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### American Indian women in academic libraries: Progress and challenges.

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## **American Indian Women in Academic Libraries: Progress and Challenges**

Sarah Kostecky

Librarians have long promoted the professional value of workplace diversity. This is evidenced by its inclusion in the Library Bill of Rights,<sup>1</sup> in scholarship programs to recruit minority populations to master's programs in library science,<sup>2</sup> and in residency programs to mentor new professionals in the field.<sup>3</sup> Particular focus has been on adding a range of voices to academic libraries to support an increasingly diverse student body by reflecting this distinctiveness in the librarians who teach them. These efforts are exemplified by the 14.8% of professional librarians of color working in United States university libraries in 2014-2015.<sup>4</sup>

Each different ethnic group brings a unique perspective to its institution, which can be beneficial to libraries trying to reach underserved populations, particularly students of color. This chapter will discuss the academic library environment Native American women librarians navigate and the pressure to balance their roles as academics with those as outside representatives and community members of their particular tribal groups.

American Indian and Alaska Native librarians represented 0.3% of all academic librarians in the United States from 2014-2015,<sup>5</sup> which is much less than their representation in the general population of approximately 2% in 2013.<sup>6</sup> American Indian women librarians encounter many of the same barriers faced by other women of color in academia while additionally dealing with the rampant misinformation and negative representations of themselves in mainstream American culture and in the workplace. From the 785 U.S. place names with the word squaw in 2006<sup>7</sup> to the persistence of the Pocahontas stereotype, Native American women must maneuver through a minefield of painful images and recurring injustices. Later in this chapter, I utilize the auto-ethnography method to share my experience as a Native American academic librarian to illustrate some successes and potential areas for improvement. Tami Spry defines auto-

ethnography as “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts.”<sup>8</sup> This discussion does not attempt to provide definitive answers but strives to provide a glimpse of the realities that American Indian<sup>9</sup> women in academic libraries encounter.

## **Historical Background**

Estimates of the American Indian population in North America prior to European contact vary but even conservative approximations figure eight to 12 million.<sup>10</sup> Generalizing across more than 500 tribes and their multiple belief systems is impossible, but some similarities should be kept in mind. Historically, many Native American cultures had defined but balanced gender roles. Men and women provided different community support which was grounded in traditional beliefs about the creation of their particular tribe and how they were meant to live, govern, and sustain their way of life. In the introduction to *Women and Power in Native North America*, Klein and Ackerman share a useful description of American Indian gender roles, noting “the worlds of men and women were, and are, distinctly different but not generally perceived as hierarchical. . . the efforts of both women and men are acknowledged as necessary for the well-being of the society.”<sup>11</sup>

Contact with the Western world changed many of the traditional lifeways of American Indian people. Policies implemented by the federal government to deal with the “Indian Problem”<sup>12</sup> had the overarching goal of eliminating the characteristics and culture that had sustained Native Americans for millennia. Boarding schools run by the U.S. government were responsible for the continued loss of culture, language, and tribal family structure.<sup>13</sup> At most of these schools, Native American girls and boys were taught to ignore their traditional ways and were punished if they tried to outwardly express their culture or language. In the 1950s the federal relocation program gave funds to tribal members in rural areas to move into cities with

the promise of jobs and a better life.<sup>14</sup> Instead of improving living conditions, many American Indians' situations deteriorated because they found mainly low-paying jobs and had lost the connection to their traditional ceremonies and family structure. The boarding school policies and relocation programs were devastating and fueled Native people's activism in the 1960s and 1970s. The events most Americans recall were the American Indian Movement (AIM) takeover of Wounded Knee, South Dakota and the Occupation of Alcatraz Island.<sup>15</sup> This history is not far from the minds of Native people today, whose great-grandparents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles share their experiences living in times when Native American people and culture were being actively eliminated. This makes the existence of languages, ceremonies, and belief systems even more special and explains why American Indian people are dedicated to continue them for many more generations.

The view of American Indians as relics of the past, people who exist only in black and white photographs or encased in museum exhibits, is, unfortunately, accepted as truth by many in the United States. This perspective is incorrect as 566 federally recognized tribes exist in America today.<sup>16</sup> Each has a government-to-government relationship with the United States. Each tribe runs its own tribal government and sets priorities for economic development, tribal enrollment policies, and other social services. The current state of Native Americans was greatly affected by the 1975 Tribal Self-Determination Act, which granted tribes the ability to be responsible for their own educational institutions.<sup>17</sup> This act led to greater opportunities for American Indians to access higher education and to become part of the academy itself.

Higher education, however, continues to be out of reach for many Native Americans. Barriers to college completion for American Indian students include costs and lack of funding for college, unpreparedness for college level courses, and lack of campus support networks.<sup>18</sup> The

U.S. Census Bureau states that 17.6% of all American Indian and Alaska Natives age 25 or older earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29.1% of the overall population.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the factors mentioned earlier, the history of educational institutions as places where expression of American Indian culture was punished also may affect the numbers of higher education graduates.

Less access to higher education is reflected by employment numbers. In 2013 25.9% of American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) age 16 or older were employed in management, business, science, and arts sectors.<sup>20</sup> The median household income for AI/AN households was \$36,252 in 2013, compared to the \$52,176 U.S. median income.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the blatantly hostile policies to permanently eliminate Native American culture and the many social and health challenges faced today, American Indians survive and thrive. The past has influenced their daily lives in positive and negative ways. Traditions, culture, ceremonies, and indigenous knowledge support their perseverance. American Indians can be found in all areas of society as deans of law schools, stand-up comedians, nurses, artists, filmmakers, teachers and librarians. This historical background presents the context for the society and culture that Native American women in academic libraries navigate today and the historical factors that affect them.

## **Literature Review**

Considering the small percentage of American Indians in the library profession overall, the lack of literature specifically focused on American Indian academic librarians is not surprising. Most of the literature mentioning American Indians in librarianship comes from research on the recruitment of librarians of color to the profession. While research about the successful recruitment and retention of American Indian students to library master's degree

programs is needed to continue to diversify the profession, it is not the focus of this chapter. Some recent literature, notably the volume edited by Loriene Roy, Anjali Bhasin and Sarah Arriaga,<sup>22</sup> also documents the history and progress of tribal public libraries. The stories of these unique libraries are valuable additions illustrating the importance of libraries and their role as cultural institutions but are not applicable here. Two articles to be discussed next, however, are useful to the discussion of the environment Native American women academic librarians operate within.

In *History and Status of Native Americans in Librarianship*, Dr. Lotsee Patterson presents a chronology of major events in American Indian history and their role in enabling Native Americans to join the library profession.<sup>23</sup> Patterson incorporates statistics to show the progression of American Indians in librarianship. She identifies a problem that still hinders research about Native Americans in librarianship today: lack of uniformity about definition of who is an American Indian/Alaska Native.<sup>24</sup> To gain a clear picture of the status of Native Americans in librarianship, data collected need a common definition. This may be difficult as Patterson notes because government institutions may allow for self-identification as American Indian while individual tribal governments have a specific definition of who can be counted as a tribal member.<sup>25</sup> While the article does not mention academic librarians, important background information that was unavailable in another prior volume is shared with the reader. Since the article was published in 2000, an update would enhance this discussion, given the continuing efforts to diversify librarianship.

Some Native American women academic librarians participate in the tenure and promotion process. Damasco and Hodges studied the tenure and promotion experiences of academic librarians of color by conducting a survey<sup>26</sup> and found similarities between issues

academic librarians of color and other teaching faculty of color face while pursuing tenure. Academic librarians of color have more service commitments than their white colleagues, lack adequate time to research and write, and may lack formal and informal support by senior colleagues'.<sup>27</sup> The authors analyze their results using a critical race theory (CRT) framework and incorporate narratives by respondents, satisfying their aim "to give voice specifically to racially and ethnically underrepresented librarians who might otherwise not have safe venues to share their opinions."<sup>28</sup> Their survey shares important information not readily found elsewhere, and the authors note the "practically nonexistent"<sup>29</sup> research on the retention of academic librarians of color. The findings can guide further research about the experiences of specific ethnic groups in librarianship including Native American librarians.

### **Overview of Academic Librarianship**

Academic librarians occupy an interesting space in the campus hierarchy as they often have faculty rank and status, and the larger campus community does not always understand their role.<sup>30</sup> Academic librarian positions vary, but a sampling of job descriptions from the Association of College and Research Libraries lists Reference Librarian, Catalog Librarian, Digital Resources Manager, and Systems Administrator.<sup>31</sup> Librarianship provides a range of areas of specialization but professional librarian positions generally require a master's degree in library and information studies, often from a program that is accredited by the American Library Association.<sup>32</sup>

The library profession historically was comprised of white females and continues to be considered feminized. A review of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institution statistics, compiled from the 124 top tier U.S. and Canadian research libraries, shows that the racial makeup of these libraries reinforces these trends. Nearly 86% of academic librarians at

ARL libraries in 2012-2013 were Caucasian. Minority academic librarians represented 14% of academic library employees and on average earned \$3,392 less than their white colleagues.<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau in 2009 found 81.8% of librarians overall were female.<sup>34</sup> While the field is primarily comprised of women, within librarianship, the perception is that men are given greater support and encouragement to pursue administrative and management positions. A few studies have been published about the male librarian experience dealing with this issue. A survey from 2001 found 65.7% of male academic librarians “acknowledge they had a slight advantage in terms of advancement, tenure and/or promotion in the field over women.”<sup>35</sup> Reinforcing the findings on gender difference in librarianship Morris and Kyrillidou examined data from the ARL Annual Salary Survey 2013-2013 and found, on average, that in all racial categories, women with more years of experience still earned less than males.<sup>36</sup> While many women are in the library field, the focus should continue to be on recruitment and retention of women of color. Women of color are not homogeneous; therefore women from diverse ethnicities, backgrounds and sexual orientations are needed.

### **Sampling of Library Diversity Efforts**

The purpose of the Spectrum Scholarship and the Knowledge River programs is to recruit diverse people to librarianship. Though other programs also exist, this author participated in these two and shares her experience with Knowledge River later in the chapter.

The American Library Association (ALA), the professional organization for librarians and library paraprofessionals in the United States, lists under its key action areas the importance of diversity and has included it since 1998.<sup>37</sup> To support diversity in the profession, in 1998, ALA started the Spectrum Initiative, a scholarship program awarding 50 scholarships to American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native



Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students enrolled in library and information masters programs.<sup>38</sup> When the Spectrum Scholarship Program had its tenth anniversary in 2007, a total of 415 scholarships had been awarded, and 17 American Indian/Alaska Native students were recipients.<sup>39</sup> The Spectrum Program continues and has expanded to include a program for doctoral students in the library science field<sup>40</sup>.

Another initiative to increase diversity within the library profession is a project of the University of Arizona's School of Information Resources and Library Science called Knowledge River. Started in 2001, it focused on recruitment of Latino/Latina<sup>41</sup> and Native American students.<sup>42</sup> It incorporated new courses on issues relevant to these ethnic populations into the existing curriculum. One example was IRLS 550: Information Environments from Hispanic and Native American Perspectives.<sup>43</sup> The addition of courses addressing topics acknowledging the different experiences of Latino/Latina and Native American students was an important part of Knowledge River's success. As noted by Montiel-Overall and Littletree in their article about the program “. . . major consideration in developing and sustaining a diversity program such as KR is ‘curriculum relevance’ and ensuring that the cultural interests of ethnic minority students are met.”<sup>44</sup> Knowledge River recruited its fourteenth cohort of students in 2014, and has had over 150 graduates.<sup>45</sup>

### **One Librarian's Experience**

Efforts to recruit and retain librarians of color have led to an increase in their representation in academic libraries, American Indian women included. Now more Native American colleagues are in the field to act as mentors, share experiences, and support and nurture the next generation of Native American librarians. I was a beneficiary of these efforts to diversify, and they contributed greatly to the achievement of my current academic librarian

position. Utilizing auto-ethnography, I share my experiences about the joys and difficulties of entering a field with very few American Indians. The aim of this narrative is to voice my experience as a Native American woman, explain the path that led me to academic librarianship, and determine how I do (or do not) fit in my current academic environment. These stories are shared in a spirit of support for others but are not representative of all American Indian women's experiences.

## **Background**

I grew up on the Zuni Pueblo reservation in Western New Mexico, the largest Pueblo group in the state with over 9,000 enrolled tribal members.<sup>46</sup> New Mexico has the third highest population of Native Americans in the United States at 9.1%.<sup>47</sup> The state is home to 19 Pueblo groups as well as the Navajo and Apache people. New Mexico presents itself as a blend of Native American, Hispanic/Latino and Western cultures. The arts are a large part of the state's economy, and the American Indian culture and traditions are vital to tourism.

The connection to traditional ceremonies and culture in Zuni is strong and was a large part of my childhood experience. The ceremonial calendar guides life in Zuni throughout the seasons. Major ceremonies mark both the summer and winter solstice, and tribal members often return home for these from other parts of the state and the country. The entire village slows down during fasting times preceding the solstice ceremonies, and stores and other tribal offices are closed. All tribal members are expected to participate in ceremonies, which have been given to the people by their ancestors to continue for all time. Zuni Pueblo has been a subject of fascination for many anthropologists and ethnologists since the late 1800s.<sup>48</sup> Despite the scrutiny, the Zuni people have kept their language, culture, and religion, all of which were important to me as a child and continue to guide me today.

My mother is full Zuni, and my father is white with parents of English and Czechoslovakian descent. Having a parent who was not American Indian was unusual in the early 1980s in Zuni and immediately set me and my younger sister and brother apart from our classmates in the public schools in the pueblo. I enjoyed school and did well especially in reading, so I became known as a “smart” student. This was not always a welcome identity because it was another marker noting my differentness from others.

I continued to do well in school, and by high school had somewhat begrudgingly embraced my identity. Since my friends knew I cared about my classes and avoided trouble, they did not pressure me to experiment with drugs and alcohol as many of them did. Considering results of a 2009 survey finding 64.8% lifetime drug abuse among Native Americans,<sup>49</sup> I am thankful that my identity served as a buffer to help me avoid the frequent use of drugs and alcohol.

Though barriers to attending college were primarily financial for me, I planned to attend. The most viable options were state schools in New Mexico and Arizona. Only one school provided a full tuition scholarship based on my grades, and that was the deciding factor in choosing the University of Arizona in Tucson.

### **College Years and Path to Librarianship**

Arriving in Tucson was exciting and overwhelming. During my first year the university’s undergraduate student headcount was 25,617,<sup>50</sup> more than double the total population of Zuni. I found the large campus and city environment freeing and was able to be somewhat “anonymous” and blend in, which I was not able to do in the pueblo.

In my first year I found a campus job that would clarify my professional path. I applied for a student position working in a campus museum library and was hired. My prior experience

with library work occurred at age 13 when hired for my first job at the Zuni Public Library, where I enjoyed the experience. Working at the museum library gave me an opportunity to see the daily workings of a smaller specialized academic library, and I happily took it all in. The greatest gift to me while working there was a supportive and encouraging supervisor. She took the time to answer my questions and was the first person to suggest I consider pursuing a master's degree in library science. I had no knowledge of library science or the notion that library work could be a career before then.

As an undergraduate, courses in American Indian Studies were pivotal in developing my career goals. Learning about other Native American people and our shared yet distinct histories, languages, and traditions helped with my own identity struggles. These courses helped me realize that one singular American Indian experience does not exist, and my own experience is as valid as any other person's. I also learned the importance of having role models and mentors who understood my background, since Native American faculty members taught my courses. Thinking about my life after graduation, I started considering careers that would allow me to directly support other Native American students as I had been helped.

The summer before completing my undergraduate degree in sociology, I learned of a grant to the University of Arizona's library school to start a program called Knowledge River. I found a new student job in the museum working with the curator for Native American Relations after my library position ended due to lack of funding. She was another key figure in my journey to academic librarianship. A Native American woman, my supervisor was encouraging but also shared a glimpse of some challenges associated with advocating for Native people in an academic environment. She was a member of the advisory board for Knowledge River and urged me to apply to the new program because she thought I would be a solid candidate. She was the

project director designated to reach out to tribal libraries, archives, and museums to offer training and create networks among them to ultimately provide quality services to tribal communities. As a student involved with these initiatives, it was enlightening and heartening to learn about the work of these tribal cultural institutions. Having the opportunity to learn about these organizations also illuminated one way I could give back to my community while using my education: as a librarian.

Prior to hearing about the Knowledge River program I was seriously considering attending the master's program in Information Resources and Library Science, but funding was a major barrier. I felt librarianship might be my calling after having so many positive library experiences and working as a student in the field. The program was seeking Native American and Latino/Latina students who wanted to serve their communities after earning their master's degree in information resources and library science. The student work with tribal libraries helped me realize that I wanted to serve Native American people and communities. My background as part of a traditional community while growing up seemed as if it would be an asset to the program. I could add to the conversation my knowledge of potential issues that future librarians might encounter when trying to serve American Indian patrons. I applied and was accepted to the library science graduate program and to Knowledge River as part of the first cohort.

The aims of Knowledge River to support future professionals who “approach the information milieu from the from Hispanic and Native American backgrounds”<sup>51</sup> were ambitious, and I was excited to be part of these efforts. The cohort was comprised mainly of Latino/Latina students with a few Native Americans, and the environment seemed welcoming to a variety of perspectives, which was promising.

As the program progressed, my studies and personal experience led me to an understanding of the very different perspective American Indians may have of libraries as institutions. Libraries can be seen as institutions of Western power structures, unfriendly places holding knowledge of indigenous people published without consent and containing misinformation. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains this concept as described by Maori author Patricia Grace, who identifies “the four things that make many books dangerous to indigenous readers.”<sup>52</sup> She argues that books do not support indigenous culture or identities; their lack of representation within them implies that they do not exist. Further, even books about indigenous people include inaccurate information, and finally, the things written tell indigenous people they are “not good.”<sup>53</sup> These ideas were difficult to express to my classmates. The entire cohort was welcoming and provided support in other ways, but this knowledge made me feel alienated from the rest of the group. I began to question if librarianship was the right path. Without the support of my friend, a Native American woman in the program who also was connected to her traditional culture and values, completing the degree would have been difficult.

Being part of the first cohort of Knowledge River was ultimately helpful to me, as it was a rich learning experience. The program helped me create a network with my classmates, who later became professionals working on diversity initiatives themselves. As a member of the program I also was able to meet with and learn from leaders in the field. It has succeeded in its goals of adding Latino/Latina and Native American voices to the field of librarianship and continues to support students in serving these communities.

### **Academic Library Life**

Initially the best place to fulfill my professional goals of providing quality service to underserved communities seemed to be in a public library setting. My first professional job was

in a public library as a youth services librarian in the largest city in New Mexico. While it was rewarding to connect with many different people in the community I still felt the pull to help the Native American community, and few opportunities for that existed in the public library. When an opening for a library director at a nearby tribal college library occurred, I applied, interviewed, and when offered the position, gladly accepted. This was the beginning of my academic library journey.<sup>54</sup>

*Tribal college library.* Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) are institutions where American Indian students are the focus. TCUs provide opportunities to earn a degree while being in an educational environment that celebrates Native American culture and traditions. They offer courses in Native language, arts, and history, and honor cultural values and philosophies by incorporating them in curricula and evaluation processes.<sup>55</sup> There are 37 tribal colleges and universities in the United States,<sup>56</sup> and in the environment of a TCU I found my professional passion: supporting American Indian students with their research and information needs. This was a way to embody the Pueblo teachings of supporting one's people and giving back to others in the community.

Working in a tribal college environment and in my first management position was fulfilling and challenging. Having colleagues who had a higher level of knowledge and understanding of Native American history and culture was a welcome change. Working at a smaller college allowed me to get to know students while helping them learn about the library and what it could offer. Tribal colleges aim to support the whole student with both their education and their culture, and I took this philosophy to heart. Students shared their stories with me and let me share in their educational journey. I also saw the statistics about Native Americans in higher education come to life and witnessed first-hand how barriers could prevent students

from graduating. Lack of funding meant seeing students one semester but never again because they had to find a job instead of continue their education. Some students met their partners at the college and then started families. Even with childcare services on campus, the option of family housing and a supportive environment, some students were unable to complete their degrees. Yet many other students succeeded, and when some thanked me for my help it was very rewarding. When I shared stories like these with librarians in other non-tribal settings, they were surprised at the amount of time I spent on activities considered “service.” They did not feel the same sense of responsibility as I did to give as much as possible to these students as others had done for me.

Being at a tribal college brought to the forefront some prior challenges related to grappling with my racial identity. I had gained confidence during my college years in the validity of my experience as a mixed race woman. Rather than feeling hurt, as I did when I was younger, if someone was surprised at my disclosure that I was half Native American, I shared my background and stories from both sides of my family. Operating in a workplace in which a majority of faculty, staff, and students were American Indian was comforting, yet it sometimes transported me back to a place of insecurity. While colleagues and students were accepting the expectation to be an expert about one’s particular people was somewhat stressful because I do not consider myself an expert.

Even though I was working in a seemingly perfect academic environment in terms of my personal goals of supporting American Indians, I felt stuck professionally. For many academic librarians, scholarly publishing is required or strongly encouraged, and this was one of my personal goals. However, the tribal college was focused on the arts and provided few chances to learn about and participate in scholarly writing. Scholarly publishing seemed to be a mysterious task, and I was not sure where to begin. I realized that proximity to colleagues doing such work



was important to learn how to participate in that world. Though it was difficult to leave the tribal college and the overall supportive environment, I had to try to work in a larger academic library to meet my professional goals. I applied to and was offered a faculty lecturer library position at the state's largest university.

*Large university library.* The University of New Mexico (UNM) is the state's flagship university, founded in 1889.<sup>57</sup> There were 27,889 students on the main campus in 2014.<sup>58</sup> UNM is a minority-majority university as well as a Hispanic serving institution.<sup>59</sup> In 2014 43.9% of tenure or tenure-track faculty members were women and 56.5% men.<sup>60</sup> The racial makeup of tenure or tenure-track faculty in 2014 was 11.8% Hispanic, 8.6% Asian, 3.1% American Indian and 2.1% African American.<sup>61</sup> The UNM University Libraries have library staff and faculty, with most faculty holding tenured or tenure-track positions. However, some library faculty including myself, have non-tenure track positions as lecturers. For tenure and tenure-track faculty, publishing is required; lecturers need not publish.<sup>62</sup>

UNM Libraries seemed to be a good fit for me. While publishing would not be required, I would be around colleagues who had experience and could ask them for advice. UNM had many more students to assist than the approximately 400 enrolled at the tribal college, and I looked forward to continuing to support underserved students in the library. American Indian faculty members worked in the library and throughout campus, which was beneficial.

My initial position was in the Access Services Department, the area responsible for externally directed library services. These included staffing the reference and circulation desks; providing virtual reference via phone, email, and chat; opening and closing the buildings; shelving; and serving as the first contact for everyone coming in the doors. I enjoyed the busy pace, and jumping right in helped me meet the people and learn library policies. I also spent time

working with the library's Indigenous Nations Library Program (INLP) as asked to do when offered the position. The program has a dedicated space in the main library with study rooms, a small computer lab, and two librarians who help students with research on Native American topics.<sup>63</sup>

I enjoyed working in both departments but was asked to add more hours to INLP and was eventually asked to move to the department full time. This was the first conflict in the academic library environment, and I felt torn between my traditional pueblo values to help my community and my professional goals to gain new skills needed for career advancement. This choice between the two identities was the first but would reappear in other situations. I felt my move to a program focused on supporting Native American students was not a coincidence but was primarily because I am from Zuni Pueblo and would add "authenticity" to program efforts on campus and in outreach efforts with the surrounding community. I also felt naïve that I hadn't considered that this may have been the plan from the beginning of my employment. Other faculty of color in academia report feeling that their ethnicity defines their role on campus: ". . . having colleagues and students pay more attention to color than to credentials is wearing; being held forth as an example of institutional benevolence engenders feelings of anger and resentment. . ." <sup>64</sup> In the end I knew I could continue to help students with their research in any department in the library and supporting American Indian students was still a priority, so I accepted the change.

Like other faculty of color in academia, I find inherent barriers in the academic environment that make success difficult. Much of my time is spent on service duties, such as meeting with student groups, which is weighted less than research and publishing<sup>65</sup> but contributes to my job satisfaction. Though not stated outright, my knowledge of Native

American Studies seems to be less valued than other subject areas; others may assume that I was born knowing it. The work to acquire the knowledge about the subject is not acknowledged. This is described by Delgado Bernal and Villalpando: “The cultural resources and epistemologies that many faculty of color bring to academia contribute to the goals of higher education and to the overall knowledge base in academia, yet these resources and epistemologies are often unrecognized or devalued.”<sup>66</sup> This lack of understanding and devaluing of skills has led me to question my credentials and added to feeling unwelcome in the academic environment.

## **Reflections**

Considering my experiences as a child, a college student, and an academic librarian, three emergent themes appear: identity, authenticity and role. They are related yet distinct.

The concept of identity has always factored into all areas of my life including the workplace. As a professional, others seem to view me as a Native American librarian, not just a librarian. Yet when I meet new students and faculty and tell them I am from Zuni Pueblo, the most common reaction is surprise. People are comfortable telling me I do not look Native American, which, logically, I understand, but this still hurts due to my strong identification with my culture.

The identity of librarian itself is fraught with stereotypes and challenges. While most people are generally supportive of libraries, some question the existence of libraries and ask if I will have a job in 10 years since everyone uses the internet to find information. At the other end of the spectrum, I feel the need to assure tribal communities that libraries are helpful places. I let them know that libraries have some accurate materials written and created by Native people and that they are welcome to use these collections. I share my philosophy as a Native American librarian: that I am dedicated to including the Indigenous perspective into the academic dialogue

instead of opting out altogether. When wearing the librarian identity among other American Indian people, however, I realize that distrust of educational institutions remains.

Who gets to decide which people are “authentic” American Indians? Is it the federal government that “recognizes” and regulates which tribes have enough documentation and culture to prove their existence so they qualify for resources and social services? Should an individual tribe set its own enrollment standards based on genealogy? Can a non-Native person make this judgment? American Indians all have most likely experienced times when their authenticity has been challenged or questioned. Many, but not all, Native peoples of New Mexico have been able to continue religious ceremonies and traditional beliefs. American Indians have varied backgrounds and beliefs and should acknowledge each individual’s experience as “authentic.” No one “Native American experience” exists, and debating authenticity continues to force us into thinking it does.

Authenticity issues abound in academia, especially in a state like New Mexico where many higher educational institutions have substantial numbers of Native American students, staff, and faculty. Markers of authenticity based on stereotypes should not determine who is an authentic Native American academic. Acknowledging American Indian heritage should not mean having to prove historical knowledge or language fluency on demand in order to be viewed as “authentic.” Being authentic can mean conducting research about one’s people or researching something completely unrelated to Native America.

My multiple roles converge daily. Librarian, woman, aunt, Zuni Pueblo woman, oldest child, faculty member, lecturer, wife, sister, daughter; all come to campus. These roles sometimes conflict. I have been late to a reference shift due to helping an elder Pueblo man and not wanting to leave before finding what he needed. My role was to support this elder as a

younger Pueblo woman. It is difficult to advocate for and promote myself, as is the norm in academia, because doing so contradicts my cultural values. My role in the Pueblo community is not to show off my individual accomplishments. Working as a community is emphasized, and aid received from others must be recognized. Moving between roles is not unique to the American Indian woman librarian experience, but the unwillingness of some to recognize the cultural conflict will continue to be a deterrent to newcomers to the environment.

I have occupied and continue to inhabit an in-between space in my life and career. As a mixed-heritage child, a high achieving student, a Native American college student from a reservation, and a young female library director, I sometimes felt I fit in only to have a comment or incident send me back to the isolation of differentness. Being a non-tenure track faculty librarian when most library faculty members are on the tenure track is another in-between space. However, based on knowledge gained from my prior experiences, an in-between space can be a place of power. The in-between space allows freedom to be different and maneuver within the academic environment while using my cultural principles as a guide.

## **Conclusion**

Sharing my experience is difficult but may enhance understanding of the complex environment Native American women academic librarians inhabit. Willingness to listen to the experiences of academic American Indian women librarians can support efforts to make libraries and the professionals who work there representative of the larger culture. As the United States becomes more diverse and a wide range of cultural and ethnic traditions are represented, libraries must reflect that diversity back to their users to remain viable cultural institutions. A diverse cadre of librarians will be retained when the library environment supports and lauds the experiences that people of color bring to academia.

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<sup>2</sup> American Library Association, “Workforce Development,” 2015,  
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/workforcedevelopment>.

<sup>3</sup> Association of Research Libraries, “ARL’s Key Accomplishments in 2014,” n.d.,  
<http://www.arl.org/about/arl-key-accomplishments-in-2014#diversity-leadership>.

<sup>4</sup> Martha Kyrillidou and Shaneka Morris, “ARL Annual Salary Survey 2014–2015”  
(Association of Research Libraries, 2015), <http://publications.arl.org/ARL-Annual-Salary-Survey-2014-2015/12>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Facts for Features: American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage  
Month: November 2014,” *United States Census Bureau*, November 12, 2014,  
<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff26.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Mark S Monmonier, *From Squaw Tit to Whorehouse Meadow: How Maps Name, Claim, and Inflame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 52.

<sup>8</sup> Tami Spry, “Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis,”  
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<sup>9</sup> While there continues to be debate about terminology, American Indian and Native American are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Archuleta, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, and Brenda J Child, eds., *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* (Phoenix, Ariz.; Santa Fe: Heard Museum ; Distributed by Museum of New Mexico Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Lee Fixico, *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Troy R. Johnson, "Roots of Contemporary Native American Activism," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20, no. 2 (1996): 130.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of The Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Tribal Directory," *US Department of The Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs*, 2015, <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/BIA/OIS/TribalGovernmentServices/TribalDirectory/>.

<sup>17</sup> Michael D. Wilson, "Reclaiming Self-Determination from the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25, no. 7 (November 1, 2012): 905, doi:10.1080/09518398.2012.720734.

<sup>18</sup> Raphael M. Guillory and Mimi Wolverton, "It's About Family: Native American Student Persistence in Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 79, no. 1 (2008): 58–87, doi:10.1353/jhe.2008.0001.

<sup>19</sup> Bureau, "FFF."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>22</sup> Lorie Roy, Anjali Bhasin, and Sarah K Arriaga, *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifeways* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Lotsee Patterson, "History and Status of Native Americans in Librarianship," *Library Trends* 49, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 182.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Ione T. Damasco and Dracine Hodges, "Tenure and Promotion Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color," *College & Research Libraries* 73, no. 3 (May 2012): 283.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>30</sup> Karin L. Griffin, "Pursuing Tenure and Promotion in the Academy: A Librarian's Cautionary Tale," *Negro Educational Review* 64, no. 1–4 (April 2013): 77–96.

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<sup>32</sup> American Library Association, "Guidelines for Choosing a Master's Program in Library and Information Studies," 2015, <http://www.ala.org/accreditedprograms/guidelines-choosing-masters-program-library-and-information-studies>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Employed Civilians by Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2009," *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2011, 394, <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2011/tables/11s0615.pdf>.



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<sup>38</sup> Amy Stone, "Spectrum Turns 10," *American Libraries* 38, no. 2 (February 2007): 42.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> American Library Association, "Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship - Building Change," 2015, <http://www.ala.org/offices/diversity/spectrum/phd>.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

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<sup>55</sup> Linda Sue Warner and Gerald E Gipp, *Tradition and Culture in the Millennium: Tribal Colleges and Universities*, Educational Policy in the 21st Century: Opportunities, Challenges, and Solutions (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2009).

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<sup>57</sup> University of New Mexico, “About The University of New Mexico,” n.d., <http://www.unm.edu/welcome/index.html>.

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<sup>59</sup> University of New Mexico, “About The University of New Mexico.”

<sup>60</sup> University of New Mexico, “UNM Fact Book 2013-2015,” 21.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences, “Faculty Performance Review Policy” (University of New Mexico, April 2014).

<sup>63</sup> UNM University Libraries, “Indigenous Nations Library Program,” *The University of New Mexico*, accessed June 13, 2015, <http://library.unm.edu/about/inlp.php>.

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner and Samuel L Myers, *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 213.

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