain way.” Kay believes it’s “easier” to be a woman in Native American society “because ... you know that you are important to what’s going on.” Unlike the male-dominated mainstream culture, in the Teosyepé, “the woman owns the house (pause) and the land. You — you ask the woman (pause) if it’s O.K. to come in her house.” Kay is involved in establishing a women’s society in her Teosyepé. Rickie values the matrilineal tradition of her Native American heritage.
**Ethnicity and spirituality.** Three women described the positive influence their ethnicity had on their spirituality. Rickie emphasized that she “didn’t become a spiritual person until [she] got in touch with [her Native American] heritage. And [she] learned (pause) what it meant to be (pause) in tune with nature, and other animals and (pause) everything.” Throughout her life, Kay felt connected to nature, but didn’t identify those beliefs until she discovered a name for her spirituality. Delisa’s spirituality grew when she was in graduate school, and expanded her sense of self to include ancestors. Since then, she has been able to “tap into” the spiritual energy of her ancestors, bringing spirituality into her daily activities.

**Ethnicity and sexual orientation.** Rickie and Randy described the positive impact of ethnicity on their lesbian identity development. Researching her Native American history in her thirties, Rickie learned “lesbians and gays ... were revered” during the pre-Christian history of Native American culture. She is proud that gays and lesbians in her culture were story tellers, teachers, shamen, and medicine women and men. When Randy came out as lesbian in her early twenties, her closest group of friends and her first female lover were all Jewish lesbians, providing comfort in their similar sex, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

**Ethnicity and age.** Reflecting her current life situation, two women focused on the positive impact their Native American ethnicity has on their perception of age. Kay observed that elderly people are “shut off and put aside” in predominant society, but in Native American society, “they are our warehouse of knowledge and wisdom.” She doesn’t get angry if someone calls her “grandmother ... because it’s an address of respect.” As an elder, Kay is “expected to be in a position to teach and to educate.” Rickie also
acknowledged that unlike mainstream society, elders are valued in Native American culture.

**Ethnicity and disability status.** Rickie, the only woman with a physical disability, stated that her ability to accept government aid is related to her Native American worldview:

I’m with Medicaid and on Medicare. If I weren’t liberal, I’d have a hard time even accepting it. I have to because there’s no other choice. I believe that ... like the Native American people, that you should take care of your own. And your own is everybody ... If the person can’t take care of themselves, like to work ... then (pause) somebody has to do it ... In a tribe situation, whoever was less fortunate with their (pause) worldly goods or if they (pause) were orphaned, (pause) they were taken care of. And the elders were taken care of (pause) and they were wise and they (pause) they’re asked to (pause) spread their wisdom, until the day they die.

**Sex and sexual orientation.** Developing as a feminist helped two women increase their interest in and support for lesbians. As a young adult, Lila met lesbian and gay friends through her involvement with the university women’s resource center. Exploration of Lila’s sexual orientation began once she was in an environment accepting of many types of relationships. Randy’s interest in the feminist movement also introduced her to lesbian ideology. At seventeen, Randy attended a women’s rally at the International Women’s March and was “fired up” by a lesbian who was speaking about “equality and repression, suppression, [and] oppression.” In college, Randy attended a “women’s lib” meeting, and became friends with the lesbian who coordinated the group. Randy’s interested in the women’s movement continued, and she became involved in “lesbian liberation meetings ... trying to be good little, radical feminist lesbians.”

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Spirituality and sex. Two women discussed the positive impact their spirituality has on their female identity. Although Judaism was part of Randy’s cultural identity, she “was not into this whole patriarchal, monotheistic thing.” She became Buddhist in her early thirties in part, because contrasted with Judaism, Buddhism “made sense to [her]” and did not conflict with her feminist beliefs.

Negative case analysis. In high school and college, Pat believed her period “was a curse.” Practicing Native American spirituality since her late twenties helped Pat “became more comfortable with being a woman.” After understanding the menstrual cycle is “God’s way of showing a woman that she is able to have children” and is able to purify her body, Pat viewed her womanhood differently.

Conflict Between Two or More Identities

The six participants represented a variety of identities. Each participant identified how at least one aspect of her identity caused conflict with another aspect of her identity. Five women identified a conflict between religion and their female identity development. Religion also caused conflict for one woman, who is lesbian. One woman described the tension between her spiritual practice and her ethnicity. Two women described sexism within their racial or ethnic group. One women described the impact of her ethnicity on her perception of socioeconomic status. Two women described the impact low socioeconomic status impacts their roles as women. Finally, one woman described the conflict between her nationality and ethnicity.

Religion and sex. Five of the six women described an awareness of sexism within religion, and its negative impact on their female identity development.
As adults, Delisa, Lila, and Randy recognized the institutional patriarchy in their respective religions. Rickie and Pat described specific incidents of discrimination as women.

Delisa feels “sexism within the African American community” when she struggles to find a place for spiritual worship. She described the problem she has with the African American Baptist church: “I could not listen to this man standing in this pulpit telling me, you know, what I needed to do as a woman. It’s like, I’m not havin’ that! (laughing)”

Lila had a similar complaint about Hinduism, which she started to “hate” from the “institutional perspective.” Recognizing that religion was used to “legitimize sexism,” Lila “completely turned away ... and despised, anybody who said that they were religious.”

Randy, affiliated with Judaism during childhood and adolescence, recognized that “everybody was rejecting religion.” She saw how the “patriarchal religion ... was painful and ... it was all about misogynistic practices.”

Rickie had a “falling out with [Catholicism]” that had been building, but was finalized when she and her husband went to see a priest to discuss his extra-marital affair: “he told me that the reason my husband had a girlfriend was because I wasn’t smart enough to talk to him.”

Negative case analysis. Pat described the limitations women have if they are “on their moon” during sacred ceremonies, but stated that was the only prejudice she could think of. At a spiritual conference, the leader “had some problems with his medicine bundle,” so a couple guys asked Pat if she was on her period. She “knew better” not to handle the bundle, and was offended that they would even ask her.
Religion and sexual orientation. Randy was the only woman who described a conflict between her religion and her sexual orientation. She "came out" as a lesbian for the second time after she had joined her Buddhist organization. She has tried to encourage lesbian experiences displayed "on the front page of the "Buddhist newsletter." Initially, "people were afraid to talk about it."

Spirituality and ethnicity. Pat is the only woman who described an indirect conflict between her current practice of spirituality and ethnicity.

Negative case analysis. Although Pat has been allowed to dance at a pow wow even though she’s European American, other White people have been forbidden to dance. Pat feels frustrated, because color of skin shouldn’t matter, "as long as you’re there being who you are."

Ethnicity and sex. Two of the six women described conflicts their female identity had with patriarchy and sexism within their ethnicity. As a child, Lila recalled receiving negative messages about Indian women from her father and brother, observing sexist behavior in other Indian American families, and absorbing claims the media made about India’s culture being sexist:

I did get the very strong message before I went to India, that sons are better than daughters … I see [other Indian families] treating, the (pause) daughters like, shit. And the sons like "Oh, these great god’s gift to earth.” … In those movies … when the son was born people would be (pause) dancing around … And when the daughter was born (pause) … people wouldn’t dance around.

When she went to India, Lila’s adolescence involved finding out who she was and being more able to articulate her feelings about sexism. She began to recognize that "gender identity and ethnic identity were always put in conflict by other people, for their gain." Because most people in India are Indian,
ethnic identity was not an issue, but “if you are different from the norm, then ... you’re not being true to your ethnic heritage.” Lila’s feminist ideas were not part of the norm, so she was accused of being “very Western,” of learning “from the British,” or “betraying your culture.” Supporting one aspect of her identity seemed to denigrate the other:

now that I feel ok to be a woman, now I’m supposed to feel bad as an Indian. There’s just no freedom in that. And if I feel ok as an Indian, I’m supposed to feel bad as a woman. I mean it’s like, what the hell! (said with frustration, slight chuckle)

Connecting with her culture as an adult, Kay acknowledged that an “old boy network” exists in Native American culture “just like there is any place else.” She alluded to the difficulties of making some men understand that when women have visions and dreams, “we aren’t just blowing smoke or trying to fit in.” The men are “more prone to listen to their compatriots ... than they are to the women.” Occasionally the women will assert their place, reminding the men that “Ceremonies don’t happen without us.” Although some women view their cultural practices to be sexist, Kay emphasized that “... it’s not what people think it is.” Women are limited from participating in sweat lodge ceremonies when they are menstruating because they are going through their own monthly purification. Kay added that once a woman is past childbearing years, she may become a medicine woman and be even more instrumental in healing.

Ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Lila was also the only woman to identify a conflict between her ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Living in India, Lila learned individuals are known through their families. Anyone who knew her last name and village number would know that she “… happened to come from the really snobby (laughs) group of villages.”
Socioeconomic status and sex. Two women described the conflict socioeconomic status had on their female identity. In high school, Randy wanted to get birth control pills, but didn’t have the money to fill the prescription. Her boyfriend’s family had money, so she asked him to help her pay for the birth control: “In aggravation, [he] dumped his piggy bank on the bed, and let [her] take what was there.”

Negative case analysis. Now that Pat’s husband is unemployed, she will have to go to work. Although she “has no problem” working, she would “rather be the one [at home] to watch the kids,” especially because she was still nursing her daughter.

Nationality and ethnicity. Lila was the only woman who lived for an extended period of time in two countries and experienced conflict between her American nationality and Indian ethnicity. When she lived in India, “the American part, all started becoming uncomfortable, because it wasn’t fitting into the, collective, the system.” The “individual part” that didn’t fit in was the part that fought the sexism “ingrained in the system.” Nobody ever said “you’re not Indian,” but they would focus on her American nationality as an excuse for not fitting in. Once she returned to the United States, Lila felt a similar conflict between the values of collectivism and individualism as she took classes emphasizing individualism: “How do you belong and not conform? (said in confused tone)” The individualist philosophy was consistent with her belief that being nonconformist meant not supporting oppressive systems. The same theory stated that ultimately, people are alone, which did not fit with Lila’s beliefs about being connected to the universe.
Summary

Describing a subsequent pattern of identity development, participants described having less awareness of limited opportunities as children. Developing through adolescence and early adulthood, they began to question and challenge societal “rules.” In addition, as they matured and increased self-exploration, the presence of a concurrent pattern of development was more evident. This provides support for the OTAID’s developmental progression of increasing self-awareness. For women with multiple identities, increased self-awareness would be expected to be associated with identification of multiple aspects of identity and thus, concurrent identity development. Environmental factors must be considered when describing the emergence of multiple aspects of identity.

A concurrent pattern of development emerged in childhood when different environments (i.e., school and home) highlighted different aspects of identity. Increased self-awareness was demonstrated as participants identified how aspects of their identity impacted each other. No clear pattern emerged demonstrating the impact of certain aspects of identity on others. Race and ethnicity had a positive impact on participants’ sex, sexual orientation, spirituality, and age. Three women, however, described how their race or ethnicity caused some conflict with their sex and socioeconomic status. For the most part, race and ethnicity positively influenced other aspects of identity. Female identity development positively impacted sexual orientation, and did not produce a conflict with other aspects of identity. The distinction between spirituality and religion was that spirituality positively influenced two women’s female identity; religion produced a conflict with five women’s female identity and one women’s sexual orientation.
Process of Identity Development

In this section, I first present each participant’s perception of her identity development with her own reflections and a metaphorical description. Next, I describe two themes which emerged in data analyses. The first represents five of the six women’s emphasis on surviving within an oppressive environment. The second focuses on the process of naming a previously unknown identity or oppression. This process of naming assisted four women by providing clarity and relief. Pat's data are included, with indented paragraphs labeled as “Negative case analysis” to provide a comparison within each section.

Reflections on Developmental Process

Women described their identity development process using ideas consistent with the OTAID model, including a non-linear, continuous process involving learning. Five participants (Randy, Lila, Delisa, Pat, and Rickie) described the process as non-linear. Delisa and Pat both referred to a circular process of returning to the place from which they began. Three women (Kay, Rickie, and Lila) referred to the process being continuous. Three women (Rickie, Lila, and Delisa) stated their developmental process involved learning through experience. Kay and Rickie suggested different “stages” or “growth spurts” enabled them to focus on one aspect of identity.

Kay described her process of growth as “never ending.” At one point, she used to wonder “What’s wrong ... because things aren’t (pause) like they are (pause) for other people.” But now, “it doesn’t matter.” Unless people ask questions, she doesn’t “dwell” on her life, because “… a lot of it’s pretty depressing.” Looking back, she feels like she has “… lived (pause) a dozen or
more different lives in one lifetime ... because [she] can look back (slight pause) at who [she] was at a certain stage, and (pause) not feel like that was [her] at all.” Reflecting on previous years, Kay sees “another person:” someone she doesn’t recognize in old photographs and someone who has completely different handwriting. Life was “difficult,” because of “the way [she] was seeing things.” In the process of finding out “where this perception was coming from ... [she] lived a lot of different lives.” The lives are almost separate, but somehow she “blundered through.”

Rickie described her identity development as “… a very slow process of growing up … and the key is actually learning something from it, and not just repeating things … again and again and again.” She recognized “growth spurts” in her life, during which she would “take on a cause ... or adventure” and learn whatever she needed to get out of a situation or to reduce her feelings of being “bogged down.” Rickie identified a similar process of being “bogged down” with each identity:

As a child, I’d be bogged down because I was a girl. I’d be bogged down because I was small. I’d be bogged down because I was crippled, and sometimes it was all the same thing, because that’s who I was. Then when I got older, I was bogged down because (pause) ... I wanted to have a job that they said only men did ... Being married was a very oppressive thing. I didn’t have a clue at the time that I was a lesbian.

Two growth spurts were the most beneficial. When she lived on the streets for one year and a half, she “… learned more about people, and about [her]self, than any other time in [her] life.” She did focus on one aspect of her identity at a time. For the first 27 years, she was “just surviving.” At 27, she focused on her “sexual identity.” At 29, she “integrated” her multiple personalities. At 30, she began tackling abuse issues. At 32, she focused on
“ethnic identification.” In the past few years, Rickie has grown through sharing. As she has become “more involved with things around [her],” she has tried to “... impart something of what [she’s] learned” to help others. If she learns something and doesn’t tell someone who might benefit from the information, she feels like “a failure.”

Randy. When asked to describe whether or not Randy recognized a pattern of which components of her identity were worked through first, she responded, “Maybe it’s not quite as linear as that, or accumulative in that kind of linear sense where, first I go with that then I go with this.” She struggled to describe the development of separate aspects of her identity:

First I think I was very aware that I was a girl (pause) in a boys’ world ... but I think they blend together a lot ... And then you’re a Jewish woman—what does that mean? And then, you’re supposed to go out with a Jewish boy, and what did that mean? Because Jewish boys are different than other boys ... or they’re supposed to be ... so good (pause) and smart ... And then [the] Jewish lesbian thing ... ‘Cause it wasn’t just being a lesbian ... It’s harder to separate out each of the identities ... I don’t think I’ve ever been able to do that actually. I don’t know if you can?

Randy suggested that she may have been able to separate her multiple identities if she had been able to accept being a religious minority as a youth: “Hey, I’m a Jew, and I love it, and it’s great and it’s wonderful. I’m not better than anybody. I’m not worse than anybody. I’m just going to live my life ‘cause I’m livin’ my life.” She hypothesized that coming out as a lesbian later on would have caused her to confront new feelings of being a minority and then reflect on how she successfully met the challenge the first time. Because she did not feel that she “really won” over feeling challenged as a religious minority in this culture, her lesbian minority status was added on to her previous minority experiences. She “carried those experiences with [her]” and
stated, “... there’s no WAY you can separate out earlier experience from your later ones.” Randy described a process of “...building on earlier stuff,” recognizing that she’s “not done building yet.” She doesn’t believe it’s possible to that aspects of her identity are separate, because she’s “one person.”

Lila’s view of identity and identity development is contextual. Because she is part of the environment, “... learning what this world is all about (long pause) is learning about [her] identity.” Believing identity development is a fluid, non-linear process, Lila described the dynamics between her identity and the environment:

Because, the world—everything that it has in it, and the way that it moves around— The way that it does ... [this] huge ... (pause) dance movement. It’s just moving (pause) and trying to dance with it (pause) that’s what identity is.

She described that her life “feels very flowy.” As she develops, Lila becomes “more aware” of who she is by slowing down to explore different aspects of her identity and then being more accepting of herself:

For example with the heterosexual part of me, it was like (pause) never stopping. Until the point where I started thinking about this some more. Never stopping, slowing down ... or feeling about it. Now that that’s happened, it’s like, very much a part of my awareness.

Delisa characterized her life as a “constant learning experience.” Although she feels anxiety about what path she should follow, she has faith that “... metaphorically the path is already there (laughing) ... All you have to do is follow it.” She has spent her life “... living within the labels and the confines ... and then destroying them.” She described that process as”... not linear, but actually like a circle.” Delisa realizes that “boxes and definitions and rules and
regulations and socializations” prevent her from being who she was in the beginning. Her process of development involves “… trying to return not to be a 2 year-old, but who I was as a 2 year-old. Which I think she was a pretty neat little kid.”

**Negative case analysis.** Pat described her identity development as “an ongoing process.” She also described a circular pattern, of coming from God and going back to God. In some instances, her development was slow, “almost to the point of nonexistence,” but the most important growth occurred “when some outside source was the catalyst.”

**Metaphorical Description**

Using a metaphor to describe their identity development, participants provided a more three-dimensional image. Consistent with the OTAID’s spiral patterns of development, four (Lila, Delisa, Rickie, and Randy) of the six women described a process that repeated itself over time. Rickie and Randy described responding differently to the same process. Lila and Delisa described a pattern of creation followed by destruction, and then reconstruction. Although both described feeling limited or restricted before the destruction occurs, they considered it a necessary part of the process. Lila referred to destruction of her own form, and Delisa referred to destruction of external expectations. Kay’s metaphor emphasized loss and separation, while Pat’s metaphor emphasized connectedness and universality.

Lila represented her identity development process using the creation of a clay pot:

It’s burnt. (spoken slowly, emphasizing each word) … At first it’s squished (pause) and then it’s shaped— then it’s burnt.
Hardened. And it’s empty inside (voice getting softer). But without that emptiness, it wouldn’t be a pot. And it holds a lot of cool things. (small laugh) Like water, flowers, (pause), incense sticks at times (laugh) … I feel hardened (pause) … And I know that the pot is a breakable pot. And it can be crushed, and brought back down to the form that it started with, the clay form. And be made into another pot. I don’t think it ends with the hardness, but right now I feel hard.

When asked whether the pot had been broken in the past, she responded that during her life process, was given a different shape:

The (pause) potmaker was spinning the thing around. And giving it a shape. And then decided not to do it that shape. And just put me in another shape. And (voice softening). I feel (pause) hardened, and hurt in the way that I was hardened. And at the same time, I don’t feel … this overwhelming attachment to my form right now. All I know is that I have a form … that’s pretty stable right now. And (pause), if I need to be broken, then that’s fine. That breaking process is not as painful as the hardening one. I think the breaking one is freeing, but the hardening one is limiting. …

Delisa felt like an ocean liner breaking through glaciers.

... Glaciers to me are expectations. And socialization. And status quo ... So it's shattering my own expectations and shattering those that are put out just because of who I am ... [That approach is] hard, it’s hard. Because it’s very, very seductive to live the status quo ...

When asked about similarities across glaciers, Delisa stated that although the glaciers are different, the feelings are similar:

It’s the feeling of being restricted ... One of the things I’ve learned about the process is that I used to rebel against any kind of structure ... What I recognize, though, is bumping against the glacier, that structure [is] important. So it’s not that I don’t want to bump against something, and have that interaction. But, having ... the structure and deconstructing that structure, and rebuilding it in a different way ... So I think that the content is different. The process is pretty much the same
Randy. The image Randy chose to represent her identity development process was an "... opening and closing, and opening wider and closing a little less, and opening wider and closing a little less. You know. Running to, running away. Running to, running away." The opening and closings are not separate, she "... see[s] it as a thread somehow. In that there’s this thing about mission too. Because I try to believe or study about the eternity of life and karma and try to understand sometimes that I’m new, but not new, in terms of who I am."

Rickie used the image of "filling up a cup":

... eventually the water’s flowing over ... until you do somethin’ about it ... I went through periods in my life where ... the water was running ALL OVER the side. And then finally I thought, ‘well I better, stop pouring the water in,’ ... ‘Or drink some of it’ ... But then I would come up for air ... and do something, like go to college, divorce my husband, increase the knowledge that I needed to grow up in general, to get involved in things that I believed in, to think about other things other than myself—

Rickie had bursts of energy, followed by periods of feeling tired. When she stopped, the cup would fill up again and "then [she] would do it again." Rickie noted that in the past ten years, before the cup overflowed, she has taken action, making herself "... do things that [she] might not have done before." After her many years of growth, Rickie stated, "It may be presumptuous of me, but I feel like I’ve got it together." After going in a "different direction," she acknowledged the hard work required to return to a place in her life were she "could use positive energy instead of negative energy."

Kay. The image that best represents Kay’s identity development thus far is related to:
... missionary days, when they would take the children off the reservation and put 'em into a school, and they'd totally lose contact with their people—That's how I felt. And then finding out (pause) that (pause) not only are they not your people but that your real family is alive and not that far away.

She remembered always feeling "other than ... Kind of like an ugly duckling." Nobody was there tell her who she was, just what they thought she was.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat used a "medicine wheel" to describe her process of identity development:

... for me, the circle is a symbol of life. It's an ongoing process ... You come from God and you'll go back to God. It's all in a circle. And the equal-armed cross, in the middle of it, is to me represents all four races of people ... With the number four ... you've got the four seasons. It's just a good thing to remember the circle of life and the involvement of all four races. Each one ... having an equal length too, is something that people need to keep in mind, that we're all equal (pause) in the eyes of God.

The cross not only reminds us "we all bleed one color," if you're in the middle, you can "travel to any part of that." Pat valued the ability to have different perspectives, to "[look] in from the outside" and also to "be on the outside and look in." Pat believes that there would be fewer problems if people realized that when two people view the same object from different points of view, they are "still seeing the same thing."

She also described her identity development like "the tides of the ocean" or like "the growth rings on a tree — some are wide because of so much growth ... some narrow because of a slow year."
Survival

As each woman described her means of coping with oppression, nine categories of survival mechanisms emerged: protection, suppression, community, attitude, learning from past experiences, obtaining survival skills, spirituality, self-destructive behavior, and transforming previously unhealthy behaviors. Survival mechanisms are listed in descending order of commonality.

Protection. Five of the six women described forms of protection, which involved withdrawing from others.

Delisa’s greatest conflict with racism occurred while in graduate school. She “protected [her]self intellectually” by reading literature and research written by African American authors. The literature helped her “normalize and validate” her reactions to the racism she encountered. Following a good friend’s advice, Delisa “didn’t sell [her] soul,” which “meant that [she] didn’t open [her]self up to make that happen.” Delisa acknowledged that she “isolated [her]self.”

When Kay secluded herself from her community, it “gave [her] the time to find out who [she] was.” Before she reconnected to her Native American heritage, her self-imposed isolation prevented her from feeling the pain of not “fitting in.” Initially, “…it was a protective measure … and now it’s by choice (pause) because [she doesn’t relate to] the (pause) everyday (pause) gossip of — of the neighborhood.”

Rickie sought “isolation … to (pause) protect [her]self.” Her isolation was a “defense mechanism” that prevented other people’s words from hurting.
Lila described becoming “invisible” as “very protective and safe.” At times when other people focus on Lila’s differences, she feels excluded because of those differences. Her response is to “reflect that environment (chuckling) [and] do it on [her] own!”

Randy’s parents encouraged her to “maintain a cultural identity” as Jewish. Maintaining that identity “… felt like a way to separate [them]selves even further from the rest of the culture.” Randy simultaneously felt “arrogance” and “defensiveness” about her Jewish identity, and “always felt a little separate based on that.”

Lila and Rickie described two other forms of protection. Lila’s fire is a primary protection: “The fire helps me know that this is not kosher (laugh) when people say that. … That’s (pause) empowering … It’s like having protective clothing on or something. It’s not freeing, but it keeps you safe.” Rickie has “… [seven] multiple personalities (slight laugh) developed over the years (pause) to protect (pause) [herself].” She “integrated them [her]self?” and “… put them properly in their place so that [she] could use them when [she] needed them.”

**Credibility.** During a follow-up interview, I asked Lila for feedback about the various women who “… went inward to protect themselves” during difficult times. Lila responded, “The withdrawing is most certainly related to oppressive upbringing.”

**Suppression.** Five of the six women suppressed their emotions, voices, or memories in order to survive.

Lila, Rickie, and Kay suppressed their anger. If Lila heard someone make a racist comment, she “wouldn’t say anything” and would try to be apathetic. As a result, she used all her energy to block the anger she was feeling. Rickie
shifted from “... angry and (pause) volatile and active, to angry (pause) and passive.” During this five-year period, she “could not raise [her] voice ... [and] could not appear to get angry at anyone.” As a result, it was “all inside ... eating [her] up.” Kay also suppressed her anger, and felt like a volcano waiting to explode.

Kay lost her voice as a child and during a couple of her marriages. Growing up, she learned that her “opinion [had] no validity.” As a result, she “stopped asking for things [and] stopped asking questions.” She continues to have problems asking questions and has to “sit and think about it for a while.”

As a young child, Lila had a “whole world,” but didn’t tell other people about it. She recalled “watching people” but not speaking. She remembers it vividly she continues to “withdraw,” where she doesn’t want to say anything or be seen. Lila described how her silence was her survival: “… it allowed me to fit in ... we’re social animals. If we don’t fit in, then we’re left out to die. And I couldn’t let that happen.” If she remained quiet, it “stopped people from shutting doors” to opportunities. The silence enabled her to be herself “… on the inside when it’s not safe on the outside.”

Delisa described losing her voice during graduate school:

I didn’t participate in class, I didn’t talk ... there was a period where I was silent. Because I felt like all around me I was boxed in by this belief that what was going to come out of my mouth wasn’t going to be valuable anyway. So ... I really shut down.

Rickie described her suppressed memories as “… another means of survival.” In the last eighteen years, after her “subconscious” realized it was safe, her memories of sexual abuse began to resurface.

Negative case analysis. Pat described an incident during which she was silent as a young adult entering a male-dominated career. In a
room full of men, a male colleague made a sexual joke directed at her. Pat remembered turning “all shades of red, but [she] didn’t open [her] mouth.” At that time, she was “too shy to say anything (said quietly),” but she also felt embarrassed and humiliated.

**Discrepancy.** Lila questioned how much of her silence is “individual” and how much is “cultural.” As a child, even compared to other girls, Lila was “very quiet.” Lila viewed two sides of silence. One “perpetuates the oppression;” the other “helps an entire people survive.”

Randy was the only woman who did not lose her voice. In her younger days, Randy wore buttons challenging other people’s assumptions about her sexual orientation and religion. Sometimes Randy questions why she doesn’t “let it go” and not be so quick to be a “teacher.” She acknowledged that she enjoys being the “voice of an oppressed minority” and believes it is part of her life’s “mission:”

> As a worker, I’m a union activist because I like to help people stand up for themselves. And I’m a Buddhist so I can help people not assume that everybody in this culture is Christian or Jewish or monotheistic … There’s a lot of assumptions in our culture … It’s like going “nyee, no, nope, hm-mm” So I’m a little argumentative!

Recently, Randy submitted a testimonial to the weekly newspaper about her Buddhist organization. She described overcoming her eating disorder through faith. Hers was the first testimonial to address an eating disorder.

**Credibility.** In a follow-up interview, I told Lila about the emerging theme of women who lost their voices. Lila responded, “That’s exactly true. (slight laugh) And it’s really effective in a very verbal culture. It’s very effective to do that. Because who you are is your voice almost, in this dominant culture. So if you don’t speak you’re not there. It works.”

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Community. Four women described the role community played in helping them survive.

Lila turned to community to cope with oppression. She discovered that other people like her have a “fire” she recognizes:

Then it feels like, “Well we’re big too.” It’s not just me, it’s a we. And they have the same kind of fire that I do. I recognize it ... It’s SO much at the survival level, that [looking for the fire] becomes central ... in terms of commonality ... That is exactly how I started feeling the collective more—Through this anger. That’s what kind of drove this feeling of collectivism and feeling of belonging.

Rickie turned to community at several points in her life. In grade school, she joined the Catholic church; in high school, she became involved in sociopolitical causes; and after coming out as a lesbian, she became involved in the lesbian community.

Randy also emphasized the importance community throughout her life. In grade school, she was actively involved in the Jewish youth center. As a young feminist, she turned to women’s groups at college. After coming out as a lesbian, the women’s center became her community. Delisa turned away from her oppressive graduate school environment, toward the African American artistic community.

Attitude. Three women described attitudes helping them cope with oppressive environments.

Kay emphasized that after coping in whatever way “works for you,” if you survive, “then you’ve done your job.” Rickie expressed a similar belief, that you have to “do what you gotta do” in order to survive. Wanting to prove others wrong, Rickie “survived in SPITE of what everybody else did” to hurt
her. Rickie’s lesbian identity gave her a sense of “uniqueness,” providing an extra reason to fight.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat copes with an “unfair” society by letting it go, and not being bothered by the unfairness. She asserted, “If you sit there and worry about it, it’s not going to do you any good anyway. Just gotta pick up with your life and keep on moving. You’ve got to. That’s just the way things are.”

**Learning from past experiences.** Three women described the importance of allowing past oppressive experiences to inform present situations.

Randy is “more suspicious” of others because she “carr[ies] around [her] past experiences.” Kay described a gradual process of learning from each of her husbands “to take less and less” abusive treatment. She “reached a saturation point” and as soon as she saw a situation becoming unhealthy, she would “get out of it as quickly as possible.” Rickie described finding a balance of letting go of enough of the past to move forward and remembering enough of the past to learn from it.

**Obtaining survival skills.** Three women described specific behaviors they engaged in to survive.

Returning from India, Lila focused on two primary questions: “How am I going to survive in this system? How am I going to survive in this world I am in now?” Lila focused on details, learning about cultural differences through observation. Although she typically perceives from a global view, “the way to survive was to just forget the global thing ‘cause it wasn’t making sense. (pause) Look at the details, one step at a time.”
Kay always read fiction because it provides “a place to go for a while.” Randy tried several holistic treatments, including herbology, Kundalini yoga, nutrition counseling, and chiropractic services.

**Spirituality.** Three women found spirituality to be central in obtaining psychological health.

After going to therapy, Randy continued to feel “controlled” by her eating disorder. Feeling “totally defeated,” Randy accepted a Buddhist friend’s offer to chant with her. Chanting enabled Randy to finally “make progress.”

Kay never sought professional help, and concluded, “I must have a lot of help from the other side … Because there’ve been situations where I should be mentally unstable … [or] not even be here (pause) But it’s like I’ve been guarded … all my life. I don’t know how.”

During Delisa’s oppressive graduate school experience, she found strength through the history and personal energy of her ancestors.

**Self-destructive behavior.** Two women described unhealthy behaviors that may have emerged from internalized oppression.

During the first half of her life, Rickie had periods when she didn’t have the strength to continue. When she reached that conclusion, she “… tried to check out [commit suicide] many times … [she] tried to (long pause) drink [her]self to death or anything else … to end up in La La Land, so I didn’t have to think.”

During periods of confusion, Randy became “obsessed” with food and losing weight. Her obsession shifted into an eating disorder, with bingeing and purging behaviors.

**Transform previously unhealthy behaviors.** Two women described transforming behaviors that used to be self-destructive into healthy behaviors.
Rickie began reading at the age of thirty. She realized how much she enjoyed “… that kind of escape which was safer than the escape [she] used to use [alcohol and drugs].”

Through her Buddhist spirituality and chanting, Randy “achieved … a plateau of not wanting to damage [her]self.” She still has “food issues,” but feels victorious because she no longer hurts herself with food.

**Naming Identity or Oppression**

Naming an aspect of identity or naming oppression that was occurring resulted in greater clarity and a sense of relief for Kay, Rickie, Lila, and Delisa. Kay and Lila both experienced greater clarity and relief by “coming home” to their identity after feeling an absence of their heritage. Lila described a similar process in understanding the oppressive environment of the United States and her spirituality. Rickie’s understanding of oppression helps her to challenge statements that perpetuate racist beliefs. Delisa felt greater clarity and relief after she could name the mechanisms of racism she experienced in graduate school.

**Clarity.** Feeling out of place most of her life, Kay found her home after her first sweat lodge: “You go through life and you don’t really know what you’re searching for. And just all of sudden, it’s there. (pause) And, it was great. I’d have to say at that point, it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.” Having a ceremony to receive her Native American name was the “second best” event in her life. Receiving a name, “answered a lot of questions” and “filled a lot of empty spaces” as she recognized, “… this is my family— these are my people.” An Ojibway legend helped Kay understand why her family had denied their heritage: “… among those people that were
removed from the reservation, or assimilated, the fifth generation the spirit would wake up again.” Counting back, Kay discovered she was the fifth generation, and felt relief because it made more sense.

Lila’s ethnicity and spirituality went through similar processes. Living in the United States, Lila’s ethnicity was not reflected, so she did not realize how her innate behaviors were Indian. She had a completely different experience when she moved to India:

... All of a sudden I saw parts of me being reflected. And because it felt so good, I would notice “this is being reflected”, and realize, “this is part of being Indian.” All the stuff that was India that, I was realizing, that I wasn’t getting [in the U.S.]

In the United States, Lila had nothing with which to contrast her experiences. She just felt “very uncomfortable.” In India, “it became comfortable.” Returning to the United States after living in India for six years, Lila felt “... that hesitancy of taking that step again.” Exchanging ideas with other people “who have also come to a certain understanding for themselves,” Lila has been able to consolidate her understanding of what it means to be Asian and what it means to be Indian.

Lila gained a new appreciation for all life forms while living in India. After she became aware of how beautiful animals were, she “couldn’t believe” she had been eating meat “all this time.” Now that she is aware, she doesn’t eat meat. Lila sees “… the animal now, it’s not just a packaged thing anymore.”

After rejecting religion in India, Lila “came back to spirituality” while in college. Not knowing what it was, Lila described her spirituality as a thing that she was “… so warmly cuddled up in.” She “didn’t have a name for it,” but described it as “… this big ball around [her] (pause) and ultimately
around, all over (pause) that [she] just was rolling (laugh) in.” Coming back to her spirituality involved “… naming something that was already there … And once it was named … spirituality, was a thing (pause) that could be.”

Rickie uses her understanding of oppression to challenge others’ statements. Hearing someone on television say that ”Jesus died for the White race,” Rickie retorted,

Jesus was a Jew. (pause) I don’t think so! … He died for everybody. That didn’t exclude, the Blacks, the Native Americans, and everybody else … He wasn’t White. Because most of the Jewish women I know, consider themselves women of color.

When confronted with a silencing, unsafe experience, Delisa researched the survival mechanisms of her ancestors. After naming her experience as oppressive, she had a framework to challenge. Prior to naming oppression, she felt confused and experienced self-doubt.

Relief. Lila’s first day at school in India, it felt “great!” to be swarmed by other girls who wanted to know her. In the United States, Lila was expected to “go and make friends;” in India, girls came to her and tried to “recruit” her into different cliques. Discovering a “different way of interacting with people,” Lila realized that having a group come to the individual, was cultural.

Before Kay found people to talk with, she didn’t have any “resources to draw on” for identity exploration. Questioning her Native American heritage, Kay would “… look in the mirror and think ‘No way!’ (pause) But, in [her] heart it was saying ‘Yea!’ ” Following her heart, she knew she needed to find a connection to her heritage. When she finally found it, she felt “such a relief.” After those questions about her identity were answered, she found out she
wasn’t “out of her mind.” Naming her identity and understanding that she had “rights” helped her anger “dissolve.”

Delisa emphasized that the ability to “understand how the mechanisms [of oppression] work” is very important. Knowing “how to name” oppression is key, because it is “not necessarily overt.” When she was in graduate school, she knew “… that something crazy [was] going on,” but didn’t know what it was.

Summary

Descriptions of identity development supported aspects of the developmental process proposed by the OTAID research team. Four women emphasized a non-linear process of development. Three women emphasized the continuous nature of identity development and three women emphasized viewing identity development as a learning process. Using metaphors to describe their identity development, four participants’ images portrayed a repetitive cycle, supporting the OTAID’s proposed spiral pattern of development.

Part of the identity development process for women with multiple minority status consisted of using survival skills and naming a previously unknown identity or oppression. Both themes emerged in the process of data analyses and are important factors to consider when exploring identity development. In an oppressive environment, survival skills are essential. Identity development theorists may have assumed the presence of survival skills. The need to develop and use these skills may impact identity development. Nine categories of skills emerged in this study, with the most
common being self-protection, suppression of identity, and turning to community for strength and affirmation.

Participants also emphasized the importance of naming an identity, as in the case of women who had felt an absence of affirmation of their identity in their environment. Participants also described the importance of understanding the mechanisms of oppression.
Environmental Influence

Throughout this chapter, I emphasized the role of environmental factors in every section. This section specifically focuses on the environmental influence of identity development. First, I present participants’ data using the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) framework. The MIM was placed in this section because the model is presented as an identity development model based on individual needs and environmental press. Second, I listed harmful and nurturing environmental factors. Third, I describe four types of reactions to environmental presses.

Multidimensional Identity Model

Data analyses using the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM, Reynolds & Pope, 1991) revealed the model’s utility for each participant. The following section presents examples supporting each category of the MIM: passive acceptance of identity ascribed by society, conscious identification with one aspect of self, segmented identification with multiple aspects of self, and intersected identification with multiple aspects of self.

Passive acceptance of identity ascribed by society was described by each woman during childhood and adolescence. As they matured and gained self-awareness, the incidence of this identity resolution option decreased.

In her youth, Kay learned she was powerless as a girl. Preceding and following her marriage, Rickie did not appear to accept traditional female roles. After high school, she married a man who expected her to be a stereotypical wife. She played the role for five years. Prior to her teenage
years, Randy accepted her identity as a girl. Randy did not actively question her limited opportunities to participate in sports.

As a child, Delisa’s first experience of racism was vicarious, when she observed Jewish neighbors being teased, without understanding the reason. In graduate school, initially Delisa did not understand the oppressive environment, and initially, she internalized some of the beliefs that her ideas were less valuable because she was African American.

Being one of the only Indian students in grade school, Lila’s ethnicity “was focused on a lot by people who were not Indian.” She received the message that she was different. Lila also did not fully understand what her culture was about, accepting “very general ideas … almost like what mainstream (pause) folks have about what Indian (chuckle) is, like ‘Oh I went to an Indian restaurant, I must know something about Indians,’ or ‘I’ve seen a woman in a sari.’” Lila learned the meaning of her ethnic identity through family activities, but felt it was “a separate life.” Lila lived in India during her adolescence and she began to understand herself differently. Lila’s friends showed her the importance of defining herself through ancestral lineage.

**Negative case analysis.** Pat identified that she was “part of the norm” when she was in grade school.

**Conscious identification with one aspect of identity.** Each woman described instances when they focused on one identity, typically during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood.

Delisa appeared to identify with her African American culture as a youth and as an adult. Growing up, her parents “affirmed” her heritage, and she was familiar with African American musicians and writers. She attended a traditionally Black college and was actively involved in volunteer work and
student organizations. Currently, she is influenced positively by the Afrocentric movement encompassing academia, grassroots organizations, politics, and art.

Throughout her life, Rickie was aware of having a boy’s name and was drawn to traditionally male activities, such as fighting, painting houses and billboards, and repairing cars. Rickie challenged the expectations others had that she only participate in stereotypically feminine activities.

As a youth, Lila moved to India, and realized Indian culture was “very foreign.” Suddenly, her American nationality became the focus. An adolescent in India, Lila primarily interacted with vegetarians, thus becoming “more aware” of her own eating patterns and not eating meat herself.

Randy was one of 12 Jews in the Jesuit college she attended. Her culture “… became very important … again … and … it became part of an excuse for the identity crisis that [she] ended up having that year.” Toward the end of the Vietnam War, Randy was less involved in protesting the war because she was “just hanging at the women’s center.” Looking back on her life, Randy stated, “I think had blinders on so that I didn’t have to experience certain things or experience certain things that would make me think about the other parts of myself.”

Although Kay’s “blood line” is Ojibway, she practices Dakotah Sioux spirituality because it is available where she lives. Ultimately, she realizes “The Ways are The Ways,” and they aren’t much different from each other. Currently, her primary community is the Teosyepé, and her primary activities revolve around that community.

Negative case analysis: The “only time” Pat’s race became an issue was when her sister dated an African American man, causing conflict in
her family. Pat was a child, and her only experience with African Americans was linked to her family breaking up. She directed her hatred toward Blacks until she was an early adolescent, when her anger subsided and she focused on the universality of all people. As an adult, Pat described feeling more accepted by "full bloods living on a reservation" than by some people with "half blood." Pat doesn’t "consider [her]self a White," but a "human being."

**Segmented identification with multiple aspects of identity.** Four women described instances when one aspect of their identity was highlighted while other aspects of identity remained in the background. Segmented identification occurred during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood.

Delisa struggled to understand racism and its impact on her, when she first experienced it in graduate school. Delisa also recognized that her race or gender is highlighted "depending on who the person is that [she’s] encountering."

...for White men, I don’t see myself as being a woman ... For Black men (pause), they do see me as a woman. Have difficulty with it sometimes because of my appearance, you know, that I don’t fit some of the stereotypes but, they do understand I’m a woman, and they do treat me like a woman ... So it’s not necessarily from me, it’s not necessarily internally derived, but it’s more derived from what kind of environment I’m going to be in.

Rickie acknowledged, "... there are times in [her] life when one or the other [identity], at separate times, is oppressed." After reclaiming her Native American heritage in her thirties, Rickie observes "atrocities" against her culture daily. Rickie described protests and marches she has been involved in during her adult life. Her involvement is related to "all of the different
groups” that she “falls into.” These causes include fighting the moral right, marching for women’s rights, being involved in Native American issues. Throughout her life, Rickie felt “bogged down” by different “distracters.” As a child, her disability was prevalent. As a girl with a boy’s name and as a woman with a man’s job, Rickie identified with her female identity. Married to her husband, Rickie didn’t realize she was lesbian and only felt oppressed in the marriage. After realizing she was lesbian, Rickie remained closeted, which was a “self-imposed” oppression.

In India, Lila began to understand collectivism as a part of her Indian identity. At seventeen, she returned to the United States and the American, individualistic part of her identity “…started becoming uncomfortable, because it didn’t fit into the collective.” She felt “hurt very badly” by the way she and others like her were treated. In college, she decided become a vegetarian and questioned why she needed to eat meat.

As a child, Randy was aware of having limited opportunities as a girl, but she focused on her Jewish culture during holiday season, when mainstream culture celebrated Christmas and people made assumptions about her religious background. In her thirties, after a period of working primarily with women, Randy began working with men and admitted “there was something appealing” about flirting with them. Currently, in her Buddhist organization, Randy pays close attention to those who tend to use sexist language.

Intersected identification with combined aspects of identity. All five of the women with multiple identities described identifying with their combined identities, which typically occurred in early and middle adulthood.

Throughout her adulthood, Delisa experiences the world and encounters oppression “as a Black woman.” She emphasized that she doesn’t analyze it,
and has nothing to compare it to, because she doesn’t “know how White women do it.” Delisa notices the “soul food” products sold in the grocery store, because she’s “an African American woman,” and sees that “somebody else is cooking greens,” and she doesn’t have to.

In late adolescence, Lila struggled with the conflict between her gender and ethnicity, and was told that she was “not being true to [her] ethnic heritage” if she believed feminist ideas. Currently, Lila emphasizes that each aspect of her identity is part of her entire self: “This is who I am … This is what an Indian looks like. This is what a woman looks like. This is what a heterosexual person is like.”

In her late forties, Rickie includes all aspects of her identity when she describes her understanding of oppression: “As a mother, a lesbian, a woman, a Native American, a disabled person, woman of color, however you term, O.K. … I feel the other people’s oppression. I understand it because I know it.” Incorporating her multiple identities, Rickie described herself as “a package deal now.” Although she experiences oppression for separate identities at different times, “… more than not, it’s in all of it. I think it doesn’t matter. Oppression is negative.”

Randy acknowledged that her identity became increasingly complex throughout her development and she was unable to “separate out each of the identities” because she is “one person.” Throughout adolescence and early adulthood, she used to “congregate with people” like herself. Randy emphasized the uniqueness of the “Jewish lesbian thing,” adding that she primarily interacted with other Jewish, feminist lesbians during late adolescence and early adulthood.
In her mid-forties, Kay alluded to the intersection of her identities as a result of her involvement in the Teosyepé: "... you’re a whole complete being, by yourself. Being with the rest of The People just makes you (pause) a part of a bigger circle."

**Summary.** Passive acceptance of identity occurred for each woman at different periods in her life, consistent with the MIM tenet that the model is not developmental. Upon closer examination, however, this category appears to overlap with the OTAID model’s Individuation phase. Each woman referred to accepting systemic beliefs about her ethnicity, race, or gender. The common factor linking these different experiences appeared to be accepting assumptions within a systemic framework. Kay’s systemic framework was her family and its power structure. Randy, Lila, and Pat referred to assumptions within the grade school structure. Delisa referred to the systemic beliefs of her graduate school. Lila also described the assumptions tied to mainstream culture. Rickie accepted her role as wife in the institution of marriage.

Conscious identification with one aspect of identity occurred with each woman, but under different circumstances. This component of the MIM appears to overlap with the Dissonance and Immersion phases of the OTAID model. Four women (Lila, Rickie, Randy, and Pat) described identifying with one aspect of identity when the minority experience was most prevalent and when some level of conflict was present. Identification with one aspect of identity also appeared to occur when four women (Delisa, Randy, Kay, and Lila) became actively involved or immersed in that aspect of identity.

Segmented identification of multiple aspects of identity occurred at different points in four women’s lives. Delisa, Rickie, Lila, and Randy emphasized how the identity focus differs, depending on the situation and the
people involved. Situations in which discrimination against one identity occurs appear to be the main reason for heightened awareness of one aspect of identity. Segmented identification appeared to occur during discriminatory experiences, after a stable sense of self had been attained. In the OTAID model, characteristics of segmented identification may represent a combination of developmental progress at least reaching the Internalization phase, accompanied by a backward spiraling movement to the Dissonance phase. A pattern of responses with less conflict and less distress may stem from a more stable sense of self and an increased sense of security gained in the Internalization phase. Examples of segmented identification were present during three of the four women’s childhoods, suggesting the potential for rapid development through four phases of the OTAID model or the potential confounds to the direct relationships between the MIM and the OTAID.

Intersected identification of multiple aspects of identity appeared in late adolescence for Lila and Randy; in early adulthood for Delisa; and in middle adulthood for Rickie and Kay. Accepting multiple aspects of identity as their entire identity, the intersected identification could reflect three later OTAID phases: Internalization, Integration, and Transformation. Although the MIM is not presented as a developmental model, Intersected identification was absent during each participant’s childhood and early adolescence.

**Harmful Impact of Environment**

Examples of how environmental influences were harmful to women’s identity development are presented in the following three categories: (a) the presence of a an environment with limited opportunities, (b) feeling out of
place, and (c) the sociopolitical impact of government, social mores, and stereotypes.

**Limited opportunities.** Four of the six women discussed the limitations of their environment, particularly the lack of opportunities available to them.

Lila believes we reflect our environment. Currently living in a town without much diversity negatively impacts her self-concept and work efficacy. Lila has not found people with similar ethnic backgrounds, and has begun having difficulty coming up with ideas at work. Before going to India, Lila never had “… Indian friends ‘cause there weren’t any.” Most of her friends were European American.

Growing up in an era where only boys had organized sports, Randy did not have the opportunity to participate in sports activities. At that time, she accepted that limitation because girls’ sports were “… just not something that [they] did in [her] town.” In high school, Randy’s chemistry teacher didn’t think it was important for girls to learn science, so he “… passed all the girls … and he didn’t want to do anything to help us when we were struggling.”

Currently, Randy feels limited by the lack of racial diversity in her Buddhist community. Her community is located in a less diverse part of the city, providing limited opportunities for growth within her organization.

Kay explored her heritage and, dissatisfied with the bias in references she found, believed that “there had to be more than what was in history books and story books … It is very difficult for me just to tell (pause) from reading something whether it’s true or not. And I just wasn’t getting what I needed to know about my heritage.” Kay also searched to learn about Native American spirituality through experience because “You can’t write it down! The words don’t even begin (pause) to explain.”
Feel out of place. Three of the six women described environments in which they felt out of place.

Randy attended a Jesuit university, and being Jewish, felt “extremely uncomfortable” and “unsafe.” Kay’s response to the statement that high school years are the best years of your life is: “That is the biggest lie, I have ever heard in my life … because (slight pause) when you’re different it’s not.” Kay could not be part of society because “it just felt awkward. Like [she] was trying to do or be something that [she] wasn’t.” Life felt “really hard” while she was trying to figure out what was right for her.

Growing up in the United States, Lila felt “different” because non-Indian people always focused on her ethnicity. In India, she felt out of place because she was American, and had feminist ideas that challenged traditional Indian customs.

Sociopolitical influence. All six participants described the harmful effect of institutional and systemic influences on their identity development.

Five women described laws and government policies impacting their development. As a Native American, Rickie sees “atrocities every day” and knows “there’s never been a treaty that’s not been broken.” Rickie is involved with a group trying to fight the government’s placement of a nuclear test site on a Western Shoshoni reservation. The government broke a treaty by “giving” the Indians land, and then placing a nuclear plant on it. Rickie described government rationale: “Well, if we have any fallout, we’ll just (pause) be killin’ Injuns anyway (sarcastic tone) and (pause) so what.”

Kay tried to inform lawmakers of the devastation of the Navajo who were moved off their reservation at the Four Corners. A dispute between the Hopi
and the Navajo was the reason provided to the public. Kay emphasized the underlying issue was Peabody mining and mineral rights. She described the effect of mining on the Navajo and Hopi people:

... what wasn’t being understood and what was never looked at, and should have been, were these peoples’ First Amendment rights were being violated, as they were being moved. (pause) Because their spirituality is connected to that land. Those four mountains there are very important to them. That’s their life.

Other devastating effects of the mining included the death of people who built homes out of Uranium residue, which became too hot for healthy living. Moving people off the reservation caused them to lose a “self-subsistent” lifestyle, one with sheep farming and without utility bills. This transition took away their “purpose in life” and “it was basically genocide.” Because of mainstream news coverage, “… most of society knew nothing about it.”

Delisa observed that financial cutbacks of the 1980’s targeted artistic and cultural expression, thus preventing us from learning about other cultures and other people.

After hearing about the recent election of “all these Republicans,” Lila felt scared “at a gut level.” She expressed conflict about how the sociopolitical climate influenced her development: “It’s not safe. And so, … [her development has] been slower, the process of kind of coming to where I am today. And that’s hard to talk about because I wouldn’t be who I am today if it wasn’t the way it is.”

**Negative case analysis.** Pat asserted that “society” is “… cruel to anybody who is different—You know, a different color of skin, … or you’re blind or you’re deaf … Or you know, if you’re from a— a
different religion.” From Pat’s perspective, the current economy is “worse than it was back in the sixties and ... seventies.”

Three of the women discussed the impact of social mores, which reflected the zeitgeist. Growing up in the late fifties and early sixties, Randy’s social activities did not include peers from other races. The city was “racially divided ... Above a certain street where the high school was, it was a very Black area, and according to our upbringing at that time, never the twain shall meet.”

As a young adult, Randy had a “large community of other Jewish lesbian friends.” At that time “Separatism was really in ... You basically went to get strong hanging out with other people, other women, and other lesbians like yourself.” At that time, “nobody was into spirituality ... It was all about politics.” The feminist dictum, “The personal is political” influenced anything Randy was going through.

Randy’s move toward a holistic, spiritual direction was influenced by the woman she was involved with and by the “beginning of the new age movement.” Randy’s decision to become Buddhist was also influenced by the zeitgeist. She sought advice from a Buddhist woman, who stated that Judaism had a capacity to “save people” at one point in history and Buddhism “was the right practice at this time in history ... to affect more people more dramatically to create a peaceful world.”

In the United States, Lila received a “very strong message ... that sons are better than daughters” from other Indian families, from Indian movies, and from Indian customs. In India, Lila observed how her mother was treated by “[Lila’s] dad, and his family, by her family, by other people in society.” Because they divorced, everyone assumed Lila’s mother “… must have done
something wrong.” Lila’s sense of self extended to her family, so her mother’s shame was Lila’s shame.

Despite being a United States citizen, Lila realized that in the United States, “... every time [she] took a step, [she] hesitated (pause) because [she] did not feel ... welcome in this place.” She did not realize she hesitated until she lived in India and, realizing she did not hesitate to take a step, could compare the difference between feeling unwelcome and welcome in a culture. Returning to the United States, she experienced the hesitancy once again.

Lila’s creativity has been suppressed in an oppressive environment. Initially, she questioned her own competence, but when she heard other people with the same racial backgrounds saying the same thing, she concluded “... there’s gotta be something more to this. It’s gotta be more systematic than I’m thinking.”

Kay asserted the difficulty of accepting people for who they are when “you’re being told how you should be” by the television, radio, and newspapers. When people are so “wrapped up in projecting this image so that they will be accepted by the people around them, ... they don’t notice what really is around them. And that’s sad. And having been there, it’s empty. (slight laugh) Really empty.” She also observed that Native Americans who “became a part of general society had a really hard time when they first come out” to the Teosyépé. They have a difficult time “letting go” of mainstream society’s definitions of women’s and men’s work and “allowing” the work to be the community’s.

Kay discussed the impact of stereotypes. After reconnecting with her heritage, Kay has noticed that “once [people] find out what your background is ... they look at you in that way that Hollywood taught them how.” She then
has to try and "undo" their misconceptions, sometimes succeeding, at other times failing, depending on the other person’s openness. Talking with an acquaintance, Kay described the completely different perspectives they had. Her acquaintance asked if Kay watched T.V., sat in chairs, and used dishes. The woman was perplexed by her Native American relative’s statement: “I can’t wait to get back on the reservation where it’s civilized.” Kay responded with a smile, saying “I understand. I know what she means.” Kay said:

It’s difficult … to help people understand where you come from. (pause) So the topic of who you are and what you are, comes up as little as possible, in general society because (pause) most people don’t want to hear it. They just want you to fit in.

**Nurturing Impact of Environment**

All six women described aspects of their environments that nurtured their identity development, including geographic location, people, events, and the sociopolitical climate. Positive environmental influence resulted in (a) a heightened awareness, (b) a sense of belonging, and (c) support and affirmation. Finally, the positive influence of sociopolitical events is presented.

**Heightened awareness.** Delisa, Lila, and Randy acknowledged how their environments heightened their awareness. Delisa lived in an integrated neighborhood, and her high school was primarily a mix of Black and White students. She was in the first generation of students being bussed into her school. She became aware of cultural, and especially economic differences. When she moved to a more racially diverse state where she encountered Asian and Latino classmates for the first time. Delisa recalled that the “cultural movement of the 70’s” enabled people to learn about each other.
In India, Lila mostly interacted with people who were vegetarians, and she became more aware of vegetarian lifestyles. All the “... healthy people (laughing) running around, who’ve never eaten meat in their lives [and] don’t even eat eggs” challenged the myth Lila had heard in the United States about vegetarianism is unhealthy. She also learned about her culture, including the way a person’s family defines that person and the importance of non-verbal communication. At her boarding school, Lila met peers from several different countries such as England, Kuwait, Abu Dabi, and Africa. She was also exposed to different religions, through peers who were Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu.

As a teenager, Randy felt “fired up” by a lesbian who was speaking at a women’s rally. At that point, Randy was “starting to feel conflict within [her]self.” Randy was highly influenced by the feminist movement, when “It was just like the beginning of having a voice and expressing all kinds of feelings about equality and repression, suppression, oppression and all of that.” Listening to folk music and reading poetry, Randy was “doing the young hippie thing” during the Vietnam War.

Currently, Randy lives with a European American woman who has “energy for [racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual orientation] diversity” and has helped Randy “really look at those issues in [her] life.” This woman has helped Randy explore the diversity in their Buddhist organization, as well as their circle of friends.

Lila, Rickie, and Pat discussed significant events which heightened their awareness. As a child living in a metropolitan area, Lila watched Indian movies at the theater and was exposed to the Hindi language. At home, Lila’s parents’ spoke the language of their sub-ethnic group. As an adult, Lila
watched a short film about Muslim women that cleared up the conflict she felt between her sex and ethnicity. She described the film as a “frieeing experience” because it explained how “… Western people have used (pause) the sexism, that [Lila] experienced … to put down … [her] ethnicity.” Lila would hear people from other cultures identify sexist Indian traditions (such as female infanticide) and then denigrate her Indian ethnicity because it is sexist. After seeing the film, Lila recognized that these people focused on her culture’s sexism without investigating the sexism within their culture. After Lila could identify sexism as a world-wide phenomenon, she felt less need to choose between her female and ethnic identities.

Rickie lived on the streets for a year and a half, which she described as one of her biggest “growth spurts.” During that time, she learned about herself and other people and she learned to maximize her minimal resources.

**Negative case analysis.** When Pat transferred to a technical college, pow wows occurred “on the college grounds,” providing an environment in which she could more fully explore Native American culture.

**Sense of belonging.** Randy, Lila, Rickie, and Kay described how groups of people, both informal and formal, provided a sense of belonging. After Randy came out as a lesbian, she moved to a metropolitan city and decided to adopt the “look” of “all these other little dykettes.”

Lila also felt like she finally belonged when she arrived in India because she suddenly saw parts of her “being reflected … And because it felt so good, [she] would notice ‘This is being reflected’, and realize, ‘This is part of being Indian.” She noticed that she did not hesitate as she walked, “because it was like [her] home,” and she felt like she “belonged.” When she arrived in India,
Lila also felt a sense of belonging because girls “swarmed” around her wanting to be her friend. This collective effort contrasted with the American assumption that an individual in a new situation is responsible to go and make new friends. When she returned to the United States and attended college, Lila discovered how much she had much in common with other Asian Americans.

Rickie found a “sense of belonging” by joining the Catholic church in elementary school and believing and becoming involved in sociopolitical “causes.”

Kay’s first sweat lodge experience was like a rebirth. Immediately, she knew that she “came home” and that she “finally found” what she had been looking for all her life.

**Support and affirmation.** Delisa, Lila, and Kay received support from people in their environment. Academically, Delisa was encouraged by family members, teachers, and peers. Lila was encouraged by her parents to be proud of her Indian heritage by celebrating Diwali and attending Indian activities. As a child, Kay learned not to ask questions. In her Teosyépé, however, questions are encouraged, and Kay rediscovered her voice.

Delisa described sociopolitical influences affirming her identity as an African American woman. During late adolescence and early adulthood, the “expression of Black culture” was emerging, and had a positive impact on Delisa. She began to see Black actors on television and Black bookstores began to emerge. Recently, Delisa has been impacted “in a wonderful way” by “the African-centered, Afrocentric, intellectual and political and spiritual” movement.
Kay described feeling support and affirmation through her ancestral lineage. Referring to Native American origins on North America, Kay believes that “Places are very powerful” because “a carryover of energy” exists from previous generations.

**Reaction to Environment**

Participants described four types of reactions to environmental presses: (a) finding an alternative to the norm, (b) fighting back, (c) ignoring or rejecting, and (d) shifting previous attitudes to more closely match environmental influences.

**Alternative to norm.** Rickie, Kay, and Pat described attitudes and behaviors they accepted to replace attitudes and behaviors supported by people and institutions in their environment.

Living in the South, Rickie “saw prejudice big time” and decided she didn’t want to treat others unfairly.

Rather than a mainstream belief system, Kay espouses beliefs Kay described a Native American prophecy that was fulfilled by the recent birth of a white buffalo calf, which represents White Buffalo Calf Woman who brought the peace pipe to Native Americans. The birth of this calf signifies “a time for unity.” The prophecies also describe a “time of purification” that has been here and is “accelerating.” Kay feels accepting of this time, and realizes that people aren’t going to change. She described the earth as a living entity: “... like a dog that has too many fleas, she will shake everything off.”

**Negative case analysis.** Pat plans to do “in-home schooling” because she “[doesn’t] like the systems anymore. [She doesn’t] believe in them.” The mother of two young children, Pat wants them to grow up
knowing that as human beings, they are important. It doesn’t matter what color of skin, color of eyes, and religion they have. Although Pat “... was never really put in a situation of feeling made fun of in any way,” it has “… become so much more apparent, on TV, in what you hear about on talk shows and things like that.” She has vicariously observed religious discrimination, informal segregation that occurs between members from different racial, religious, and economic backgrounds.

Fight. Rickie and Randy described ways they fight political movements and people which respond negatively to some aspect of their identity.

Rickie plans to fight the “moral right,” a current political movement proposing legislative bills which would legally support anti-gay discrimination for housing, jobs, and marriage rights. The moral right supports “family values” and says lesbians and gays should not be allowed to have what the moral right perceives to be “special rights.” Rickie believes their argument is “… a crock, because there are too many things they can discriminate against” gays and lesbians.

Randy stated that “the way people respond to … whatever you put out there and what they perceive you are (pause) ... helped me to (pause) form my identity—or feel attached to my identity, or go against something.”

Ignore or reject. Lila, Kay, and Delisa described ignoring or rejecting environmental influences which did not apply to their experience or were conflictual.

Lila became more aware of religious differences when she observed Hindu-Muslim riots in India. Attending Catholic school, she learned that “if you’re not Christian, you’re not saved, and you’ll go to hell.” At that time, she
also questioned sexist practices in most religions. With so many conflicting messages, Lila rejected religion entirely.

Kay’s response to a KKK rally was to “let people be,” because seven clansmen posed no threat to one thousand demonstrators. If they had posed a threat, Kay would have been part of a group who “expressed their point of view” and then “let it go.”

The women’s movement that “dovetailed” off the civil rights movement did not reflect Delisa’s experience: “Women wanting the right to work made no sense to me. Because my mother always worked, and my grandmother always worked.”

Shift attitude. Only Randy described shifting her attitude based on environmental influences. Randy and her friends started to be more “hippie-like radicals” during the “whole time of questioning the society and everything in it,” from the Vietnam War to dress codes. By the end of high school, the war had “come into full flourish,” and Randy was “pretty left-leaning at that point.” After a long period of being away from men, Randy was in a working environment with men. The flirting that occurred was “appealing” in some way.

Discrepancy

Kay de-emphasized the role of environmental influences, emphasizing that her agency in her relationship with the environment:

Life was just so difficult. (pause) And I don’t think it was that the things outside of me made life difficult; it’s the way I was seeing things (pause) that made life really difficult for me. (pause) And rather than change the way I was seeing things, I needed to find (pause) the answer to it. I needed to find (pause) where this perception was coming from. And I finally did. But in doing it, I lived a lot of different lives.
Credibility

Randy asked about the “age variance” of the women participating in the study. She suggested that talking with a woman in her fifties or “somebody’s mother” would be “really interesting” because they developed in a different sociopolitical era. Randy stated that even the oldest participant in the study, at the age of 47, was raised during a “time of upheaval.” Randy suggested differences in identity development may be evident when comparing individuals whose development preceded or followed the civil rights movement.

Summary

The MIM provides a useful framework with which to view each participant’s data. Together, the OTAID and MIM can be used to describe the interaction of environmental and developmental factors. Environmental factors can be both harmful and nurturing to multiple identity development. The harmful aspects were related to feeling of isolation, as reflected in an environment with little diversity, and a perception of larger systemic influences, as reflected in media stereotypes and government policies. The nurturing environments included communities in which women felt support, affirmation, and a sense of belonging — small groups, such as organizations, circles of friends, and spiritual communities.

Randy believes her identity is a “combination” of many factors, including sociopolitical, familial, and historical:

... how’d I end up being born (pause) me ... How’d I end up being born in that family at this time in history (slight pause) ... a time of great upheaval (slight pause) where people were really looking at ... all these issues of freedom. Personal freedom.
Political freedom. Individuality. The great rebellion after the fifties.

She emphasized that societal events coinciding with developmental stages are “critical,” and that she is “very much a product in part, of the time that [she] grew up in.” The questions Randy asked are appropriate for the role of the environment in identity development. Although these results do not provide the answers to her questions, they do indicate the important role of the environmental factors in identity development.
Integration and Transformation

In each participant’s individual profile, I included interview data reflecting Integration and Transformation tenets. Following each individual profile, theoretical notes address the participant’s current phase of identity development. The following section depicts a summary of theoretical observations for all participants. Each tenet is represented by a circle. Names inside of the circle indicate participants who reflected that tenet. Names outside of the circle represent participants who contradicted that tenet. If names are neither inside nor outside, data were not present to support or contradict that tenet. The size of each circle is proportionate to the number of participants supporting its respective tenet. For each name in the circle, its radius increases by 1/8 inch, producing the following measurements: two names = 1/4 inch; three names = 3/8 inch; four names = 1/2 inch; five names = 5/8 inch; and 6 names = 3/4 inch.

A summary of the Integration phase is presented in Figure 1. Tenets of this phase were identified in each participant’s interview data. Figure 1 presents four tenets of the Integration phase: (a) a stronger sense of inner security and inner peace; (b) an expanded sense of community; (c) greater unconditional positive regard for all people; and (d) a shift toward understanding how oppression reflects the nature of one’s worldview (Myers et al., 1991).

A summary of the Transformation phase is presented in Figure 2. Tenets of this phase were identified in each participant’s interview data, although the number of tenets varied across individuals. Figure 2 incorporates seven tenets of the Transformation phase: (a) an expanded sense of self, which includes
ancestors, nature, and community; (b) a recognition of the interrelatedness of all things; (c) an optimal worldview, which challenges institutional oppression and includes a deep understanding of culture and history; (d) the centrality of spirituality; (e) a de-emphasis on material wealth; (f) accepting and valuing human diversity; and (g) accepting and understanding challenging life events as growthful (Myers et al., 1991). A theme related to spiritual development emerged in this study: the incompatibility of modern, mainstream religion with current spirituality. I included this emerging theme in the depiction of the Transformation phase, because the theme was present with all five women who represented Transformation.
Greater inner security and peace

Greater acceptance of all people

Understand all people can oppress or be oppressed

Expanded sense of community

Figure 1
Integration Phase
Figure 2
Transformation Phase

- Centrality of spirituality
- Expanded Sense of Self
- De-emphasis on material wealth to attain happiness
- All life events growthful
- Holistic understanding of culture and history
- Modern, mainstream religion incompatible with spiritual beliefs
- Value human diversity
- Interrelatedness of all

Lila
Rickie
Delisa
Kay
Randy
Pat
Summary

This chapter began with a presentation of each participant, paraphrased and quoted from interview transcripts. Each profile contained the context of the interview, a demographic description, a chronological summary, my theoretical notes, and a section addressing credibility. Second, I presented exploratory research regarding the experience of having multiple identities, using eight emerging themes. Third, subsequent and concurrent patterns of identity development were presented. Concurrent patterns resulted in identities having a positive or conflictual impact on each other. Fourth, I described participants’ views on their process of identity development. Two emerging themes, survival and naming identity or oppression, provided additional insight into the process of identity development. Fifth, the environmental influence on identity development was addressed using the MIM, noting the harmful and nurturing impact of the environment, and describing participants’ reactions to their environment. Finally, tenets of the OTAID’s Integration and Transformation phases were presented graphically.

The following chapter includes a discussion of the results within the framework of identity development literature.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss the data by weaving research questions and emerging themes together. First, I address the experience of multiple identities, emphasizing the differences and similarities between visible and invisible minorities. Second, I present subsequent, concurrent, and spiral patterns of identity development. Third, I discuss how the identity development process highlights the interplay of multiple identities, developmental processes, and the environment; survival mechanisms; and how individuals achieve a deeper understanding of self. Fourth, I juxtapose the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) against each phase of the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development model (OTAID; Myers et al., 1991) and the resulting theoretical implications. Fifth, I discuss insights and questions regarding spirituality and the exploratory analyses of the Integration and Transformation phases. Sixth, I discuss the limitations of this study’s sample, method, and analyses. Seventh, considering
limitations, I suggest ideas for future research. Finally, I present this study’s implications for research and practice in the field of counseling psychology.

**Research Questions**

**Experiencing Multiple Identities**

The relative lack of literature is my primary impetus for exploring multiple identity development. Atkinson et al. (1993) concluded that minority groups share the common experience of discrimination. Atkinson et al. (1993) failed to address single versus multiple minority identity status. In this study, women with multiple minority status did not demonstrate support of Atkinson’s theory. All five women with multiple identities (Delisa, Randy, Kay, and Lila) stressed the *uniqueness* of her identity. In addition, four of the five women with multiple identities (Rickie, Delisa, Lila, and Kay) stated that although they experience discrimination and are aware of groups being oppressed, they do not feel oppressed as individuals at this point in their lives. They did, however, recall feeling oppressed at earlier periods in their lives. During childhood, for example, Rickie felt discriminated against because of her physical disability and sex, Lila and Kay felt some internal conflict when they felt that some aspect of their identity was devalued, and Delisa’s exposure to discrimination was primarily vicarious. During adolescence, these four women became more aware of inequalities based on some aspect of their identity. Lila and Delisa’s awareness occurred within a cultural framework (i.e., recognizing sexism within their ethnic or racial group). Rickie and Kay faced environmental challenges, such as sexist attitudes at work and socioeconomic struggles. In early adulthood, the discriminatory experiences
were still present, but all four women described having increased self-confidence and a greater understanding of the external source of oppression.

Randy was the only woman who described feeling oppressed currently and in the past. She described being denied opportunities in her life, but institutional barriers (i.e., Judaism, educational systems) had a greater impact during her childhood and adolescence. Currently (in middle adulthood) she acknowledges oppression, but it does not appear to be a major road block, as it had been earlier in her life. Randy's stance may be attributed to a broader definition of oppression, in which societal challenges (rather than denied opportunities) are viewed as oppressive. Her daily Buddhist practice focuses on striving for world peace, which has not been attained. This spiritual practice and her deepened spirituality also may have influenced her description of oppression — as long as one person is oppressed, we all are.

Referring to racial and ethnic minorities, Ogbo (1994) defined "involuntary minorities" as groups of people whose ancestors were "... incorporated into U.S. society against their will by Euro-Americans through slavery, conquest, or colonization." Ogbo (1994) reviewed ethnographic literature, concluding involuntary minorities across developmental periods have an "oppositional cultural frame of reference" with which to express opposition to the dominant group. This dynamic with the dominant culture was most closely reflected in this study when participants described their nonconformity, their rebelliousness, and their shattering others’ stereotypes about their identities. All five women with multiple identities described their tendency to be nonconformist. Four of five women with multiple identities (Delisa, Randy, Kay, and Lila) discussed their focus on shattering stereotypes.
Atkinson et al. (1993) suggested that common experiences of discrimination are shared, without specifying the effect of discrimination on the individual. In this study, women with multiple identities described emotional responses and periods of isolation. For example, all five women with multiple identities described feeling angry about the inequalities they have faced. Lila, Rickie, and Randy identified the positive aspects of anger; Delisa stated her anger is usually prompted by situations; and Kay’s anger “dissolved” after she began practicing Native American spirituality. Three of the five women with multiple identities (Lila, Rickie, and Kay) described feelings of sadness associated with painful events. Three of the five women with multiple identities (Randy, Lila, and Delisa) described periods of shock, often associated with an eye-opening experience that contradicted what they had previously known. Lila and Kay described a numbing of emotions in response to overwhelming hurt and anger. Two women felt confused about their identities — Lila about the conflicts between her sex and her ethnicity, and Randy about her sexual orientation.

Women with single identities may also experience these emotional responses and feelings of isolation. In this study, Pat’s (single identity) emotional reactions to discrimination were less intense and lasted for a shorter duration than did emotional responses of the five women with multiple identities. Pat also did not describe feeling isolated. As a European American woman, she has greater chances of being understood by others with similar backgrounds. Because women with multiple identities share the same aspects of identity with fewer people, the likelihood of experiencing isolation is increased.
The five women with multiple identities described their identity from intersected perspectives, across sex, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and disability status. Their integrated perspectives challenge Chan’s (1989) findings, in which 30 of 35 participants (aged 21-36 years) identified as either gay/lesbian or Asian American. Chan (1989) described behaviors (i.e., attending mainstream lesbian and gay events) which indicate segmented identification and suggested possible reasons for this segmentation — environmental (i.e., disclosure of sexual orientation to family) and sociopolitical factors (i.e., homophobia in Asian American community).

Four of the five women with multiple identities (Rickie, Lila, Kay, and Randy) recalled discriminatory experiences from a single minority perspective, supporting Chan’s (1989) suggestion that environmental factors are related to segmented identification. During childhood and adolescence, each woman experienced discrimination from their classmates at school. Children made fun of Rickie’s disabilities, Lila’s classmates focused on how different her Indian ethnicity was, Kay felt like an outsider because of her low socioeconomic status, and Randy experienced limited opportunities for her social activities because of her ethnicity and sex. In adolescence, Lila and Randy began viewing experiences through the perspective of multiple aspects of identity. Describing job discrimination and stifling relationships with men, Rickie and Kay focused primarily on their sex during early adulthood. Discovering a missing piece of identity in early adulthood (lesbian identity for Rickie, Native American spirituality for Kay) appeared to help them shift from a single to multiple identity perspective.

Two participants (Delisa and Lila) emphasized the difference between oppression (being denied opportunities) and discrimination (being treated
unfairly on the basis of minority status). The other four participants appeared to use “discrimination,” “prejudiced,” and “oppressed” interchangeably. Pat (negative case) and Kay often described discriminatory situations without using these labels. Delisa and Lila have the highest levels of education, which may be related to their distinction between oppression and discrimination. Although participants in this study used these words with varying levels of specificity, their definitions all included the presence of inequality.

**Visible and invisible minorities.** An emerging theme in this study was the comparison of visible versus invisible minority identities, as reflected in physical characteristics. Expanding Root’s (1990) discussion of biracial identity development to that of multiple identity development provides a framework with which to compare visible and invisible aspects of identity. All five women with multiple identities are visibly female. Lila and Delisa are the only two with physical characteristics revealing their racial backgrounds — Indian American and African American, respectively. Rickie’s disability is visible when she uses ambulatory aids, such as crutches and a wheelchair. Invisible minority status is present for Rickie and Kay, both of whom are biracial with European American and Native American backgrounds. Randy’s Jewish ethnicity and lesbian sexual orientation are invisible, as is Rickie’s lesbian sexual orientation.

Visible identities were addressed at earlier ages than were invisible identities, consistent with Root’s (1990) assertion that physical characteristics prompt reactions (first neutral acknowledgment, then negative attention) from others who can observe a biracial person’s identity. Sex was visible for each participant, and their greatest conflicts occurred with patriarchal, mainstream society (Kay, Pat, and Randy) and sexist attitudes within their own ethnic or
racial group (Delisa, Lila, and Pat). Being female is viewed as positive within Native American tradition, thus influencing female identity development of the three women who culturally identify as Native American (Kay, Rickie, and Pat). Perhaps these three women are more connected with the indigenous, matrilineal history of Native American culture. Both Kay and Pat emphasized how women are respected, valued, and have power within Native American culture. In a cross-cultural comparison, Rickie was proud of the matrilineal history of Native American culture. These three women also described a primary cultural belief that all life forms are equal, which would be consistent with their experience of feeling affirmed as women within their culture. Although Lila and Delisa described sexist practices within their ethnic cultures, they also felt affirmed as women by learning about female ancestors. This affirmation of participants’ female identity is consistent with the OTAID model’s emphasis on accepting a worldview consistent with indigenous roots of an individual’s culture.

Women with invisible identities tended to become aware and accept their invisible identities later in life. Randy’s Jewish identity was an exception — she has been highly aware of her Jewish cultural identity since childhood. Becoming Buddhist in middle adulthood, Randy readily accepted her new religious identity, which was also invisible. Rickie addressed both her disability and role as a female since childhood. She was not aware of her lesbian identity until she was 27 years old. Although she was aware of her Native American identity, she did not actively explore it until her late twenties and early thirties. Kay was also aware of her Native American heritage during childhood, but she did not fully explore it until her early thirties. Randy’s process of accepting her lesbian identity involved confusion and variability.
Lila discussed the difference between socioeconomic status and her visible aspects of identity. She is aware of economic class through her experiences living in two extreme economic levels. Although socioeconomic class could be considered invisible, Pat, Delisa, and Kay referred to external manifestations of socioeconomic status. During childhood and adolescence, Delisa observed differences between her middle class background and peers from lower economic classes, but she did not discuss her identity in economic terms. Growing up, Kay recalled feeling like an outsider at school because her appearance, which was important to her, revealed her lower socioeconomic background. Pat did not struggle with socioeconomic status issues until she and her husband needed government assistance to survive.

The level of parental acceptance and openness to both visible and invisible minority identity appears to be a critical factor in determining an individual’s level of self-acceptance, supporting Root’s (1990) assertion that the family environment assists biracial individuals embrace both aspects of their identity. Kay, Rickie, and Randy all had invisible components of identity ignored or spurned by their parents. Invisible minority identities shared with parents, such as low socioeconomic status, surfaced in situational conflicts. Kay, for example, only described conflict about her low socioeconomic status when she was at school. Randy’s parents encouraged her Jewish cultural identification and acceptance of her Jewish identity. However, her mother found it extremely difficult to accept her lesbian identity.

Although visibility of minority status may provide greater parental affirmation and greater ease of self-acceptance, the visibility also is more likely to reduce the choice to deal with discriminatory experiences. A biracial person may be able to “pass” as White, or a lesbian may remain “in the closet.” Racial
minorities, ethnic minorities, and people with physical disabilities do not have the choice to hide.

Another possible explanation for differences between visible and invisible minorities is related to urgency of environmental presses. Rickie and Kay, for example, first worked through their female identity development, which was seriously affected by sexual abuse. What is perceived to be most threatened at different periods of life, in different situations, would be most salient. Being threatened could also refer to a feeling of difference and lack of security with self, as Randy may have felt in a Christian neighborhood, or Lila may have felt as the only Indian student at school. Delisa deepened her understanding of African American culture as an adult, when she was faced with the racist environment of the graduate school she attended.

**Patterns of Identity Development**

Development models applicable to multiple identities, such as the OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991) and R/CID model (Atkinson et al., 1993), do not fully describe how individuals address various aspects of identity. I searched for both subsequent and concurrent patterns of identity development during data analyses. Both patterns were present, although Rickie clearly described a subsequent pattern, and Lila clearly described a concurrent pattern. The other women provided examples of both subsequent and concurrent patterns. Results of this study provide preliminary support for a spiral pattern of development, as posited by the OTAID research team (Myers et al., 1991).

The absence of agreement on a defined pattern of development indicates additional factors need to be considered, such as individual differences, parental attitudes, community experiences, religious influence, and
sociopolitical movements. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) suggested that a parallel process of individual and group identity may be useful in conceptualizing lesbian identity development. Multiple identity development may benefit from a similar conceptualization, with a myriad of parallel processes. A multi-faceted crystal may provide an even more appropriate metaphor for identity development. Although the crystal (person) remains the same, it may look different depending on where the light (resembling focus or awareness) shines.

Subsequent pattern. Most women did not endorse completely working through one identity before another identity was highlighted; however, some patterns emerged regarding the order of identity issues. All five women with multiple identities first addressed identities which were visible, such as sex, race, ethnicity, and physical disability. By observing differences in their environments and having differences pointed out by others, women had heightened awareness at an early age. Women whose identities were not visible, such as biracial heritage, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation, demonstrated a slower pattern of awareness and acceptance.

During childhood and adolescence, female identity and sex roles were the primary focus of four women with multiple identities and Pat, whose single identity was being female. Lila was the only woman to discuss her ethnic and female identities as intertwined, even reflecting on her childhood (pre-India) in this light. Rickie, who addressed her physical disabilities at a young age, was the only woman who discussed another identity preceding a focus on her female identity. Rickie addressed her female identity throughout her childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood by challenging traditionally female roles and becoming a mother. At the age of twenty-seven, she accepted
herself as lesbian, after which she more fully explored her Native American heritage. She described focusing on one identity at different periods in her life, but currently accepts all aspects of her multifaceted identity.

Participants addressed their racial and ethnic issues with greater variation across a developmental framework. Delisa, Lila, and Randy were aware of and dealt with racial and ethnic differences at a young age; Kay and Rickie did not address their Native American half of their ethnic heritage until later in life; Pat experienced racist feelings as a child because of family conflict regarding her sister’s interracial relationship. Environmental factors greatly contributed to the development of participants’ racial and ethnic identities. Two primary environmental factors described by the six women include attitudes of family members and exposure to racial and ethnic diversity at school and in the community.

Lila and Randy shared a more similar pattern than Delisa. In the United States, African American culture is more prevalent than Indian and Jewish cultures, both of which are ethnic, rather than racial, groups. Self-acceptance at a young age may be easier when more resources are available to help children understand their cultures and see themselves reflected in the environment. Delisa was reflected at home, in her peer group at school, in her neighborhood, and at college; Randy and Lila were not reflected across those same situations. Both Randy and Lila became more self-accepting and gained a deeper appreciation of their culture after being completely surrounded by others from the same ethnic group (in India and on a kibbutz in Israel). Going to the home of their ancestral roots, Randy and Lila experienced their culture outside of the struggles associated with being an ethnic minority in the United States of America.
Acceptance at home — whether it be a cultural home or nuclear family home — may be the root of self-acceptance. Kay and Rickie lived in home environments where their Native American heritage was denied and absent. Exploration and self-acceptance of their Native American identity did not occur until middle adulthood, which may be associated with the additional complexity of working through two racial identities with conflicting values. These results are consistent with Root's (1990) assertion that forward propulsion of biracial identity development occurs with the internal conflict that emerges when individuals are exposed to new people, ideas, and environments. These results are also consistent with Kerwin and Ponterotto’s (1995, p. 200) conclusion that, “Development of racial identity would appear to be more complex for individuals with a multiracial heritage as compared to those with a monoracial background.” Pat was raised in a home where her sister's interracial dating caused major conflict. By focusing on how much she hated Blacks, she implied that being White was superior. Her solution was to let her feelings of hatred go by focusing on the universality of people and minimizing differences.

All six participants acknowledged the influence of socioeconomic status on their identity development. Its impact was more evident for the women with low socioeconomic status (Kay, Randy, Rickie) or who had experienced a change from middle to low socioeconomic status (Pat). Kay and Randy described limited opportunities because of low economic status, but Rickie did not focus on her lack of financial resources. Randy and Rickie gained a sense of pride by recognizing the hard work required to survive with limited resources. Kay and Pat currently have different socioeconomic statuses, but they both questioned mainstream ideas about financial resources,
emphasizing the belief that material wealth is unimportant. Lila gained perspective and humility by living in both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. She pays attention to class issues, is aware of the level of poverty, and recognizes that she is fortunate to have the opportunities she has. In high school, Delisa (with an upper middle class background) observed cultural differences in high school based on economic, rather than racial, groups.

Sexual orientation also varied widely across participants. All six participants assumed that they were heterosexual throughout childhood and early adolescence. Lila was the only woman with exposure to accepting attitudes about homosexuality. Randy had a heightened awareness of lesbian sexuality in high school and experienced an extended period of sexual identity confusion, lasting until her early twenties. During their early twenties, Lila, Kay, and Delisa questioned their heterosexuality; Lila physically explored her attraction to a woman who was also questioning her sexual orientation. Rickie, who divorced at the age of twenty-seven, accepted her lesbian identity almost as soon as she experienced it in her late twenties. Although socialization was in place for all six women, only the five women with multiple identities had begun to question and explore their sexual orientations between the ages of 20 and 28.

Although some patterns of subsequent identity development were evident in this study, the patterns include great variation, which may be related to the additional complexity of working through multiple identities. Acknowledging multidimensional aspects of identity, Cross (1995, p. 116) described Negrescence as a "... process during which a single dimension of a person's complex, layered identity is first isolated, for purposes of revitalization and transformation, and then ... re-integrated into the person's total identity
matrix." Consistent with Cross' (1995) conceptualization that a single identity becomes the focus before being reintegrated, each woman with multiple identities described focusing on a single identity at different points in her life. Even when one aspect of identity was being worked through, however, other aspects of identity provided a lens through which each woman viewed, understood, and questioned that aspect of identity. The impact of these background identities (such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) was not easily extracted from the data.

**Concurrent pattern.** Recent models of identity development (Choney et al., 1995; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Myers et al., 1991; Reynolds & Pope, 1991) incorporate simultaneous processing of aspects of identity. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) presented a four-phase model of lesbian identity development with two parallel branches, emphasizing the related but separate paths of individual and group self-identity. Choney et al. (1995) described a health model of acculturation for American Indians using concentric circles within a medicine wheel. This theoretical framework provides flexibility for individuals to move in and out of different levels of acculturation, within four different domains: cognitive, behavioral, social/environmental, and affective/spiritual. Reynolds and Pope (1991) suggested that individuals with multiple minority status may use four possible options to resolve identity issues — passive acceptance of one aspect of self that is assigned by society, conscious identification with one aspect of self, segmented identification with multiple aspects of self, and intersected identification with combined aspects of self. Individuals may move fluidly among these four options, based on personal needs, reference groups, and environmental demands. Myers et al.
(1991) also emphasized the utility of the OTAID model in providing flexibility of differing developmental patterns for multiple minority identities.

Consistent with models emphasizing a simultaneous or fluid model of identity development, all five women with multiple identities exemplified a concurrent pattern of identity development. Although this concurrent pattern was evident at certain points in participants’ lives, the interaction between identities was significant in identity development, providing a positive or conflicting impact. Ethnicity, for example, had a positive impact on four women’s female identity development, both lesbians’ sexual orientations, two women’s spirituality, two women’s age, and one woman’s disability status. Female identity development assisted two women in exploring their sexual orientations. Concurrent multiple identity development also caused some conflict between competing values of two different identity groups. Religion was the most commonly cited source of conflict; all six participants described some aspect of patriarchy negatively impacting their female identity development. Two women described having a conflict between their ethnicity and sex, because of the sexism within their ethnic groups. Two women described conflict between their low socioeconomic status and issues related to female identity development.

Having an ethnic minority background was more frequently referred to as a positive influence on other aspects of identity. Because ethnic minorities experience the impact of oppression, perhaps a greater awareness enables ethnic minority groups to accept a variety of differences within their ethnic group. Two women described the sexism within their ethnic group, and five women described several different patriarchal religions impacting their identity as women. This pattern suggests how power-based oppression may
impact an individual’s multiple minority identity development. Considering environmental factors, the power structure may differ. In this study, ethnicity appeared to have an overriding influence on the development of other identities.

Although affiliation with modern, mainstream religions (Judaism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Baptist) conflicted with all six participants’ female identity development, the three women who practice non-mainstream religions (Buddhism and Dakotah Sioux) described the positive influence these religions have on their female identity development. Both Buddhism and Dakotah Sioux emphasize individual expressions of spirituality and actively involve individuals in spiritual practice. Randy chants daily and practices trying to experience Buddha internally. Kay and Pat are actively involved in sweat lodge ceremonies, and believe that women are respected and valued in their religion. An expanded concept of God, which includes nature and the universe, may also increase the likelihood that women see themselves reflected in a way patriarchal religions (i.e., Judaism, Catholicism, Protestant) do not offer.

Overall, multiple identities positively influenced each other. When conflicts between identities occurred, they were related to systemic, rather than intrapersonal, influences. A concurrent pattern of identity development acknowledges the presence of multiple identities, but does not fully address the complexity of multiple identity development.

**Spiral pattern.** The spiral pattern of development described in the OTAID model provides an alternative, which begins to more fully describe the alternating focus of various multiple identities.
Consistent with the OTAID model, five women directly or indirectly supported a non-linear path of development. Lila, Delisa, Randy, and Pat described their identity development as non-linear or referred to it as circular. Although Rickie did not specifically state a circular process, she described a process in which her experience of being “bogged down” recurred throughout her life. Kay, Rickie, and Lila emphasized the continuity of their identity development. Only Delisa and Pat described a circular process of returning to the place from which they began, providing some support for the OTAID supposition that identity development involves returning to the beginning point, only with more awareness. Kay was the only woman who described experiencing different “stages” in her life. Emphasizing the discreteness of her identity may be related to Kay’s perception that “coming home” to her Native American heritage and spirituality was a literal rebirth.

Using a metaphor confirmed support for a spiral patterns of development. Four (Lila, Delisa, Rickie, and Randy) of the six women used a metaphor involving a process which was repeated over time. More specifically, Rickie and Randy acknowledged having a different response to the same process over time. Randy described being more open and less closed with each cycle. Rickie stated she became wiser and healthier through repeated cycles. Lila and Delisa described a similar pattern involving creation, destruction, and reconstruction. Lila referred to destruction of her own form, and Delisa referred to destruction of external expectations. They considered the destruction limiting, but necessary.

As the metaphors indicate, a similar process can be viewed with extremely different perspectives. Support for a repetitive, spiral pattern of development is encouraging, but the metaphors provide clear reminders that
individuals must have the opportunity to describe their experience. Women in this study share common experiences, but each voice provides a perspective from which to address multiple identity development. A suggested modification to the OTAID spiral for multidimensional identities includes multiple threads spiraling with, in, and around each other.

The identity development of the six participants in this study followed the OTAID’s spiral progression, but multiple identity development must be conceptualized using more complexity. Multiple strands of development within a larger strand may reflect the interweaving patterns of multiple identity development. Within each aspect (or strand) of identity, a process of identity development occurs. This process may be influenced by environmental factors and individual differences, as stated by OTAID theorists. At times, the strands may be intertwined as they proceed through a phase. At other times, one strand may be highlighted while the others remain in the background, proceed forward, or lag behind. An individual may begin with one strand and as she becomes conscious of other aspects of identity, add strands to the main progression as the larger strand becomes thicker. This spiral process, as described in the OTAID model, may follow a different timeline across identity strands. These interrelated spirals occur within a larger spiral, representing the self. How a person views the development of each strand of identity is impacted by the person’s place on the larger spiral representing their identity development.

For example, Randy described first being aware of her Jewish identity. When she became aware of her female identity, her perception occurred through the lenses of her Jewish identity. When she realized she was lesbian, she viewed her sexual orientation within the framework of Jewish culture and
mainstream heterosexual norms. As she developed, each identity was separate yet inextricably linked to the identities she had previously recognized and addressed. Also, her previous identity development issues, such as feeling isolated, contributed to how she viewed and worked through additional identities. She prevented the isolation she felt as a Jewish child in a Christian neighborhood by immersing herself in the lesbian feminist community, which included her closest circle of Jewish lesbian feminist friends.

Pat (negative case) displayed characteristics of three OTAID phases (Integration, Internalization, and Dissonance) demonstrating the interweaving nature of single identity development. With her recent economic struggles, she may, however, be moving into multiple minority status. Through the perspective of her primary Internalization phase, she demonstrated characteristics of the Dissonance phase regarding her socioeconomic identity. This example reflects how multiple strands of identity development may also be applicable to individuals with single identity status.

Identity Development Process

Three primary characteristics of identity development emerged: (1) The interplay of multiple identities, developmental processes, and environmental factors; (2) Survival strategies; and (3) The experience of not feeling oppressed.

Interplay of multiple identities, developmental processes, and environmental factors. Each woman followed a unique path of multiple identity development, with common developmental patterns less evident than environmental influences. Environmental circumstances often determined what identity would be at the forefront of participants’ awareness.
Four women (Lila, Delisa, Rickie, and Randy) described alternating awareness of a single identity, based on environmental factors. As children and adolescents, for example, their focus alternated between their sex and their race (Delisa), ethnicity (Lila and Randy), or disability (Rickie). Kay did not reflect an alternating sequence. She addressed her female identity development for the first thirty years of her life, gradually learning she did not have to endure abuse and unfair treatment from individuals or institutions.

All five women with multiple identities described growth spurts associated with immersion into a nurturing environment or events strongly supporting their identity. In India Lila experienced support for her ethnicity through the sociopolitical structure, the region, her community, school, and home. Randy felt support for her feminist lesbian identity through her community and the feminist movement of the 70’s. At a historically Black college, Delisa experienced consistent support through her education, community, and home. Kay and Rickie experienced growth spurts associated with events enabling them to discover an aspect of identity which had been missing previously. After participating in a ceremonial sweat lodge, Kay described other aspects of her identity falling into place. After experiencing sexual attraction to another woman at age 27, thus recognizing her lesbian identity, Rickie explored her Native American heritage and felt accepting of all aspects of her identity. Developmentally, these growth spurts occurred at different times, including early adolescence, late adolescence, and early adulthood.

Women with multiple identities, and the woman with a single identity, experienced major conflicts from a discriminating environment. As children, Kay and Lila received negative messages about their female identity from
their parents. Lila also received negative messages about her sex from other Indian families and Indian movies. Both Rickie and Kay’s parents passed as White, thus creating a null environment for their ethnic identity. During adolescence, Lila received negative messages about her sex from traditional Indian culture, and Randy’s mother was extremely upset about her daughter’s lesbian identity. During early adulthood, Delisa and Lila experienced shock when entering a dominant European-American environment after an extended period of living in an environment dominated by their racial and ethnic worldviews. Kay, Pat, and Randy — though not experiencing the change in cultural environments as did Delisa and Lila — had increased awareness of their own experiences of discrimination.

Although growth occurred, this process took much longer and involved greater struggle than when the environment was nurturing. This struggle may be associated with the energy required for self-preservation in an environment with collective energy focused on discrimination or with collective energy excluding the individual, as in a null environment. When this collective force stems from a group of trusted individuals, such as family members, the conflict may take longer to resolve, as in the case of Rickie and Kay’s ethnicity, Kay and Lila’s sex, and Randy’s sexual orientation.

Participants also gained a deeper understanding of the multiple aspects of their identities. Myers and her colleagues (1991) described an individual’s primary developmental task as moving “... from a rather segmented way of viewing the world to a more holistic worldview. To attain this holistic worldview, the individual embarks on a journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance” (p. 59). Environmental, developmental, and individual differences greatly impact this journey.
The way in which participants’ multiple identities emerged is consistent with OTAID theory. In addition to the developmental process, environmental factors and specific events spurred the women toward deeper self-understanding. The OTAID research team acknowledged that environmental influences moderate the developmental process. All five women with multiple identities described the strong influence environmental factors had on their identity development: living in India (Lila); attending her first sweat lodge (Kay); facing racism at graduate school (Delisa); attending a Catholic university (Randy); and living on the streets for 18 months (Rickie). Increased exposure to a greater diversity of people and experiences often occurs as individuals mature. The intensity and variety of environmental events (the different impact of a pebble versus a boulder), appears to modify progression along the predicted OTAID developmental course. For example, all three of the women older than 35 (Randy, Kay, and Rickie) described their identity as multi-faceted, indicating that increased age may bring increased self-acceptance. Although they viewed their lives as continually developing, they acknowledge multiple aspects of their identities and have a stable sense of identity.

The two younger participants, Delisa (33) and Lila (23), also described their identity as multi-faceted and stable. Compared to other women in the study, Delisa and Lila have the highest levels of education, in social science fields. Their educational levels and fields of study may have increased their exposure to diversity in and out of the classroom. This greater exposure may have contributed to greater understanding of their personal experiences of discrimination and oppression. Delisa and Lila are also the only women whose race and ethnicity are visible, unlike the three women whose ethnic
minority status is invisible (Kay, Rickie, and Randy). In the United States, race and racial relations have been filled with tension and conflict since European-Americans colonized the “New World.” The overarching racial climate of the United States may have created an environment in which visible racial minorities must face racist experiences across many situations. From an early age, these struggles may provide the impetus for personal exploration, which then leads to growth.

Another possible explanation is that women with multiple minority identities work harder to explore their complex identity and find sources of affirmation. Each of the five women with multiple identities described learning about their identities through immersing themselves in their respective cultures and learning from their history. Pat, a woman with a single minority identity, described spiritual growth and female identity growth, but appeared to have less insight into the struggles associated with racial and ethnic minority development. After experiencing a major racial conflict as a child, her anger dissolved into a color-blind philosophy, in which she emphasizes human universality and ignores human diversity. Currently, she is struggling with her low socioeconomic status and focuses on her anger and the downfalls of society.

Survival. In response to identity struggles, women in this study employed survival strategies, thus gaining a deeper awareness of self and more fully understanding the mechanisms of oppression. Recognizing that minorities must develop survival skills in order for self-preservation in a dominant culture, Ogbu (1994) and Sue and Sue (1990) described strategies of survival, some of which are consistent with results of this study, some of which are less
evident. The demonstrated survival skills have implications for further understanding the MIM (Reynolds & Pope, 1991).

Delisa, the only African American participant in this study, had no doubt that she would succeed academically and did not appear to distrust educational institutions until she reached graduate school. Her educational experience contradicted Ogbu’s (1994) assertion that involuntary minorities distrust educational institutions and believe they have unequal chances to succeed. Environmental factors, such as the absence of discrimination prior to graduate school, interact with this conclusion, emphasizing the importance of addressing the context in which an individual develops. Delisa also did not employ the primary or secondary survival strategies Ogbu (1994) described for racial minority children in European-American schools. General strategies include: “collective struggle,” “Uncle Tomming,” and “hustling.” Part of African Americans’ collective struggle, for example, includes “compelling Euro-Americans and the schools they control to provide them with ‘equal’ and ‘quality’ education” (Ogbu, 1994, p. 383). Secondary strategies used to avoid the dilemma of remaining true to their ethnic heritage or “acting White” to enhance success in European-American institutions include:

“camouflaging” (disguising one’s true academic attitudes and behaviors), “cultural passing” or “emulation of Whites” (adopting Euro-American behavior of trying to behave like Euro-Americans), “accommodation without assimilation” (when in school, behaving according to school norms, but at home and in the community behaving according to the minority-group norms; this strategy is more common among voluntary minorities), and “clowning” (acting like a fool, jester, or comedian).

In contrast, during Delisa’s childhood and adolescence, she exemplified a bicultural identity, being fluent in both African American and European
American knowledge and feeling a more constant sense of self which did not change across situations. Ogbu’s (1994) strategies do not account for individual differences and environmental factors. Another possible explanation not addressed in Ogbu’s (1994) description may be the confound of socioeconomic differences. Middle class African American attitudes toward education may more closely align with middle class European American values. Delisa did experience a major conflict with a European American educational system, but not until she attended graduate school. Her strategies included separating herself from the European American system as much as possible, turning to Black Studies courses and African American history, and not “selling [her] soul.”

Ogbu’s (1994) strategies for racial minorities surviving in educational systems may be extended to other minority identity groups represented in this study. “Camouflaging,” for example, may be related to the suppression of identity described by five of the six women: rather than disguising academic abilities, as Ogbu (1994) described, participants hid their feelings and beliefs. Ogbu’s (1994) “double-bind” between minority and majority cultures may also apply to multiple minority status, as Lila and Delisa described a double-bind with their sex and race/ethnicity.

The suppression of identity described by each participant in this study supports Sue and Sue’s (1990) “playing it cool” strategy. Sue and Sue (1990) described two forms of “mild dissociation” African Americans have adopted to survive in a racist society: “playing it cool” and “Uncle Tom syndrome.” Both forms involved using a dual identity, revealing the “true self” to peers in the same minority group, and presenting the “dissociated self” to meet expectations of prejudiced Whites. In this way, racial minorities suppress their
hostility and rage for self-protection. Accommodation without assimilation (Ogbu, 1994) and playing it cool (Sue & Sue, 1990) are strategies used across minority identities, which involve separating or dissociating an aspect of self in order to survive. These strategies are consistent with the MIM’s “segmented identification with one aspect of identity,” which may be most useful when confronting oppressive environments for an extended period of time. An individual suppressing an aspect of identity as a survival strategy may also appear to represent the MIM’s “passive acceptance” of identity as ascribed by society. The level of self-awareness is a primary consideration, because behaviors perceived as passive acceptance may actually represent adaptive self-protection. In this way, the OTAID model may be useful in further defining the complexity present in the MIM’s four identity resolution options.

Women in this study suppressed aspects of their identity during conflicting times, which could reflect the initial contact with the OTAID Dissonance phase for a particular identity. Considering the multiple strands of development, some identities may loop back toward the Dissonance phase each time they encounter discriminatory events. How an individual moves through Dissonance is related to additional factors, including the impact of that event, the individual’s past experiences of Dissonance with any combination of identities, and the coping skills used to work through previous Dissonance experiences. Viewing suppression as a protective measure could be added to Myers’ et al. (1991, p. 59) assertion that individuals in the Dissonance phase may “... suppress that salient aspect of the self to disassociate themselves from this negative self-definition.” The negative self-definition — consciously or unconsciously internalized from sociocultural
values devaluing an aspect of self — was not always associated with suppressed identity for the women in this study.

**Not feeling oppressed.** This emerging theme was supported by three women with multiple identities (Delisa, Rickie, and Kay) who exemplified the Transformation phase. They acknowledged an awareness of oppression and its effects on different groups, but described not feeling oppressed as individuals. Beliefs shared by these women include: recognizing past experiences of discrimination in their lives, acknowledging sexism within their own racial and ethnic groups, recognizing sociopolitical influences contributing to institutional oppression of various groups, understanding the common experience of oppression shared across various minority groups, and using survival skills to avoid being oppressed as individuals. This experience of not feeling oppressed appears related to how individuals perceive a situation and make life choices consistent with their perception. Increased awareness appears related to individual development; not allowing oppression to occur appears related to using survival skills. For example, as part of Delisa’s development, encountering Dissonance as an African American woman created an urgency to deepen her self-awareness and spirituality by turning within and turning to her female ancestors. As she began to understand the mechanisms of racism, she developed survival skills to prevent being denied opportunities in racist and sexist environments.

The perception of not feeling oppressed as an individual varies, depending on the OTAID phase of development. The difference appears to be level of awareness. The three women mentioned above demonstrate the Transformation phase. Pat, exemplifying the Internalization phase, also described not feeling oppressed. Her awareness of oppression was limited to
racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and individuals who are disabled, poor, or homeless. With her current socioeconomic situation, she is beginning to experience Dissonance with economic oppression. Her understanding of oppression appeared superficial, however, as reflected in her statement that she respects her ex-husband for not forcing her to have sex “when he had a right to” as her husband. She also contradicted herself by expressing a spiritual belief that everyone is equal and then stating that gays and lesbians are sick, need to be healed, and should not be allowed to be legally married. The difference between Pat and the three women in Transformation provides an example of how oppression can be understood differently, based on OTAID phase of development and life experiences.

Theoretical Implications

The OTAID model (Myers et al., 1991) has theoretical utility for viewing multiple identity development. The MIM (Reynolds & Pope, 1991) was specifically designed to address multiple identity issues. The OTAID is characterized by six developmental phases; the MIM is characterized by movement among four categories of identity resolution. This section juxtaposes the two theories, based on results in the individual profiles. Using grounded theory, suggestions for theoretical refinement of the OTAID model are provided.

Phase 0, The Absence of Conscious Awareness, is described as a lack of awareness of being. Myers et al. (1991) asserted this phase typically occurs during infancy, when an individual is unaware of physical boundaries separating herself or himself from the surrounding environment. This phase
was not addressed in this study, because memories of infancy are rarely accessible.

**Phase 1, Individuation**, was present for each participant during childhood. Although three women moved into the Dissonance phase for at least one aspect of identity during late childhood, three women (Kay, Rickie, and Randy) had aspects of identity (Native American ethnicity and lesbian sexual orientation) which could be characterized by Individuation until late adolescence and early adulthood.

Sexual orientation is often not addressed until late childhood and adolescence. Prior to the first awareness, assumptions across cultural groups (i.e., family, community, society) are internalized without conscious exploration. Kay and Rickie described being unaware of their Native American ethnicity during early childhood. In a null environment, where an identity is hidden and/or neglected, the lack of conscious awareness of an aspect of identity prevents progression into the Dissonance phase. Randy and Rickie were both unaware of their lesbian identity during childhood. They both recalled a slight awareness of having a different sexual orientation during adolescence. The other four women did not discuss an awareness of their sexual orientation until adolescence. This type of environment may also be reflected for any individual (i.e., Jewish, biracial) who has some aspect of identity not recognized across cultural frameworks (i.e., home, school, media). Accepting cultural assumptions, prior to questioning them, reflects the MIM’s passive acceptance option.

As individuals become aware of an aspect of identity in the Individuation phase, they reflect the MIM’s conscious identification option. Participants’ identification involved affirmation from others in the same group (often
parents or peers), increased awareness of cultural and societal expectations, and exploring those expectations as related to their identity.

Throughout childhood, for example, Kay, Randy, Delisa, and Lila were aware of being girls and accepted cultural norms (i.e., girls not wearing pants or not playing sports). Randy, Delisa, and Lila began questioning their limited opportunities and unfair treatment as they moved into adolescence. Kay’s belief about her female identity appeared to remain in Individuation until early adulthood, as indicated by her pattern of abusive marriages and stereotypical roles. The duration of this phase was probably exacerbated by the pattern of abuse often passed down from generation to generation.

Delisa, Lila, and Randy received affirmation of their racial and ethnic identities from their parents. Randy and Lila had a superficial understanding of their ethnic identities. For example, they knew about and participated in ethnic ceremonies without fully understanding their meaning. Delisa understood that she was African American without realizing that she could be discriminated against because of her race. Throughout adolescence, Delisa’s home and school environments were nurturing (i.e., parents encouraged exposure to African American literature and art, integrated schools with racial diversity). She did not fully experience and personalize racism until she entered a predominately European American graduate institution in early adulthood. Rickie and Kay knew they were part Native American, but did not actively explore their ethnic heritage until early adulthood. Pat (negative case) described never needing to address her race or sex during early childhood.

All six women described different levels of interest in boys during junior high and high school, indicating acceptance of their heterosexual socialization.
Rickie was the only one of three women with low socioeconomic backgrounds to not focus on its impact. She appeared to remain in Individuation regarding her socioeconomic status until she left home at 17 and lived on the streets for 18 months. Her de-emphasis on economic status may be related to her main focus on having a physical disability, surviving sexual and physical abuse, and being a nonstereotypical girl.

Phase 2, Dissonance, differed across participants, but each woman described events or prolonged periods during which they experienced conflict, anger, confusion, isolation, and sadness, consistent with the OTAID conceptualization. The Dissonance phase was reflected among three MIM options: conscious identification with one aspect of identity, segmented identification with multiple aspects of identity, and intersected identification with multiple aspects of identity. Because Dissonance includes emotions experienced throughout a person’s life, the MIM provides additional insight into the source of conflict and the level of self-awareness.

Rickie described the earliest progression into the Dissonance phase. She identified feeling different and having to fight for her physical identity and her boy’s name from the time she was born. Her female identity development primarily characterized the Dissonance phase throughout childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. Although she acknowledged her abuse was her father’s power issue, this prolonged Dissonance phase for her female identity development may have been partially related to her anger stemming from abuse. As an adolescent, for example, she picked fights with boys and men who were arguing with their girlfriends. Rickie also experienced Dissonance with her physical disabilities throughout childhood and early adolescence. She felt isolated for several reasons, including her extended
hospitalization for polio, attending special education classes, and using ambulatory aids. Her anger was directed both outward and inward, as reflected by her fights, school trouble, substance abuse, and suicide attempts. Her recognition of lesbian identity at the age of 27 involved minimal conflict. She described feeling relieved to find what had been missing in her life. Her past experiences appeared to greatly influence her self-acceptance. She acknowledged that she knew lesbians were oppressed in society, but she would rather be “oppressed and happy” than oppressed and unhappy. After working through her physical disability and female identity development, she appeared to have a higher survival self-efficacy. Her past identity struggles, which resulted in greater self-acceptance, also may have helped her to more easily integrate an additional aspect of identity. Shortly after accepting her lesbian identity, she actively explored her Native American identity. As she researched her history and learned about her miseducation (i.e., Columbus’ hero status vs. his treatment of Native Americans), Rickie felt dissonance, which was directed more outward than inward. She appeared to have a stable sense of self that was less impacted by societal views. Rather than internalize negative views about Native Americans, she challenged them.

Lila and Randy progressed into dissonance during late childhood and they both experienced overlapping identity conflicts. Lila experienced conflicting feelings with one identity, such as her ethnicity or sex, depending on the environment. In addition, she felt confused about the interaction of her ethnicity and sex. Moving to completely different environments, from the United States, to India, and back to the United States, often caused her to highlight at least one aspect of her identity. Throughout her life, Lila noted environments in which she focused on at least one aspect of identity: (a) sex
was the focus at home; (b) ethnicity was the focus at American grade school; (c) nationality, budding feminist ideology, religion, and socioeconomic status were the focus in India; (d) ethnicity, race, feminist identity, vegetarianism, and sexual orientation were the focus in college; and (e) deepening and integrating these various identities with spirituality is a primary focus during early adulthood.

Randy described first being aware of the unfairness she experienced as a girl, and then being aware of feeling different as a Jewish girl. In adolescence, she began to feel inner conflict about her attraction to lesbian ideology. Randy’s first “crush” on a woman marked the beginning of her confusion and “obsession.” She tried to understand unique issues associated with being a lesbian in the Jewish culture. This confusion coincided with feelings of isolation as a Jewish student attending a Catholic university. Her mother’s response to her lesbian identity was negative. Randy’s inner conflict about her sexual orientation resurfaced at different transitions in her life: feeling attracted to men after a period of lesbian identification, exploring relationships with men, and returning to relationships with women after a period of dating men. Until middle adulthood, at any given period in her life, Randy defined her sexual orientation based on the sex of her romantic partner. Lila experienced major environmental changes, and her experience of Dissonance clearly was linked to environmental pressures. For example, during late childhood, Lila felt confused about her ethnicity at school and her sex at home and within the Indian community. Moving to India, she felt conflict about her American nationality and her feminist ideas during adolescence, when her anger started to surface. Returning to the United States, she experienced conflict about her ethnicity once again. After gaining a deeper
understanding of her ethnicity and sex, Lila began to explore her sexual orientation. She retained her heterosexual identity and did not report major conflict; confusion may have been a more appropriate descriptor.

Kay experienced a conflict about her ethnic identity she could not fully describe. She felt different growing up and knew something was missing, but she didn’t know what she needed to fill the gaps. Her female identity development seemed to involve overlapping Individuation and Dissonance. Individuation gradually decreased as Dissonance gradually increased. She felt powerless as a girl, but as she matured, became more empowered to make healthy relationship choices. She began to see examples of sexism across different situations.

Delisa experienced Dissonance with her female identity development during adolescence, when she had concerns about her attractiveness as a girl. These concerns dissolved by the end of high school when she transformed from “ugly duckling” to “swan.” Contrary to OTAID theory, Delisa appeared to experience Immersion with her African American identity before experiencing Dissonance with her African American identity. This finding is consistent with the OTAID theory’s supposition that environmental factors (i.e., Delisa’s supportive family, home, and school experiences) moderate identity development. She experienced Dissonance with her African American identity in early adulthood, when she learned that racism included the assumption that African Americans are inferior based on their race. Delisa was shocked, hurt, and angry, and used the following coping strategies: she withdrew from individuals and institutions she perceived to be unsafe, lost her voice because she didn’t believe her opinion would be valued, turned to

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African American women’s history, and took classes in the Black Studies department.

During childhood, Pat (a European American) experienced a race conflict in her family (her sister’s interracial dating). Her hatred toward Blacks may be more accurately characterized by a model of White racial identity development (e.g., Helms, 1990). Because her race is in the majority, she did not experience Dissonance in the way a racial minority might. Pat’s negative views about race were directed outward, rather than inward, and she eventually allowed her anger to dissolve. During adolescence, she experienced Dissonance related to her spirituality, sexual orientation, and female identity. Practicing Native American spirituality and having children both positively impacted her female sense of self. Since age 31, she has experienced Dissonance about the recent onset of low socioeconomic conditions. For example, she described feeling embarrassed about what other people may think when she uses food stamps. She also expressed anger as she discussed societal inequity.

Participants experienced Dissonance throughout their lives, when events occurred reminding them of the oppressive environment. Delisa, for example, experiences some anger during Black History month when African Americans are only premiered on a movie channel for Saturday afternoons during one month, rather than during the entire year. Kay and Pat described feeling some conflict when men in their Teosyepé begin to take women for granted. Lila and Randy described the positive aspects of their anger, used to educate people acting out of ignorance. Rickie described her continued political involvement as one way to fight for her rights and the rights of others who are oppressed.
As the OTAID model suggests, spiraling through a phase often results in a deeper understanding of the emotions associated with conflict. In addition, participants revealed strategies they used to address experiences triggering Dissonance. Initially, they had to expend energy to deal with powerful emotions. As they gained a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of oppression, conservation of energy became prevalent. All five women with multiple identities described a decision process including whether or not to address discriminatory situations and if so, how to address them. Repeated cycles through Dissonance were characterized by greater understanding, a greater sense of control, and a shorter period of emotional distress. Pat described periods of Dissonance with race during childhood and adolescence, with sex during adolescence and early adulthood, and with socioeconomic status currently. She described responding to these periods of conflict by “letting go” of her anger and making light of it.

**Phase 3. Immersion.** was evident in each participant’s identity development. At this point, all women with multiple identities had consciously identified at least two aspects of identity. At first glance, the OTAID Immersion phase appeared to represent a segmented identification with one aspect of identity. Within that Immersion, intersected identification with multiple aspects of identity appeared to represent the core Immersion experience. Attending a historically Black college, for example, Delisa appeared to identify and focus on her African American identity. Within that Immersion, though, she emphasized having the greatest connection with other African American women. Randi identified her late adolescence/early adulthood Immersion in lesbian culture, but acknowledged that her primary reference group included other Jewish lesbians. The MIM may be helpful in
determining layers, depicted with concentric circles, of the OTAID’s Immersion phase.

Delisa described Immersion of her race and sex at different levels throughout her development. As a child, her family affirmed her African American identity and her primary group of friends were African Americans. During adolescence, she primarily socialized with other African American girls. During late adolescence, she attended a historically Black college, Immersing herself in a nurturing Afrocentric educational system and social network. Later, in graduate school at a predominately White university, Delisa’s Immersion occurred at a survival, rather than nurturing, level.

During childhood, Lila’s Immersion in Indian culture was confined to family and community events. A complete Immersion occurred when she lived in India for six years during late childhood and early adolescence. Returning to the United States, Lila was faced with a dominant European American system, and immersed herself in the Asian American community. Compared to learning about her ethnicity in India, her experience with the Asian American university community was one of discovering the anger shared within her racial group and becoming involved in a university group which addressed diversity issues. Lila also became involved in the university women’s center. Her Immersion in the women’s center opened the door to philosophically and physically explore her sexual orientation.

Randy described a pattern of Immersion throughout her life, in which her identity was reflected in her activities and relationships. As a child, Randy’s parents emphasized her Jewish culture, and she was active in the Jewish youth center. During adolescence, Randy identified with political leftist ideas, and her rebellion included interracial dating, marijuana use, leftist friends,
and Vietnam War protests. During late adolescence, she went to a kibbutz in Israel to explore her ethnic identity. Returning to the United States, Randy came out as a lesbian, immersed herself in the women’s center, and had a primary group of Jewish lesbian friends, encompassing three aspects of her identity.

Kay described feeling lost for many years of her life, until she experienced her first sweat lodge. She immediately knew it was the missing piece she had been searching for, and she immersed herself in the Native American culture. Coming home to an aspect of her true self was reflected in her immediate recognition and intuitive knowing. She earned a Native American name and became involved in political activities supporting Native American rights. Currently, her primary community is the Teosyepé. She primarily identifies with her Native American spirituality. As an elder, she assumes her role as an educator and as a leader. For example, she is helping coordinate a women’s Lakotah society within their community.

Rickie’s first period of Immersion was the lesbian community. Prior to that, she distrusted most people and experienced a great deal of isolation. One protective mechanism involved remaining distant from other people so they couldn’t hurt her. After remaining closeted for a period of years, Rickie became involved in the lesbian community. At the same time, she began exploring her Native American heritage, which she learned had historically revered gays and lesbians. She re-educated herself about Native American history and rejected racist practices evident in European American culture.

Pat’s interest and participation in Native American culture and spirituality exemplifies the Immersion phase because she identifies with Native American culture. Because her racial background is European American, her placement
in Immersion could be questioned. During early adulthood, her primary group of friends and activities were Native American. Currently, she emphasizes her Native American spirituality, criticizes society as being "cruel," and plans to educate her children outside of the mainstream school system.

As described in the OTAID model, Immersion is characterized by a focus on in-group members and devaluing or distrusting dominant out-group members. In this study, Immersion appeared to provide both nurturing and self-protection, consistent with the OTAID conceptualization that group identification provides safety. The nurturing aspect of Immersion occurred when the dominant group does not play a major role in self-definition. When the dominant group was a primary focus, the Immersion appeared to provide self-protection. Growth occurred during both types of Immersion.

Phase 4, Internalization, appeared to be present in the five women with multiple identities. Following a difficult period of emotional distress (Dissonance phase) and exploration (Immersion phase), a sense of acceptance emerged in early adulthood (Internalization phase). The Internalization phase represents a shift into a more constant multi-faceted self-concept, as represented by the MIM’s intersected identification with multiple aspects of identity.

During college, Liia explored all aspects of her identity and felt comfortable accepting each as part of her multi-faceted self. Delisa described self-acceptance throughout her life, with the exception of events causing varying levels of conflict related to her sex and to her race. Working through her racial identity crisis during early adulthood, Delisa described having a more stable sense of self. In early adulthood, after Randy had become
Buddhist and overcame her eating disorder, she accepted her Jewish culture, feelings of attraction to men, feminist identity, union activism, and Buddhist spirituality. After Rickie came out as a lesbian and connected with her Native American heritage, she gained a sense of wholeness and accepted all aspects of her identity during early adulthood. Kay also had a missing piece of identity (Native American heritage) which, after she fully explored it in early adulthood, enabled her to accept a multi-faceted identity. Pat (negative case) is the only woman who continues to struggle with an aspect of identity in early adulthood. Without having major experiences of discrimination, Pat’s current low socioeconomic status appeared to create a more intense experience of Dissonance than it did for individuals who had also encountered Dissonance for inherent aspects of their identity (such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability status). Aside from her economic standing, Pat feels a stable sense of female identity and Native American spirituality.

Although progression through the first four OTAID phases of development varied for the five women with multiple identities, the Internalization phase and the MIM’s intersected identification represent an integration point which occurred during early adulthood. This point of integration appears to propel individuals toward spiritual deepening characterized by the final two OTAID phases.

Phase 5, Integration, is characterized as a transition period involving deeper self-understanding, an expanding community, a more comprehensive understanding of oppression, and acceptance of all diversity. Each participant reflected characteristics of this phase, but at widely varying points of development. By definition, the Integration phase involves expanded awareness of human diversity. Applying an expanded definition to the
surrounding environment, the MIM’s intersected identification was closely associated with the OTAID’s Integration phase.

Rickie’s openness to differences was prevalent throughout her life. As a child, she rejected her family’s bigoted attitudes toward African Americans and Native Americans. During adolescence, she marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. and became involved in rape crisis work. During early adulthood, she dated an African American man and later became involved with a European American woman. Currently, she is married to a Jewish woman, coordinates a lesbian health organization, performs Native American ceremonies, and works for the AIDS task force. Her diverse activities and expansive community reflects her Native American worldview, which emphasizes the interrelatedness and equality of all living things.

Lila’s community expanded in college. As she became involved in the women’s center, for example, she was exposed to greater diversity in sexual orientation. As she explored aspects of her identity, she gained a deeper self-awareness. Throughout her life, Lila struggled to understand oppression and reconcile her internal conflict. She observed sexism within Indian culture, classism across cultures, heterosexism present in most cultures, and racism within European American culture. Lila observed lifestyle differences when her socioeconomic status dropped from upper middle class in the United States to lower class in India. Although her experiences and opportunities revealed her upper middle class culture, she became aware of the lack of opportunities available for individuals with little economic power.

Delisa’s core community consists of African American women, but she acknowledged that her circle has widened as she has matured. Her career focuses on working with internalized oppression of African American women
and educating others about oppression. She understands oppression as a systematic means of denying opportunities. Through her Dissonance phase with race, Delisa’s spirituality deepened by connecting with her ancestral history. Her deepened spirituality and her ability to survive a severely oppressive environment contributed to a greater sense of inner peace.

Kay, Randy, and Pat described gaining a greater sense of self-acceptance when their spirituality deepened in early adulthood. Kay and Pat felt greater inner peace associated with their female identity development after they became involved in the Teosyepé. Randy’s overall inner peace improved after she began chanting. Since becoming Buddhist, Randy’s circle of friends has expanded in racial and ethnic diversity. She has also begun to explore music of cultures different than her own. Randy is expanding her awareness of oppression by learning from her partner, who is sensitive to diversity issues. Randy’s awareness of oppression has changed from focusing on societal oppression during late adolescence and early adulthood to emphasizing personal responsibility in striving for world peace. Her shift in focus represents the conceptual shift to an “optimal worldview” (Myers et al., 1991) in which oppression includes personal responsibility: “All people can oppress or be oppressed, depending upon one’s assumptions about one’s self and relationships to others” (p. 60).

Phase 6, Transformation, is characterized by the following tenets: an expanded sense of self including ancestors and nature, recognition of the interrelatedness of all things, the centrality of spirituality, a holistic understanding of their culture and history, viewing challenging life events as growthful rather than negative, and accepting all life forms as valuable (Myers et al., 1991). The MIM’s intersected identification option was also closely
associated with the OTAID’s Transformation phase. Characteristics of the Transformation phase reflected a deeper, more complex, and more expansive intersected identification. Thus, the MIM may benefit from a more three-dimensional depiction of identity resolution as spirituality and self-knowledge deepens and expands.

Rickie, Kay, Randy, and Lila reflected all of the tenets of Transformation. They differed in age, with Lila reaching this phase by age 23. She had the unique experience of living in two cultures, which exponentially increased her exposure to ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious diversity. In addition, her experiences in the United States increased her awareness of sexual orientation differences. Her increased exposure to diversity, the amount of emotional conflict she experienced, and her openness to exploring the interaction between individuals and environmental factors may have contributed to her accelerated development through the OTAID phases. Rickie, Kay, and Randy exemplified tenets of the Transformation phase by age 35, suggesting support for a developmental pattern. At 33, Delisa reflected all but one of the Transformation tenets (the interrelatedness of all things). She also did not focus on an expanded self-definition including nature. This result may be related to identity development which has not yet occurred, as the OTAID model would indicate. Because I did not directly ask her about her connection to nature, it may also be related to an unspoken belief absent in the interview data, but present in her worldview.

Pat described three tenets of the Transformation phase, including the interrelatedness of all things, the centrality of spirituality, and valuing all forms of life. Although she supported these tenets, some attitudes were inconsistent. For example, she emphasized the universality and equality of all
people, but she stated that it bothered her that her biracial niece and nephew were being labeled Black. She also demonstrated little knowledge about terminology used to describe sexual orientation. She emphasized the centrality of spirituality, but was struggling to accept her current economic condition of minimal financial resources. This may not be contradictory because economic stability can become an issue of survival. Her anger toward society and embarrassment about using food stamps indicate more than survival issues at the bottom of Maslow’s hierarchy. The discrepancy between her words and actions indicate that her spiritual practice has only influenced her philosophically. If she develops further through OTAID phases, her philosophy, attitudes, and behaviors may align with greater consistency. She did not fully proceed through Integration, which is another indication that she has not progressed to the Transformation phase. As a woman with single minority status, Pat’s experiences of discrimination have been less prevalent compared to those of women with multiple minority status. In addition, Pat’s environmental influences (i.e., racist stepfather, predominately European American schools and geographic region), choices to remain in homogeneous environments, and failure to seek experiences for vicarious learning provided less exposure to and understanding of racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation diversity. Comparing her experience to Lila’s, the difference in how each woman perceives and interacts with her environment is substantial. Pat’s current socioeconomic status, spiraling her back to Dissonance, may provide the impetus to her further understanding oppression and proceeding further through the identity development process.

When I asked women to describe their definition of self and community, none spontaneously referred to having an expanded self-definition which
includes the unborn, as defined by the OTAID model. Because I did not
directly ask women whether or not their self-definition includes the unborn,
their responses may not fully reflect their beliefs. I employed
phenomenological inquiry, so my questions provided a general topic area (i.e.,
spirituality, self-definition, community) from which data emerged.
Participants failed to include the unborn, which may reflect beliefs the
participants have not yet reached. OTAID theorists incorporated the unborn
into the Transformation phase based on both quantum physics and
indigenous peoples’ belief that reality can transcend space and time. Because
the history of minorities is often lost, ignored, or devalued, women in this
study may have focused on reclaiming their history as part of their identity.
Focusing on the past may have overshadowed thoughts of future generations.
Spirituality

Exploring the spirituality of six women illuminated the OTAID’s Integration and Transformation phases. Analyzing these phases in the context of each participant’s life story, I present insights and questions regarding the OTAID’s highest phases of identity development. I also introduce the incompatibility of modern, organized religions with spiritual beliefs, an emerging theme related to participants’ spiritual development.

Analyzing the data, I realized that Integration and Transformation are difficult to separate theoretically. Both theoretical (Myers et al., 1991) and empirical (Sevig, 1993) conceptualizations of OTAID development acknowledge that an individual must reach Integration before progressing into Transformation. Behaviorally, the distinction may reflect initial explorations into a different conceptual system and a deepening understanding of a different conceptual system. These two phases appear to reflect a continuum, in which original ideas are deepened, expanded, and strengthened as an individual gains a greater amount of life experience. Compare this process to dropping a pebble, rock, or boulder into a body of water. The rock symbolizes a shift in an individual’s conceptual system. The water represents the universe. Depending on the situation, an individual’s experience may have a sudden, intense impact — a boulder hitting water. For example, Lila’s complete immersion in Indian culture or Kay’s sweat lodge experience are like boulders, rather than pebbles, hitting water. Depending on the intensity of that initial impact, the outward ripples will form rapidly, moderately, or slowly. Further complicating the ripple effect are multiple rocks hitting the water, creating interference patterns. Multiple pebbles, rocks, or boulders may reflect multiple identities within one individual, as well as
environmental presses, such as discriminatory events and the sociopolitical climate. Consistent with the OTAID model’s developmental framework, after the pebble, rock, or boulder is dropped into the water, the ripples will expand outward with time. The size of the stone, which represents the amount of impact an identity or environmental event has on the individual’s development, will determine how quickly the ripples move outward.

One question emerging from this study is what determines progression into the Transformation phase. All five of the women with multiple identities appeared to reflect characteristics of both the Integration and the Transformation phases. The Self Identity Developmental Model of Oppressed People (SIDMOP; Highlen et al., 1988), the OTAID research team’s original model, included six transitional periods between the seven primary phases retained in the revised OTAID model. In this revised model, the research team excluded the six transitional periods and retained the seven primary phases. One of the reasons for excluding the transitional periods was based on Jecman’s (1989) empirical study of the SIDMOP’s thirteen phases, which revealed low internal consistency coefficients for two of the five transitional phases (0.36 and 0.47). Jecman (1989) concluded that the difficulty of defining the transitional periods may impede clarity of the seven primary phases. In addition, the thirteen-phase model was considered too cumbersome for future empirical validation.

Describing the OTAID model, Myers and her colleagues (1991, p. 58) asserted “...the amount of time individuals spend in a given phase may vary widely because of factors such as the zeitgeist or environmental press.” In this study, all five women with multiple identities represented each tenet of the Integration phase — greater inner security and peace, expanded sense of
community, greater acceptance of all people, and understanding oppression as the potential for all people to oppress or be oppressed. Four women with multiple identities (Kay, Randy, Rickie, and Lila) reflected all seven Transformation tenets — expanded sense of self, centrality of spirituality, all life events are viewed as growthful, holistic understanding and appreciation of their culture and history, valuing all human diversity, interrelatedness of all things, de-emphasizing importance of material wealth to attain happiness and meaning. Delisa reflected six of the seven Transformation tenets. In her interview, Delisa did not discuss the interrelatedness of all things. Her acceptance of human diversity and her ability to tap into the personal energy of her ancestors suggests the interrelatedness of all things would be consistent with Delisa’s worldview, indicating the likelihood that she is in the Transformation phase. Consistent with the OTAID model, these results indicated that the Transformation phase builds on tenets of the Integration phase.

Pat (negative case) reflected three Transformation tenets, but contradicted three Transformation tenets. Her expressed spiritual beliefs are more closely related to Transformation, but her demonstrated misunderstanding of oppression and lack of acceptance of gays and lesbians reveals inconsistency between her expressed beliefs and attitudes. She demonstrated three of the four Integration tenets, contradicting the tenet in which an individual gains an expanded sense of community. Because she does not reflect all four tenets, she does not appear to fully demonstrate the Integration phase.

Comparing the five women with multiple identities to the woman with a single identity, the difference in worldviews is evident. Pat’s minimal exposure to oppression and limited searching may have contributed to slower
OTAID progression. The five women with multiple identities all received more constant exposure to oppression throughout their lives and explored their identities more in-depth than did Pat. The exposure and exploration may have spurred the five women with multiple identities through OTAID progression. Age played less of a role, because women with multiple identities demonstrated Transformation at ages younger than, older than, and at the same age as Pat. This preliminary finding could be investigated empirically, given a large sample.

Another consideration regarding tenets of the Integration phase is the relativity of each of the following four descriptors:

...sense of self has developed to a stronger place of inner security ... sense of community has deepened and expanded as a result of a connection to more people because criteria of acceptance go beyond appearance. A conceptual switch is beginning to occur ... beginning to understand the true nature of oppression as reflecting the nature of one’s worldview: All people can oppress or be oppressed, depending upon one’s assumptions about one’s self and relationships to others.

(Myers et al., 1991, pp. 59-60).

These tenets describing the Integration phase all reflect relative characteristics: stronger inner security, expanded sense of community, a greater acceptance of all people, and beginning to understand oppression differently. If an individual progresses along these dimensions, she or he may reflect the Integration phase. Compared with other individuals, however, the characterization of these descriptors may vary widely. Myers and her colleagues (1991) clearly distinguished the Integration and Transformation phases from the previous five phases. A defining characteristic of the two highest phases involves “... moving beyond the conceptual limitation of the Western concept of the individual self toward a more holistic and integrated realization of self”
(Myers et al., 1991, p. 58). This distinction allows for variation, but not widely discrepant views.

Throughout the course of participants’ lives, the Integration tenets were clearly evident. When comparing each tenet across participants, however, the defining criteria varied widely. Individual differences in openness to exploring aspects of identity and learning about other cultures may account for some of this variation. Individual differences in willingness to explore aspects of identity. For example, Lila described attaining greater inner security and inner peace as she has developed. Her experience of inner peace, however, reflects more angst than Kay’s, who is nineteen years older than Lila. This discrepancy may represent age differences and the process of deepening, as reflected in the OTAID model. Similarly, Pat described accepting a greater variety of people throughout the course of her life. Her current acceptance, however, does not include gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. In contrast, Lila (eight years younger than Pat) described accepting a wide variety of people across many types of diversity. These differences may be associated with the degree of oppression endured and the level of awareness. Another possible explanation is that Pat does not fully represent the Integration phase, as her limited acceptance of others demonstrates. Although multiple strands of identity may reflect different OTAID phases, her predominant OTAID phase appears to be Internalization. As she develops and grows spiritually, she may gradually move into the Integration phase.

The five women with multiple identities appeared to represent the Transformation phase of identity development, thus providing insight into a principle research question and implications for OTAID theory. During the Transformation phase, an individual shifts toward a holistic worldview, in
which self-concept expands to include ancestors, the unborn, nature, and community. This worldview de-emphasizes material wealth to attain happiness and meaning in life, resulting in the belief that “... self-worth is assumed intrinsic in being” (Myers et al., 1991, p. 56).

Identity development, a process of gaining self-knowledge, inherently involves spiritual development (Myers et al., 1991). Consistent with this supposition, the five women with multiple identities and the woman with a single identity demonstrated an increased self-acceptance associated with deepening spirituality. This process of spiritual deepening shared the following chronological pattern across all six participants: having a structured religious affiliation, feeling conflict and questioning the source of conflict, turning away from organized church of childhood, and recognizing deeper layers of spirituality. This process of spiritual development appears to coincide with OTAID identity development patterns. During childhood, all six women were affiliated with the following modern, organized religions: Hindu (Lila), Jewish (Randy), Mormon (Kay), Baptist (Delisa), Catholic (Rickie), and Lutheran (Pat). All participants shared at least one of the following two conflicts with their childhood organized religions, (1) conceptualization of God and (2) sexist practices within the religion’s structure. As children, Kay and Delisa questioned their religions; during adolescence, Lila, Randy, and Pat began addressing conflict; Rickie left the church in early adulthood as she experienced increased value conflicts. As four women (Lila, Delisa, Pat, and Rickie) explored their identity — learning about their cultural history, meeting influential people and spiritual role models, and defining their spirituality using more than an organized church — their spirituality seemed to develop into a higher level of consciousness. The other two women (Randy and Kay)
experienced a more sudden spiritual transformation. After searching for inner peace for many years, they both found answers through life-changing events. Kay followed up on a flyer she received at a movie theater, and attended her first sweat lodge. Randy happened to meet a Buddhist acquaintance on the street during a period of distress. To help her, Randy’s friend chanted with her for the first time, which marked Randy’s introduction to Buddhism. Although the six women currently practice different types of spirituality — Dakotah Sioux (Kay and Pat), Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism (Randy), Native American spirituality (Rickie) and nondenominational spirituality (Delisa and Lila) — they share common beliefs, including respect for all people, the interrelatedness of nature, and an acceptance of the mysteries of the universe. Another common feature is the incompatibility of modern, mainstream religions with their current spiritual beliefs.

The incompatibility of modern, mainstream religions. This theme emerged in all women’s interviews, including Pat (negative case). They emphasized the incompatibility of modern, organized religion with their current worldviews. As described in the preceding paragraph, dissatisfaction with the their original religious affiliations occurred for each participant at different developmental periods. Questions surfaced during childhood (Kay and Delisa), adolescence (Lila, Randy, and Pat), and early adulthood (Rickie). Kay and Delisa had an intuitive response, questioning the sexist teachings of ministers and the hypocrisy they observed both in church teachings and the actions of congregations with which they were affiliated. Randy and Lila recognized the incompatibility of Judaism and Hinduism, respectively, during late adolescence when their thinking aligned with feminist ideology. Pat’s interest in Native American culture, which included learning of missionaries
who imposed Christian religion on Native Americans, coincided with her questioning of Christianity. During early adulthood, Rickie experienced sexism in the Catholic church; she also recognized the incompatibility of modern Christianity when she connected with her Native American heritage.

Connecting with other aspects of identity, such as sex and sexual orientation, appeared to cause some internal conflict with participants’ affiliation to modern, mainstream religions. Practicing nonmainstream religion led four women (Kay, Pat, Randy, and Rickie) to self-affirmation rather than conflict. The OTAID research team (Myers et al., 1991) concluded that a “key tenet” across multiple worldviews (e.g., African, Native American, and Eastern philosophies, and Creation Spirituality) is the interrelatedness of spiritual and material aspects of reality.

Grounded Theory

Revisiting the OTAID model

Through the use of grounded theory data analyses, results of this study support two expansions to the OTAID model as it relates to women with multiple identities. The first offers a pictorial model useful in depicting the OTAID process of identity development. This model includes multiple layers of self which provide several contexts in which to understand an individual’s development. The second suggests using the MIM in conjunction with the OTAID model to provide two perspectives with which to view the identity development process.

Pictoral model of OTAID theory. Expanding the original OTAID theory, I created a pictorial model depicting the interrelationships among various identities throughout the identity development process. This model consists of
both specific and general components. The specificity of the model consists of representing each person’s unique path of identity development with interweaving lines, each representing an aspect of identity. This path, superimposed on a general circular framework, shows how multiple aspects of an individual’s identity move among the various OTAID phases. The general circular framework represents each OTAID phase and remains constant, with a consistent placement of each OTAID phase.

The emphasis of an individual’s unique path along the overall OTAID developmental framework is a critical component of this pictorial model. Depicting the identity development process of women with multiple identities becomes complex and requires a thorough analysis of an individual’s developmental process. Individual configurations are represented metaphorically by a strand of rope consisting of multiple interwoven threads—each of which represents an aspect of identity comprising the individual’s overall identity (i.e., Rickie has four threads representing her female, Native American, disabled, and lesbian aspects of her identity). The multiple threads emphasize how each aspect of identity impacts and interweaves with other aspects of identity throughout the developmental process. This strand of rope may change throughout an individual’s developmental process. A new thread is added when an individual recognizes a new aspect of identity, such as when Rickie came out as a lesbian and Kay discovered her Native American ancestry. At some points, a particular thread may be the primary focus while others remain in the background, such as when Randy focused on her Jewish ethnicity while her female identity was less of an issue. On this model, the thickness of a thread represents an individual’s amount of focus given to a particular aspect of identity in any phase of development. At other points, the
strand may be comprised of several, tightly woven threads, as when Lila and Delisa discussed the inseparability of their female, racial, and ethnic aspects of identity. This rope strand and its changing multiple threads are superimposed on the general OTAID framework to visually represent an individual’s path of identity development.

The circular framework representing the OTAID phases is a large dashed circle (see Figure 3). A circle was chosen to represent the OTAID tenet that individuals return to the same place from which they started, only with more knowledge. On this circle, the Absence of Conscious Awareness is placed at the bottom, in the 6:00 position. Traveling counter-clockwise, is Individuation (5:00), Dissonance (3:00), Immersion (12:00), Internalization (9:00), Integration (7:00), and Transformation (6:00).

Within this circle, several OTAID phases were placed across from phases with some contrasting developmental issues. For example, during the Individuation phase an individual primarily accepts what society and family defines her to be. Across the circle, the integration phase involves questioning society and its roots, such as the educational system, the political systems that inform our knowledge, the media, and our family's assumptions about who we are. This questioning emerges from a more stable sense of self, which is gained in the Internalization phase. Across from Internalization is the Dissonance phase, which involves self-examination, self-doubt, confusion, and competing messages from society or situations that cause conflict with an emerging sense of identity.
Figure 3
General framework of OTAID developmental process
Figure 4

Observed relationship between OTAID and MIM
The process of identity development following an overall circular path enables the fluid relationships among each phase of development to be reflected. For example, after an individual has experienced Immersion with one aspect of her identity, she may have another experience that brings up feelings of Dissonance with that same aspect of identity. That re-experiencing of Dissonance feelings may be depicted as the thread of identity looping back toward the Dissonance area of the circle. The intensity of the Dissonance experience can be represented by the degree to which the individual’s thread returns to the Dissonance area of the circle. The intensity of experience may also be represented by the thickness of the thread. An individual may describe relatively small Dissonance events, such as when Delisa heard cat calls from men while walking down the street. This experience would be graphically depicted by the line representing Delisa’s female identity moving slightly toward Dissonance before returning to its previous position on the circle. This multi-faceted model demonstrates how an individual may re-experience Dissonance when new aspects of identity are incorporated. For example, Randy previously worked through the Dissonance phase with her female and Jewish identities. When Randy came out as a lesbian, she experienced Dissonance with her lesbian identity. The thread representing her lesbian identity moved through the Dissonance phase before proceeding to the Immersion phase. An individual’s path of identity development may be followed by observing how the multiple threads travel around the circle.

**MIM informs the OTAID model.** The MIM can be used to further inform characteristics of each OTAID phase. For example, Delisa experienced a time when her primary cultural focus was her racial group, and her MIM identification was Segmented. In this pictoral model, a Segmented
Identification would be represented by individual threads of identity that travel separately through the OTAID phases. When Delisa primarily focused on her racial identity, she experienced Immersion with her African American identity. The focus on particular aspects of identity can be represented visually by the thickness of the thread. Delisa’s racial Immersion experience reflects the MIM’s Segmented Identification with one aspect of identity, depicted in the pictoral model as one thicker thread (African American identity) traveling separately from a thinner thread (female identity). Delisa also stated that Immersion with her African American female friends was most essential to her self-definition. This Immersion experience reflects the MIM’s Intersected Identification with combined aspects of identity, depicted in the pictoral model as interwoven threads (see Figure 5).

Randy, on the other hand, primarily identified with other women like herself—Jewish, feminist, and lesbian. From the MIM perspective, Randy’s experience was characterized by an Intersected Identification with all three aspects of identity depicted as interwoven threads. Each woman experienced Immersion differently. Randy and Delisa experienced the Immersion phase with multiple, integrated aspects of their identities, whereas Rickie and Kay experienced Immersion with individual, segmented aspects of their identities.

The MIM can be used in tandem with the OTAID model. Although the MIM was designed to provide flexible outcomes of identity resolution based on an individual’s personal and environmental needs, a relationship between two MIM states (Passive Acceptance and Intersected Identification) and OTAID phases was apparent in this study. The MIM’s Passive Acceptance of a particular aspect of identity primarily occurred in the Individuation phase of the OTAID model. The Individuation phase shares characteristics of the
MIM’s Passive Acceptance of self. Both are typically experienced in childhood as children learn who they are from the world around them. They haven’t lived long enough to begin to question society’s assumptions about their identity. The length of time before an individual begins to start questioning her self-definition varies according to each individual and her experiences.

With multiple identity development, the OTAID framework may be complemented by the MIM to describe how one aspect of identity (i.e., Rickie’s Native American ethnicity) may remain in a Passive Acceptance state while other aspects of identity (i.e., Rickie’s female and disabled identities) are represented by MIM’s Segmented or Conscious Identification and continue to move through subsequent OTAID phases. The Passive Acceptance state was not evident after any of the women in this study experienced Dissonance and Immersion. As women experienced Dissonance and Immersion, they appeared to be in the MIM’s Segmented, Conscious, or Integrated Identifications. Consistent with MIM theory, each participant identified times throughout her OTAID developmental span when a Segmented Identification helped her to most effectively address particular situations. With repeated experiences of Dissonance, the MIM identification tended to become more integrated. Rickie, for example, experienced Dissonance with her female and disabled identities during childhood. As an adult, when she experienced Dissonance with her sexual orientation and her Native American ethnicity. The Immersion that followed was more reflective of the MIM’s Intersected Identification. Similarly, Lila experienced Dissonance with a Segmented Identification of her female or ethnic identity depending on her environment (home or school).
As individuals moved into higher OTAID phases of development, Segmented Identification appeared less frequently than did Intersected Identification. Lila, for example, moved through a powerful Immersion experience in India and shifted to an Intersected Identification with her multiple identities that she said has remained constant since then. Lila’s Intersected Identification is demonstrated by her active responses against sexist and racist attitudes and behavior and her involvement in both women’s and Asian American organizations. All five of the women with multiple identities emphasized that their spiritual growth developed in the Integration and Transformation phases. Their spiritual growth appeared to be associated with a belief in the inseparability of their multiple identities (the MIM’s Intersected Identification). In this study, the OTAID’s Integration and Transformation phases were primarily associated with the MIM’s Intersected Identification with combined aspects of identity (see Figure 4). This relationship could be explored further through additional research, such as qualitative inquiries focusing on women and men in the Integration and Transformation phases.

Using the MIM may also provide additional information about how an individual moves through one OTAID phase to the next. For example, a Segmented or Conscious Identification can be used to depict how one aspect of identity (i.e., African American) can move through OTAID phases (i.e., Immersion) while another aspect of identity (i.e., female) remains in different OTAID phases (i.e., Dissonance). The identity that continues to develop can be viewed as a survival tool that counterbalances the self-doubt about another aspect of identity in the Dissonance phase. Kay’s female identity, for example, was in the Dissonance phase for many years because she
believed that women inherently have less power and respect than men have. Experiencing Immersion with her Native American identity helped Kay to develop respect for her female identity.

Case example. Delisa’s multiple identity development is presented to demonstrate how the developmental process of a woman with multiple identities may be depicted using this pictorial model (see Figure 5).

The initial phase, the Absence of Conscious Awareness, is defined by the infancy stage when infants have no sense of ego boundaries. They do not recognize that they are their own person and merely have an absence of awareness. As children begin to develop a sense of self and begin to realize that they are their own person, they begin to notice visible characteristics of identity, such as skin color, hair, and facial features. Delisa, as an African American girl, accepted both identities (two parallel lines moving from Phase 0 to Individuation) without questioning what her African American and female identities meant. This phase is consistent with the MIM’s Passive Acceptance of identity.

Delisa’s understanding of her African American culture through books, plays, and music represented an Immersion phase with her African American identity. This experience of Immersion is represented by the MIM’s Conscious identification with one aspect of identity. Her African American identity was a primary area of exploration and understanding during childhood and adolescence and is represented as a thicker thread. Because she did not actively explore her female identity during this time, her female thread is thinner than the African American thread. As she moved through Immersion with her African American identity, her female identity moved through Individuation and Dissonance.
Delisa’s first experience of the OTAID’s Dissonance phase occurred during adolescence when other African American boys thought she was unattractive, causing her to doubt her African American female identity and her relationships with males. This experience occurred in the context of her African American peer group after she had immersed herself in African American culture. The OTAID Dissonance regarding her female and African American identities was related to MIM’s Intersected Identification. Her coping skills during this Dissonance phase included focusing on her school activities and education rather than dating relationships and spending time with her African American girlfriends. In the model, her two threads of identity became interwoven into one strand as represented by the MIM’s Intersected Identification. After moving to a more racially diverse region of the country, she described having an “ugly duckling to swan” experience because people in her new environment accepted racial and ethnic differences.

From the MIM perspective, Delisa’s Dissonance experience was initially characterized by the MIM’s Segmented Identification. Delisa was aware of both her female and African American identities, but she felt conflict between the two. As an African American she felt positive, but as an African American female, she doubted herself with her African American male peers. Consistent with the MIM, the focus of her awareness depended on the context. With African American boys, she focused on her female-ness (MIM’s Segmented female identification). With girlfriends, she felt positive about being both African American and female (MIM’s Intersected Identification).

Delisa continued Immersion in her African American identity. She attended a historically Black university with an educational system consistent with her cultural values. Her family and her college community had strongly
affirmed her African American identity. She described her college years as a wonderful experience, during which she learned much about her culture. She was active in local politics, arts, and community service and emphasized the importance of being connected to her African American female friends. Her relationships with other African American females appeared to expand her sense of self with Immersion in her female African American identity (MIM’s Intersected Identification). Delisa provided an example of how an intense, positive Immersion experience can spur growth through phases of the OTAID model.

Delisa’s most intense experience of Dissonance occurred with her African American identity when she attended graduate school at a predominately White institution and realized that racism includes believing that racial minorities are inferior. As depicted in Figure 5, her African American thread circled back from Immersion toward the Dissonance phase. Although this pattern is inconsistent with OTAID theory, this non-linear process is consistent with the OTAID’s conceptualization of an “expanding spiral” process of development that is moderated by environmental factors. Delisa experienced racial conflicts in her environment and the MIM’s “Segmented Identification” with her African American identity further characterizes this period of development. In addition, she had moved away from her support network of family and friends. At this point, she needed to use survival skills, including isolating herself and shielding herself from the Eurocentric and racist assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes that surrounded her.

Taking a friend’s advice, Delisa “wasn’t going to sell her soul” and began to truly know herself. Consistent with the OTAID’s non-linear process of development, she looped back toward Immersion with her African American
identity (MIM’s Segmented Identification). She turned to the African American artistic community and her African American classmates to counterbalance the Dissonance she experienced in graduate school. She also moved through the feelings associated with Dissonance by exploring and learning from her heritage from the perspective of the MIM’s Intersected Identification. She took Black Studies classes and looked to African American female role models in literature and history to learn how they lived through racist experiences. As she learned about her female ancestors, her intersected identity moved further along in the OTAID framework – toward Internalization and Integration – as she gained a more stable sense of self and an increased connection with her spirituality.

After Delisa reached the Internalization phase, she seemed to have a more stable sense of herself with an Intersected MIM identification that remained more constant. Although she continued to encounter daily racist and sexist behaviors, she described them annoyances because she understood the mechanisms of racism and sexism. She has responded to these events with anger and previously learned survival skills, which can be represented by her threads moving slightly in the Dissonance direction (see Figure 5) and then returning to the same path. This configuration represents a healthy response to discriminatory events which no longer affected Delisa’s stable sense of self.

Consistent with the MIM, Delisa’s situational context determined whether or not she experienced Segmented Identification with a single identity (African American or female) or Intersected Identification with both identities. For example, when her race was attacked in a class or she read something racist about African Americans, her Segmented Identification was with her
African American identity. Reading about African American women’s history facilitated an Intersected Identification of both identities.

As Delisa moved into Integration, she began to understand how oppression was perpetuated, where it originated, and how oppression affected her as an African American female. She began to recognize sexism in all racial and ethnic communities. She started to gain an expanded sense of self by connecting with her ancestors and tapping into their personal energy. Her spirituality expanded as she recognized her own agency and, at the same time, acknowledged the spiritual forces of the universe that supersede human agency.

Delisa’s Transformation phase is represented by the centrality of her spirituality, expanded sense of self, belief that all life events are growthful, de-emphasis on material wealth to attain happiness, holistic understanding of culture and history, and valuing human diversity. She acknowledged that she views her life as a continual process of growth. Developmentally, Delisa was in the OTAID’s Transformation phase and identified her need for continued growth. Pictorially, Delisa’s strand of identity is moving toward the place from which she began with conscious awareness. This movement reflects the OTAID’s description of Transformation, which involves a lifelong process of expanding an individual’s conscious awareness of self.

Participants’ configurations. (see Figures 5-10) Three findings evident in each of the graphic depiction of participants’ identity development include (1) the relationship between deepening spirituality and the MIM’s Intersected Identification with combined aspects of identity; (2) the utility of adding identities that emerge in the developmental process (i.e., multiple identities);
and (3) individuals' unique movement, modified by environmental factors, through OTAID phases.

First, the OTAID model describes development of spirituality occurring as an individual develops her or his inner self. This interconnection between identity development and spirituality may be reciprocally bi-directional. Exploring spirituality may lead to more fully knowing your core self. Likewise, exploring your innermost self may lead to the evolution of your spirituality. This pattern was clear in five of six participants' configurations. When Delisa and Lila immersed themselves in the history of their female ancestors, they both experienced the MIM’s Intersected Identification with their racial/ethnic and female identities and an increasing connection with their spirituality. After connecting with Native American spirituality, Rickie, Kay, and Pat described a complete acceptance of their minority aspects of identity. Randy’s pattern was less clear cut, but still demonstrated credence to the relationship between spirituality and MIM’s Intersected Identification. Randy’s Intersected Identification with combined aspects of identity (Jewish, female, and lesbian) occurred during her Immersion phase with other Jewish lesbian feminists. She identified being more political and community-oriented during that Immersion phase. She began to focus more on spirituality when she began practicing Buddhism. Although she experienced feelings of Dissonance with her lesbian identity, she worked through the Dissonance and returned to an Intersected Identification as her spiritual growth continued.

This pictoral model also demonstrates the utility of adding threads of identity as an individual incorporates additional aspects of identity throughout the developmental process. For example, if people become disabled following an automobile accident, they will experience a rapid
identity shift. If such an experience occurs later in life, their past experiences with Dissonance will provide survival skills needed to process the Dissonance with their disability. Rickie and Randy provided clear examples of how their coping skills improved after spiraling through OTAID phases. Both Rickie and Randy needed to interweave a lesbian thread of identity to their already existing strand of multiple identities. Rickie came out as a lesbian at age 27, Randy in late adolescence. Randy moved into Immersion with other Jewish lesbians, reflecting all three of her multiple identities. She was able to draw strength from other people struggling with the same issues. Another thread of identity might be added as a person ages and deals with the views of the United States’ mainstream culture on aging. In some communities, like Rickie’s and Kay’s Native American communities, elders are respected and valued as a source of wisdom. They did not report having feelings of Dissonance related to incorporating a new aspect of identity as an older person. They recognized that Immersion in Native American culture enabled them to easily incorporate age into their identities. This fluid and complex process of identity development was also evident in Pat’s case, as she struggled to incorporate low socioeconomic status as a new aspect of identity (even if only temporarily). Although Pat was chosen to be a comparison participant with a single identity (female), events in her life included adding a second minority identity (see Figure 10).

Third, individual differences were evident in the process of moving through OTAID phases. Lila, for example, lived in two countries in which several aspects of her identity (i.e., Asian Indian American, female, American citizen) were challenged because the identities had minority status. Each
participant had a different pattern of development that could be represented visually.

**Summary.** This pictoral model incorporating both OTAID and MIM theories is complex. Tracing an individual’s life story demonstrates the challenges of the environment and the unique way in which each individual maneuvers through the OTAID phases.

Consistent with OTAID theory, participants in this study emphasized that life continues to offer challenges and opportunities for growth. As an individual moves through OTAID phases, these opportunities for growth may be visually represented in this pictoral model by loops. With each repeated loop, an individual experiences Dissonance and/or Immersion with greater maturity and wisdom as she continues to learn the meaning of living as a minority in this country.
Figure 5
Delisa's Configuration
Figure 6
Lila's Configuration
Adulthood: Segmented Identification with Native American identity

Early adulthood: Segmented Identification with lesbian identity and Segmented identification with female identity

Childhood and Adolescence: Segmented Identification with disabled and female identities

Childhood: Conscious Identification with disabled identity and Passive Acceptance of Native American identity

Absence of Conscious Awareness

Transformation

Rickie's Configuration
Figure 8
Randy's Configuration
Figure 9
Kay's Configuration
Figure 10
Pat's Configuration
Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations in sampling, methodology, and data analyses. Some of these limitations are inherent to qualitative research, such as having limited generalizability; others are unique to this study, such as interviewing dynamics and coding procedures.

Sample. A primary limitation of this study’s sample is limited generalizability. Contributing factors include number of participants, educational levels, phase of identity development, age, and ethnic representation.

The six participants had, on average, 16.8 years of education, which is much higher than the general population. Given that the six women represent higher phases of the OTAID model, education may be an environmental factor contributing to identity development described by the OTAID model. Because women with lower levels of education were not included in the study, a lack of comparison prevents conclusive statements about the contribution of education. The educational homogeneity of the sample also prevents generalizability of the data to individuals with lower levels of education.

Limited generalizability is also evident when considering participants’ identity development. A principle research question involved obtaining information about the two highest phases of the OTAID model. A criterion for sample selection included the centrality of spirituality in participants’ lives. As a result, the sample is unique in that participants have attained high levels of identity development according to the OTAID model. Although providing theoretical insight, participants do not appear to represent the “average” person in mainstream America.
Although the six women in this study represent a variety of ages, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and religious affiliations, the presence of individual differences must also be considered when analyzing the data and conclusions.

Despite the 24-year age range in this study’s sample, I was unable to interview a woman over 50. Because all participants under 50 were impacted by the civil rights and women’s movements, a cohort effect may be present in the results.

Participants represented Native American, African American, and Asian Indian American backgrounds, but women with Latina or other Asian (i.e., Chinese, Japanese) ethnicities were not involved in the study. Again, generalizability is limited to women who share characteristics with the women in this study. Viewing the data as a whole, the reader will need to decide if participants’ experiences reflect her own experiences. Individuals who do not share the same identities may relate to the shared experiences of multiple identity development.

Two lesbians were included in the study. Although the number is small, they represent 33% of the sample, higher than the 10% estimate of lesbians in the general population. No women interviewed identified as bisexual — another perspective excluded from the study.

**Method**. Limitations of research methodology are evident in interviewing dynamics, sharing intimate information, and self-report.

As a European American, bisexual, middle-class, Catholic woman, my worldview contributed to the direction of interview questions. This limitation was addressed by following the interview guidelines when interviewing each woman. Member checks and external coders were included in the data.
analyses to provide multiple perspectives, including participants’ views. Another potential limitation of being a European American interviewer is the dynamics of women from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds speaking about their lives with a woman from the racial group that has oppressed their groups. Potential dynamics could include less self-disclosure, censored self-disclosure, and mistrust of a White researcher conducting multicultural research. In a member check, Lila stated that describing her exploration of racial identity may have been influenced by her attempt to describe it to a non-Asian person. In their first member checks, Lila and Delisa recalled being surprised at the amount of information they shared. Referring to casual acquaintances, Kay described feeling hesitant to explain her cultural beliefs to people wanting a quick answer. These three women acknowledged an awareness of interviewing dynamics, but as the interview proceeded, they appeared comfortable enough to share their life stories. Following our second interview, Delisa provided feedback about my interviewing style, commenting on my “respect” for sensitive issues and the support and encouragement I provided during the interviews.

A second limitation includes the personal and sensitive topics of sexual orientation and socioeconomic status. This sensitivity may have contributed to both my asking less in-depth questions about those topics, and participants providing fewer details about their sexual exploration and economic standing. The two lesbians interviewed provided more explicit details about their sexual orientation throughout their lives than did the four heterosexual women. This pattern of response may be more indicative of working through a minority, rather than majority, identity.
An individual's self-report has advantages and limitations. Unlike surveys and standard questionnaires, the interview provided more freedom for self-expression. This freedom is especially important for exploratory and grounded theory inquiry, both of which were employed in this study. A limitation of this study was my reliance on one source of data — participants' self-perceptions. Believing in a personal philosophy and living by it are related, but separate. Interview questions attempted to address this issue by asking about activities, specific examples, and behaviors reflecting their belief system.

**Analyses.** Five external coders coded at least one transcript each; I coded all transcripts. Thus, each transcript was coded by two people. The percentage of coder agreement (ranging from 32.9% to 66.7%) varied across external coders. One possible explanation for low coder agreement is my inadequate explanation of the code meanings. Another explanation is unfamiliarity with my research questions. The highest percentage of agreement (66.7% for one interview) occurred with a member of the OTAID research team. Her familiarity with the OTAID model and the purpose of my research contributed to adequate coding agreement. The lowest percentage of agreement (33.6% average for two interviews) occurred with a colleague who was less familiar with the OTAID model and the purpose of my study. She may also characterize an OTAID phase lower than those of participants, resulting in less developmental insight with which to code the transcripts. She infrequently used codes related to the impact of identities on each other and working through aspects of identity; she frequently coded role of emotion, religion, discrimination/oppression, and environment. This coding pattern
may reflect her perspective and current developmental issues as a 24-year-old Hispanic woman.

To address the lower coding agreement (less than 50%) in three interviews, a third coder (29-year-old European American, lesbian) coded the sections of text with coding discrepancy. She used a structured coding list and her codes served as a tie breaker; agreement with my code was recalculated as an agreement.

Although it is helpful to attain coder agreement, the reality is that each coder interprets the text from her or his own worldview. Each participant’s life story, which could be compared to a novella or literary work, will be read differently. General ideas, much like a plot, are clear to most readers. Finer details, however, become more difficult to interpret. A literature professor would not expect students to read the same book and reach the same conclusions. Psychologists reading case studies often have different interpretations, based on their theoretical orientations and worldviews. Such is the case with this study.

Given unlimited time and resources, a more effective coding system would incorporate coders until a critical mass of codes was obtained. If one hundred individuals representing various worldviews coded sections of transcript, for example, a bell curve of codes would likely emerge. This can again be compared to prevalent interpretations of novels or plays. In this way, outlying codes would be readily identified as falling outside the interpretive norms.

**Directions for Future Research**
Multiple identity development is complex, and few empirical studies have investigated the dynamics of this developmental process. Additional qualitative studies are needed to provide a broad base of in-depth data to further refine developmental theories. Future studies could include participants across a broader spectrum of diversity, including race and ethnicity, sex, disability status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and educational levels.

Improved data collection would incorporate multiple interviewers from diverse backgrounds. This would reduce the chances that participants feel uncomfortable being interviewed by an individual from a majority group (i.e., males, Caucasians, heterosexuals). For example, the women in this study were open, but during a member check Lila stated that explaining her Indian identity might have been influenced by trying to explain it to a non-Asian person.

Adding an observational component to the methodology of future studies may provide insight into the degree of congruence of actions and beliefs. Observation, perhaps accompanying individuals as they proceed through daily activities, spiritual worship, and family/friend interactions, would provide insight into the amount of and response to diverse colleagues and friends and the manifestation of spirituality in their daily lives. A less intrusive observation method would include obtaining consent to videotape at primary locations (e.g., home, work).

In this study, four of the five women with multiple identities distinguished between discrimination and oppression. Future research may focus on the differences in how discriminatory actions and oppressive environments influence multiple aspects of identity. All five women with
multiple identities articulated some conflict between two different aspects of their identities. The role of internalized oppression could be explored more fully, through qualitative and quantitative research, as it relates to internal conflict among multiple identities.

Future OTAID research could also address theoretical issues that surfaced in this study. For example, the progression through identity development phases is theorized to be sequential; however, this study indicates that all six participants experienced more than one OTAID phase simultaneously. This simultaneity reinforces interweaving phases of development related to multiple identities. Randy, for example, had already experienced Dissonance and Immersion related to her Jewish ethnicity during childhood and early adolescence. When she came out as a lesbian during late adolescence, she spiraled back to the Dissonance phase, only this time sexual orientation caused the conflict. Depending on life events and individual differences, an identity (or combination of identities) may focus on a primary OTAID phase while other phases remain in the background. Constant circular motion of individual and contextual variables results in OTAID phases shifting to the forefront of awareness, if only briefly. Future research questions could address the following overlapping and interweaving developmental issues of individuals with multiple minority identities: (a) Do common patterns occur across individuals? (b) Do certain OTAID phases, such as Dissonance and Immersion, occur in tandem more often than other OTAID phases? (c) Are certain OTAID phases, such as Dissonance and Immersion, more likely to shift to the forefront of awareness than others?

Another area of future research could incorporate using both the MIM and the OTAID model to investigate an individual’s identity development.
The MIM helps researchers in untangling the strands of identity. For instance, individuals with apparent passive acceptance of their identity are more likely to be in earlier OTAID phases. Depending on their OTAID phase, this passive acceptance may reflect unawareness or self-protection. For example, Rickie and Randy, unaware of their sexual orientation during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood (Rickie), accepted societal and familial assumptions that they were heterosexual. Rickie, although she had fought against stereotypical female roles during her youth and was aware of sexism, played the role of stereotypical wife as a young adult. My study provides preliminary support for MIM and OTAID compatibility, as described in the "Theoretical Implications" section earlier in this chapter. Future research using the MIM and OTAID models may address further distinctions and implications for identity development, such as searching for the relationship of MIM identity resolution options and OTAID phases to determine the degree of overlap and predictability.

The OTAID model incorporates the role of spirituality, unique in the identity development literature. Because it is unique, little research is available for comparison. The Integration and Transformation phases would benefit from more in-depth theoretical writings and empirical research intended to more clearly define the parameters of the two highest phases. In this study for example, the Integration tenet, "a deepened sense of community," was evident in each woman's life story. Across participants, however, this deepened sense of community was defined differently. Pat had expanded her spiritual community to include Native Americans and all of nature; Lila included nature and people across racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic groups — a much broader range than Pat. Because the OTAID researchers
describe the conceptual switch needed to progress from the Internalization to the Integration phase, the previous example’s discrepancy may reveal that Pat is in the process of making the conceptual shift that Lila has already made. The original SIDMOP’s transitional phase from Internalization to Integration may more accurately reflect Pat’s position, which appears to include characteristics of both phases. The role of spirituality and the exposure to and acceptance of different worldviews (through people, literature, and sociopolitical movements) appeared to help five of the six women in this study make that conceptual shift. Future research may further elucidate the process of making the shift from a suboptimal to an optimal conceptual system.

The incompatibility of modern, mainstream religions with current spiritual beliefs was a theme emerging for all five women who reflected the Transformation phase. Future studies could further explore the role of this incompatibility in the Integration and Transformation phases. OTAID theorists (Myers et al., 1991) asserted that individuals with an optimal conceptual system often embrace the mystical traditions of modern religions, such as Matthew Fox’s Creation Spirituality. Future studies could explore the differences and commonalities between individuals embracing the mystical aspects of modern religions and individuals emphasizing their rejection of modern religions. The emphasis on the incompatibility of modern, mainstream religions with spiritual beliefs may be more prevalent for individuals who have experienced discrimination within modern religious institutions. Limited exposure to mystical religious traditions may fail to provide a language with which to describe spirituality, resulting in defining spirituality through negation of available spiritual traditions. To answer these
questions, future researchers should assess the level of awareness of non-mainstream religious traditions; obtain definitions of spirituality which include cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and philosophical components; and explore the spiritual history of individuals, to ascertain the amount of positive and negative experiences associated with both mainstream and “alternative” organized religions.

Implications for the Field of Counseling Psychology

In an age of increased attention to the range of human diversity, counseling psychologists can incorporate knowledge of multicultural identity development into research and practice.

Identity development research, which impacts training programs and practitioner knowledge, has grown tremendously since Cross (1971) presented his model of Nigrescence. Only recently, however, have identity development theorists addressed multidimensional aspects of identity. The life stories of the six women in this study challenge the simplification of identity development. Often, identity development research focuses on single identity models and brief questionnaires. Acknowledging multiple aspects of identity, researchers can incorporate these complexities when designing a study or research program.

This study supports OTAID (Myers et al., 1991) formulations, which emphasize the importance of spiritual development. All six women in this study described increased self-acceptance coinciding with deepened spirituality. The field of mainstream counseling psychology provides a null environment for the role of spirituality in identity development. This null environment is perpetuated by the scientist-practitioner training model. For
example, most identity development researchers fail to examine the role of spirituality. Faculty members incorporate identity development literature into their syllabi and applied training. Graduate students learn about identity development through their personal experiences, coursework, and applied training. Graduate students become psychologists who build on their research and clinical training. In this way, a research base excluding spirituality perpetuates psychologists’ exclusion of spirituality in research and applied settings.

Learning about the survival skills that the six women in this study used in oppressive environments, counselors may become more familiar with the repertoire of survival techniques available to clients. As a European American Catholic woman, I have not experienced racial or ethnic discrimination. The life stories of the five women with racial and ethnic identities taught me more about racism and anti-Semitism than any clinical definition I have encountered. Counselors with any aspect of identity considered to be “majority” (i.e., European Americans, males, heterosexuals, individuals without physical disabilities, and Christians) would benefit from reading about the experiences of each woman in this study. Considering the uniqueness of individuals, Speight et al. (1991) asserted, “All counseling is multicultural” (p. 31). Reading a life story — rather than a cross-cultural counseling “cookbook” — provides a holistic view of individuals (Speight et al., 1991).

At different points in their lives, all six women in this study described the protective role of self-imposed isolation, reference group immersion, and suppression of some aspect of identity. They also described an array of emotional responses to discrimination: shock, anger, confusion, and sadness.
These case examples would provide excellent training for multicultural counseling by increasing the awareness of the range of emotional responses to discrimination. Increased understanding of self-protective behaviors (e.g., withdrawal) and emotional responses (e.g., anger) may prevent psychologists from pathologizing the behaviors needed to survive in oppressive environments.

This study also illuminates the role of environmental factors, which either nurture or inhibit an individual's multiple identity development. Nurturing factors include affirming parents, immersion in a cultural group or environment, and exposure to diverse groups of people and alternative worldviews. Inhibiting factors included a rejecting or null family environment, lack of exposure to diversity, and the failure of peers, community, and culture to reflect minority aspects of identity. Psychologists who address these environmental factors in assessment and psychotherapy can assist clients in naming their identities and the presence of oppression. In this study, three women who named their previously unknown identity experienced clarity and relief. Three women experienced relief after they understood the mechanisms of oppression that had been causing them distress. All women in this study enhanced their self-understanding by connecting with individuals who shared their identity and by learning about their cultural heritage through cultural activities, literary and artistic expressions, and history. Counselors may encourage clients to use these strategies to enhance self-awareness. As demonstrated by all six women in this study, this deeper understanding of self may assist individuals in obtaining greater self-acceptance, increased sense of community, and deeper spiritual awareness.
The interplay between the type of minority identity and a null environment influenced OTAID progression. Three women (Kay, Rickie, and Randy) had aspects of identity that could be characterized by the second OTAID phase (Individuation) throughout their youth. A rejecting or null environment (regarding their invisible minority identities) was associated with accepting societal and familial assumptions about those invisible aspects of identity. Kay and Rickie first became aware of the Native American half of their ethnicity during childhood (between ages 5 and 8); Rickie and Randy did not begin to question their sexual orientation until adolescence (between ages 15 and 18). In addition to delayed awareness, these women experienced a null or rejecting environment at home, at school, and in their communities. In contrast, women in this study with visible identities — female, African American, Indian American, and physical disability — gained awareness of differences early in their development. To offset the lack of familial and societal support for children and adolescents with invisible identities, practitioners can provide affirmation and encourage identity exploration at a young age. Youth whose identities are not visibly apparent include some biracial individuals; gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth; individuals with non-Christian religious affiliations; and youth with learning disabilities.

In some cases, accepting societal and familial assumptions may continue into adulthood, based on developmental patterns and external circumstances. Pat, whose socioeconomic status lowered with her husband’s unemployment, suddenly became aware of having low socioeconomic status. As Lila demonstrated, moving to another country creates a new set of dynamics, in which certain aspects of identity (such as nationality) are highlighted. Individuals who come out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual later in life (as Rickie
demonstrated) also interface with society from a new minority perspective. To enhance awareness for youth and for adults who have not previously explored aspects of their identity or questioned stereotypes and assumptions, psychotherapists can acknowledge the impact of gaining self-awareness and an expanded self-concept, provide a nurturing environment as a balance to the rejecting or null environment experienced by the client, and encourage clients to find resources and activities that nurture the previously ignored identity.
Concluding Remarks

This study illuminates the complexity of multiple identity development. Rather than one spiral process, as proposed by OTAID theorists, multiple identities appeared to follow overlapping, interwoven spirals of development. Environmental factors — such as the role of parental affirmation, exposure to diversity in the community, the availability of resources to explore aspects of identity, and overarching sociopolitical movements — contributed to multiple identity development. The OTAID model incorporates the role of the environment; this study provides more specific details of how environmental influences are interrelated with developmental progress. During childhood, for example, parental affirmation and the exposure to different types of people provided a framework for expanding development. The degree to which a community (i.e., school, work, or neighborhood) reflected an individual’s multiple aspects of identity is another impetus for development. The experience of oppression and discrimination resulted in powerful emotional and cognitive responses, motivating individuals to develop survival skills. Surviving through identity conflicts spurred by environmental factors brought increased awareness and deeper self-understanding. As OTAID theorists proposed, spirituality is an essential component of self. In this study, deepening spirituality was associated with increased self-understanding.

Most importantly, the openness with which these six women shared their experiences demonstrates the power of interconnection. Hearing their life stories deeply touched me. Their experiences resonate with my own experiences of discrimination and have broadened my understanding of
identities different than my own. I will carry their stories beyond this dissertation — I have already woven them into my professional outlook and my own personal growth.
APPENDIX A

Solicitation of Interest
Date:  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Name:

I am requesting your participation in dissertation research exploring the identity development of women with two or more aspects of identity that have "minority" status in this society (i.e., women of color, lesbian and bisexual women, women with a disability). The principal investigator is Dr. Pamela Highlen, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the Ohio State University. I am a doctoral student of counseling psychology working under the guidance of Dr. Highlen, and would be honored if you choose to contribute your valuable insights to this research. Few studies have looked at how multiple aspects of identity influence a person's development. By sharing your life experiences, your participation in this study would help identify issues that have been previously ignored.

If you choose to participate, you would be considered a "co-investigator" because of the collaborative approach used to gather and analyze information obtained in the one-on-one interviews. Your involvement would consist of two interviews: (a) The first interview, lasting approximately 90 minutes, would enable you to share important life experiences that contributed to your identity development; (b) The second follow-up interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes, would consist of reading and checking the accuracy of our transcription of your first interview. The second interview will also provide an opportunity for you to hear a summary of common themes that have emerged from all of the other interviews (including your own), and then to compare those themes to your own experience. Both interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. To insure anonymity, any identifying information will be excluded from the transcription and audio-tapes will be erased at the completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary, and you may certainly withdraw from the study at any time.

I would appreciate your willingness to participate. Please contact me, at your convenience, to address further questions you may have and to discuss meeting times. I am professionally and personally invested in this research and look forward to meeting and working with you as a co-investigator.

Sincerely,

Heather C. Finley, M.A.
APPENDIX B

Letter of Confirmation
Dear Name:

I am pleased that you are interested in participating in my dissertation research on the identity development of women (Dr. Pamela Highlen is the principal investigator). Through interviews, your unique life experience will provide insights into the development of women’s multiple identities. A theory has been created for identity development, but little research has addressed the identity of women with multiple minority status. By sharing your experiences, you will help refine and broaden the theory.

I wanted to let you know some of the areas I will be asking you about, so you will have time to think about major events, experiences, and people that have impacted you throughout your life. I am especially interested in the significance of spirituality, relationships, family, community involvement, and political involvement as they relate to aspects of your identity (i.e., race, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability). I am also interested in the feelings, values, and attitudes that you had at important times in your life, and how various aspects of your identity influenced you. I realize that much of this information is very personal, and I will treat all that you share with respect and confidentiality. I am honored that you are willing to share your life story.

The interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, and examined for common themes and patterns. I want to assure you that all responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Any information that reveals your name or other identification will not be included in the written form, and audio tapes will be erased at the end of the study. Interviews will be coded by letter, insuring your anonymity. Please read and sign the enclosed consent form. It states your rights as a participant. If you have any questions about the consent form, research, or upcoming interview, please don't hesitate to contact me.

As we discussed on the phone, the first interview will take place on **Date**, at **time**. As you suggested, **Location** will be a quiet and private place for us to meet. A second interview will be scheduled in order for you to verify the accuracy of the transcription and the general themes that emerge from interviews with other women. Enclosed is an information sheet that will help provide additional background information and give you an idea of some basic areas I will be especially interested in. I am looking forward to talking with you, and would like to thank you for participating in this study. You have much wisdom that will benefit others, and hopefully, through the process of reflecting on and sharing your experiences, these interviews will prove to be a positive experience for you as well.

Sincerely,

Heather C. Finley, M.A.
APPENDIX C

Consent Form
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

Women with Multiple Identities: Searching for Patterns Among Complex Differences

Pamela S. Highlen, Ph.D. or his/her authorized representative has
(Principal Investigator)

explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: __________________________ Signed: __________________________ (Participant)

Signed: __________________________ (Principal Investigator or his/her Authorized Representative)

Signed: __________________________ (Person Authorized to Consent for Participant - If required)

Witness: __________________________

HS-027 (Rev. 3/87) -- To be used only in connection with social and behavioral research.)
APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire
This summary sheet will be used to provide general information about you that may not be fully covered in the interview. I will collect this completed sheet at our initial meeting.

*Please answer the following questions. All responses will be confidential.*

Age __________________

Racial/Ethnic Background __________________________________________

Sexual Orientation __________________________________________

Disability Status __________________________________________

Religious Affiliation __________________________________________

Professional Training/Education _________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Occupation/Community Involvement ______________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Relationship Status (i.e., single, partnered, married, divorced, separated, etc.)

__________________________________________________________

Motherhood Status __________________________________________

Childhood Background (i.e., socioeconomic class, family)

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Other information ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX E

Initial Interview Guide
**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

*Multiple Identity*

- Self-Definition
- Critical Incidents
  
  situation, what triggered age
  important people feelings
  community sociopolitical spirituality
  impact of identities on this situation

- What or who has had the most impact on your identity development?

*Pattern of development*

- (*look for concurrent, subsequent, overlapping experiences*)
  Looking back at your life up until now... what aspects of your identity seemed to be most important at different times in your life?

- (*impact of one identity on others*)
  How did _____ (*a previously resolved identity issue*) influence the development of ____________ (*a subsequent identity issue*)... if at all?

- (*repeat previous question with additional combinations of identities impacting others*)

- *Environment (people, things)*
  Please describe how any aspect of your identity development has been helped or hindered by people or things in your environment.

- *Society*
  Describe how your identity development has been helped or hindered by society.
OTAID and MIM Perspectives

- look for personal philosophy of development

- look for predictions of future...i.e., more stable, confident times ahead; stable?

- Any incidents in your life that reminded you of an earlier experience, but with _______________ (a different identity)?

- Elaborate on _______________ (any situations where you have worked through different identity issues in similar ways)
  How were they the same? How were they different?

Integration and Transformation Phases

- How define "community"?

  Who and/or what make up your community?

- Thoughts about "oppression"?

  How do you make sense of the various ways you have experienced discrimination?

- How define "self"?

  Who and/or what are connected to yourself?
  How describe that connection?

- What are some of your challenging life experiences?

Additional Information

- Would you like to add anything that might help me understand your identity development as a(n) _______________ (their self-definition)?
APPENDIX F

Interview Priming List
The following areas are those I will ask you about when we meet for the initial interview. Providing this information in advance will give you more preparation time to reflect on your past experiences:

- How you define your identity

- Important events in your life that influenced your identity development (Consider: situation, age, people involved, spirituality, feelings, values, attitudes, community, political climate)

- Looking back at your life ... what aspects of your identity seemed to be most important at different times in your life?

- How has your spirituality influenced who you are?

- Describe how any aspect of your identity development has been helped or hindered by people or things in your environment.
  * Family
  * Relationships
  * Community

- How has one aspect of your identity (i.e., race, sexual orientation, sex) influenced other aspects of your identity (i.e., race, sexual orientation, sex)?

- Describe how any aspect of your identity development has been helped or hindered by society.

- What is your political involvement like?

- Who and/or what make up your community?
- What is your community involvement like?

- Who and/or what are connected to yourself?
  How describe that connection?

- What have been some of your challenging/growthful life experiences?
APPENDIX G

Revised Interview Guide
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of study: Identity development of women who have two or more aspects of identity considered to be minority status. (Multiple identities)

Minority status: Discriminated against systematically in the larger society, through "-isms"

Individual experience: By sharing your experiences as _________________, learn about how each aspect of identity impacted your life, how your different identities emerged, how they interacted with each other, and how you felt at different periods.

Spirituality/orientation to the world: How spirituality relates to identity development.

Today's time: As we stated, ____ hours. Because so short, I will be active during this interview, to make sure the various areas are covered before our time runs out.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Multiple Identity
* Self-Definition

* Critical Incidents (chronological, if comfortable)

situation, what triggered
age
important people
feelings
community
sociopolitical
spirituality
impact of identities on this situation

Pattern of development
* (look for concurrent, subsequent, overlapping experiences)
* Looking back at your life up until now... what aspects of your identity seemed to be most important at different times in your life?
* How identify at different times in your life?

* (impact of one identity on others)
* How did ____ (a previously resolved identity issue) influence the development of ____________ (a subsequent identity issue) ... if at all?
• (repeat previous question with additional combinations of identities impacting others)

• Environment (people, things)
  * Please describe how any aspect of your identity development has been helped or hindered by people or things in your environment (family, relationships, community).

• Society
  * Describe how your identity development has been helped or hindered by society.
  * Describe your political involvement

• Spirituality
  * Its role in development throughout life.
  * Role of church.

**OTAID and MIM perspectives**

• look for personal philosophy of development

• look for predictions of future...ie, more stable, confident times ahead; stable?

• Any incidents in your life that reminded you of an earlier experience, but with _____________ (a different identity) ?

• Elaborate on _____________ (any situations where you have worked through different identity issues in similar ways)
  * How were they the same? How were they different?

**Integration and Transformation Phases**

• How define "community"?
  * Who and/or what make up your community?
  * What is your community involvement? (past and present)

• Thoughts about "oppression"?
  * How do you feel about the various ways you have experienced discrimination?
• How define "self"?

* Who and/or what are connected to yourself?
   How describe that connection?

• What are some of your challenging/growthful life experiences?

Additional Information

• Would you like to add anything that might help me understand your identity development as a(n) ________________ (their self-definition)?
APPENDIX H

OTAID Checklist
CHECKLIST


dividuation  (Phase 1)
  Separateness
  Not question suboptimal system

Dissonance  (Phase 2)
  Exploration of social groups
  Self Doubt
  Avoidance??

Immersion  (Phase 3)
  Energy to same social group
  Pride, reclaiming identity
  Negative feelings toward "other"

Internalization  (Phase 4)
  More stable sense of self
  Multidimensional understanding of identity (> tolerance, acceptance)

Integration  (Phase 5)
  Shift toward changing assumptions about world
  Oppression...link to suboptimal system
  Deeper sense of community, diverse range of people
  Greater unconditional positive regard for life

Transformation  (Phase 6)
  Optimal worldview
  All life interrelated, interdependent
  Spirituality...
  Expanded sense of self
APPENDIX I

Follow-Up Letter
Dear Name,

Hello! Here is the transcript of our interview so long ago. As you can tell, it has taken a while to get the transcript in order. First, I want to thank you again for sharing so much of you and your experiences with me. I am honored that you are willing to share your life story.

As you read this transcript, I apologize in advance for any misspellings or any inaccurate representations of what was said during our interview. I know some of the spelling may be incorrect, due to my lack of knowledge or difficulty in hearing the tape clearly. I did my best to reflect the content as well as some of the animation in your voice intonation and level of intensity. One of the most important aspects of this interview process is making sure that you feel the transcription accurately represents what you said. Please make any corrections, additions, deletions you see necessary. My questions about spelling or content are in [brackets], so I will ask you in our follow up interview about those questions as well as other oversights you may find. I hope to address them over the phone, if possible. I tried to replace any identifying information with more generic words in order to maintain your anonymity in the text. Please note any further changes that I might have missed.

We can address your corrections to the transcript when we meet for our second interview. During this interview (approximately 30-45 minutes), we can (a) discuss the accuracy of the transcription, (b) gather more depth with follow up questions, and (c) discuss common themes across other women’s interviews.

I am looking forward to talking with you again! I will be contacting you via email for possible times to talk over the phone lines! Take care.

Sincerely,

Heather Finley
Observational Notes:

Setting: ____________________________________________________________

Environmental Distractions: _________________________________________

Interviewer:
  Race/Ethnicity__________ Sex___ Sexual Orientation________
  Physical/mental/emotional readiness______________________________

Length of Interview: _________ Date of Interview: __________

Co-Investigator:
  Nonverbal Comm (i.e., eye contact, posture, personal space):
  ____________________________
  Attitude toward interviewer: _________________________________
  Speech (i.e., pace): _________________________________________
  Physical/mental/emotional readiness: ___________________________

2nd Interview:
  Date: ____________________ Time: ______________
  Place: ______________________

Additional Notes:
  _____________________________________________________________

Snowball referrals: _____________________________________________
What was relationship with Co-Investigator like:

How did interviewer experience Co-Investigator? (i.e., integrated, fragmented?)

Allusions to something in another part of the data:

Interviewer’s feelings about what was being said or done:
Methodological Notes:

Equipment problems, suggestions:

Logistics:

Which research questions did Co-Inv. struggle with?

What information was NOT obtained in this interview?

Process...Suggestions from Co-Investigator

Reflections of Interviewer (process)

Mental note to pursue an issue further with CI:
Theoretical Notes:

Main themes or issues in interview:

Thoughts/Insights on the meaning of what the Co-Investigator was saying:

What new hypotheses, speculations, guesses suggested by Co-Investigator?
OTAID thoughts:

Consider phases, patterns, spirituality, acceptance, optimal worldview, community, self:

MIM thoughts:

Consider multiple identities in relation to each other, situation/context
APPENDIX K

Transcription Guidelines
TRANSCRIPTION

Setting Up:

* Foot Pedal, Headset, Electric Plug
* Always keep discs, tapes, and equipment together
* Don't press play & rewind or play & fast forward at same time, that erases!!

Transcribing:

* Identifying Information  *generic name
  i.e., name (H*, friend’s name, *university, workplace)

* Missing Information  ... ellipses
  i.e., totally unable to understand, plane flies by

* Difficult to understand information  [brackets]
  [?personality] means you think you heard personality
  [?] have no idea, need to recheck on next run through

* Unfinished sentences, interruptions  -- double dash
  i.e., So when I was -- Well let me start at the beginning.
  i.e., He didn't understand -- (I: He, meaning your father?) Yes.

* Nonverbal information
  Verbal emphasis is underlined
  Tone of voice is placed in parentheses (whispered)
  Nonverbal sounds in parentheses (laugh), (chuckle),
  (tapping on table)
  Pauses in parentheses (pause) (long pause)

* Quotable quotes to self, or from another person
  i.e., And so I said "No way am I going to do that!"
  i.e., My dad said "G* you need to get out on your own."

Reminders:

* Don't forget to save your document every 15 minutes or so
* Make a backup copy of your document on the 2nd disk...just in case
* Keep the disks with the transcribing machine...important not to lose
* Finally...thank you SO much for your help. I really appreciate your time and energy. If you have questions let me know.... 486-5018
HyperResearch Codes

1 Mult identities
   1a fam pos/neg infl mult ident
   1a react against family beliefs
   1b environ pos/neg infl mult ident
   1b react against environment

2 Devel patterns
   2a subsequent pattern
   2b concurrent pattern

3 Ident devel process
   3a ident impact each other
   3b work thru *physical/sexual/
      female/racial/ethnic* identity
   3c MIM framework

4 CTAID sequence
   4b zeitgeist

5a Integration
5b Transformation
   5b Transformation contra

6a Visible minority exper
6b Invisible minority exper

7 Role of emotion
   7a anger
   7a anger for survival
   7b loss and sadness
   7c shock re oppression
   7d confusion

8 Suppressed identity
   8a lost voice

9 Role of religion/spirituality
   9a religion incompatible

10 Motherhood

11 Isolation
   11a Isolation ext imposed
   11b Isolation self imposed

12 Environment
   12a pos/neg impact of comm
   12a community involvement
   12b pos/neg impact of sociopolit
   12b sociopolitical involvement

13 Oppression
   13b Discrimination

14 Survival
   14a harmful coping
   14b healthy coping

15 Naming identity/oppression
   15 Naming identity contra
   15a relief thru naming
   15b clarity thru naming

16 Nonconformity
   16 Nonconformity contra
   16a Rebellious

17 Not feel oppressed

18 Critical turning point
APPENDIX M

Code Clusters
Code Clusters

Multiple Identities

- Multiple identities
- Oppression
- Discrimination
- Nonconformity
- Nonconformity contra
- Not feel oppressed
- Identities impact each other

Identity Components

- Naming identity
- Work through ethnic identity
- Work through gender identity
- Work through physical identity
- Work through racial identity
- Work through socioeconomic status identity
- Work through sexual identity
- Work through spiritual identity
- Visible minority experience
- Invisible minority experience

Developmental Process

- Critical turning point
- Subsequent pattern
- Concurrent pattern
- Identity development process
- Metaphor (developmental process)
- OTAID sequence

Survival

- Survival
- Harmful coping
- Healthy coping
Integration and Transformation

- Integration
- Transformation
- Transformation quote
- Transformation contra
- Spirituality
- Spirituality not present
- Alternative to religion
- Religion incompatible

Environmental Influence and MIM

- Environment positively influenced identity development
- Environment negatively influenced identity development
- Reaction to the environment
- Sociopolitical events positively influenced identity development
- Sociopolitical events negatively influenced identity development
- Zeitgeist
- OTAID sequence not evident
- MIM framework

Naming Identity and Oppression

- Naming identity
- Naming identity contra
- Naming oppression
- Relief through naming
- Clarity through naming

Isolation and Suppression

- Isolation
- Isolation contra
- Isolation externally imposed
- Isolation internally imposed
- Negative impact of community
- Survival through suppression
- Suppressed identity
- Suppressed identity contra
- Lost voice
- Lost voice contra
APPENDIX N

Second Member Check
Dear Name:

Greetings! Believe it or not, I am STILL working on this dissertation but am very close to finishing. Before it is complete, I would like to ask a few more questions of you, if you have the time.

In the results section, I will present an "individual profile" that summarizes your life experiences related to identity development and spirituality. I have paraphrased and pulled out brief quotes from your transcript, and used a first person narrative to relay that information to the reader in a more real and fluent fashion. Before including that in my dissertation text, I want to make sure that you feel your voice is accurately represented and does not reveal any identifying information. The profile's final form will include your feedback, will not be as rough as the draft you have, and will need to be more condensed (according to my adviser).

I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a form that may assist you in answering some brief questions about your individual profile at your earliest convenience. Realizing you may have more to add than the form allows, please note if you want me to call you regarding additional changes to the text.

Once again, thank you so much for your participation in what seems like a never-ending project. Fortunately, your words are helping me maintain interest and motivation.

May this spring bring renewal in your life.

Peace.

Heather Finley
Individual Profile

Please respond to the accuracy of your individual profile ...

What changes would make the text *more accurate*?

page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:

Please note any *identifying information* that you would like changed or omitted:

page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:
page ___:

*in some cases, education and jobs were discussed in more vague terms to ensure anonymity. Please note any further changes you would make.

I would like to use pseudonym to provide more dimension to your voice. So far, I have only used letters and referred to you as Participant ____.

Please write down a name you would prefer that I call you in the text: ______

If you want me to call you regarding further changes, please check here ____

Best times to reach you are: ___________________________

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this form.
LIST OF REFERENCES


