An Exploration of Higher Educational Experiences For Mixed Blood American Indian Males in the Santa Clara Valley

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AN EXPLORATION OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR MIXED BLOOD AMERICAN INDIAN MALES IN THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of International and Multicultural Education

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By

Edward Salcedo
December 2022
ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR MIXED BLOOD AMERICAN INDIAN MALES IN THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

This dissertation investigates the availability of higher educational opportunities in the Santa Clara Valley for mixed blood American Indian males in the Santa Clara Valley from lower middle class and middle-class backgrounds born between the early 1980’s and early 1990’s who enrolled in community college courses but did not graduate. The study uses Critical Race Theory as the guiding theoretical framework but focuses on Tribal Critical Race Theory pioneered by Brayboy (2005) to understand the educational and societal experiences of American Indian people from their unique ethnic prism. The dissertation uses Red People’s Oral Tradition as the methodology, drawing from the Red Pedagogy concept presented by Grande (2004). The dissertation delves into the educational experiences of American Indian people in the 1990’s and 2000’s and what prevented American Indian mixed blood males from excelling in their scholastic endeavors. The study expounds on how the portrayal of Red people in academia, the media, and society affected the participants’ own sense of self and impacted their outlook towards their educational experiences.

Furthermore, the study offers solutions from the perspective of the participants regarding what could be changed in society and academia to better represent and improve the educational experiences of mixed blood American males in the Santa Clara Valley and throughout the American Southwest where this group mainly resides. Lastly, the study broaches ways in which its findings can be used to highlight and determine the issues affecting mixed blood American Indian educational attainment to increase visibility and representation at college campuses.
SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Edward Salcedo 12/20/22
Candidate

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Susan Katz 12/4/22
Chairperson

Dr. Xornam Apedoe 5/11/22
Committee Member

Dr. Derrick Smith 5/11/22
Committee Member

Dr. Gregory Tanaka 12/17/22
Committee Member
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Every society needs educated people, but the primary responsibility of educated people is to bring wisdom back into the community and make it available to others so that the lives they are leading make sense. (Deloria, 1997, p. 4)

Young mixed-blood American Indian males (people of American Indian and European origin) in semirural areas of California have struggled throughout the state’s history to gain access to higher education and achieve at a high academic level during college enrollment (Ramirez, 2007). This hurdle has affected the mixed-blood American Indian community (MBAIM) in the same way that it has the general American Indian population with both groups suffering from a very low level of college enrollment (Schmidt, 2012). In 2018 only 24% of American Indians between the ages of 18-24 were enrolled in college, which is the lowest rate among all ethnic groups in the US (https://nces.ed.gov). American Indians who self-identify as one race represent 14% of bachelor’s degrees holders, while mixed-blood American Indians constitute 19% of their population versus 30% for all other races (Bordelon & Atkinson, 2020).

The issue of college enrollment is coupled with the fact that the majority of American Indians live in rural communities or semi-rural communities where access to college and resources tend to be limited (Bordelon & Atkinson, 2020). Yavorksi (2020) postulates that a main reason for the achievement gap among American Indian people is they are “disproportionately suspended and expelled for non-violent, disruptive behavior” (p. 5). Data have shown that American Indians lag behind their counterparts when it comes to gains in high school graduation rates, according to Phil Gover (2018), former admissions counselor at Dartmouth University who was delegated to addressing American Indian recruitment. Only 74%
of high school students of American Indian descent graduate from high school (insidehighered.com).

To compound issues for American Indian students who do enroll in college, only .5% of college faculty is American Indian. In line with students of American Indian descent, American Indian professors have little input in nationwide studies and data gathering projects (insidehighered.com). Besides being underrepresented as faculty members, American Indians do not have much of a presence in any of the 50 departments of each of the five disciplines: mathematics, engineering, economics, political science, and sociology (insidehighered.com). As a result, many American Indian students are left without mentors and guides to help them during their educational experiences (insidehighered.com).

Moreover, with a poverty level at 26% of their overall population, American Indians make up the most impoverished ethnic group in the United States, which interferes with their opportunities to gain access to a college education (www.nativeforward.org). American Indians struggle to defray tuition and living costs while in attendance at a university, with 85% receiving some type of federal grant aid and 62% receiving a federal student loan (https://pnpi.org/). American Indian students struggle to extricate themselves from their mindset of college looked at as unattainable based on the reality of few examples existing in their communities. Moreover, for the fortunate American Indian students who do enroll at a university, they must cope with the additional problem of tuition and other college-related expenses. This issue disrupts them from focusing their time and attention on strictly being full-time students (Brayboy, et al., 2012).

American Indians are not prepared for college enrollment as compared to other racial groups based on the lack of college preparation courses completed (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). As a result, they do not gain the necessary skills to compete with other
students during the process of applying for college. American Indian students enter early adulthood with this sense of inadequacy that continues to resonate in their lives academically and outside of higher education. American Indians’ lack of college preparation courses makes them ill-prepared to compete with students from more financially and racially privileged backgrounds where resources and funding are available to ensure academic success (Brayboy, et al., 2012).

**Statement of the Problem**

**Santa Clara Valley rural towns**

As the researcher of this study, I am a member of the federally unrecognized mixed-blood American Indian people in the region of the Santa Clara Valley with ancestral origins in the American Southwest and Northern Mexico. I have personal ties to the area of the Santa Clara Valley with my family dating back four generations in the area after migrating from the American Southwest. As a MBAIM youth growing up in the Santa Clara Valley, I personally witnessed how the lack of college enrollment led to mixed-blood American Indian youth feeling disempowered and opting instead for various unproductive activities, some illegal. This soul damaging behavior by many members of the community provided a temporary escape from a monotonous life in the Santa Clara Valley, where people are expected to follow the same path of their parents including not pursuing academic interests. This did - and still does - entail settling for whatever basic job and educational opportunities existed in one’s hometown. The redundant lifestyle has diminished the scholarly potential and personal growth of community members that the pursuit of knowledge can nurture and uphold. Instead of pursuing higher education after high school graduation, many youths secured employment in local retail businesses, while others remained financially dependent on their parents for the remainder of their early adulthood years before finally enrolling in a local community college.
In addition to knowing this region intimately, the researcher chose the Santa Clara Valley as the site of this study because of its large self-identified community of mixed-blood American Indian people. However, some members do not recognize or are aware of their true ancestry since “today Indian tribes use blood quantum to determine tribal membership” (Miranda, 2012, p. 117). The Santa Clara Valley area has a historical reputation as the Northern California mecca of political activism, communal relations, and cultural affairs for MBAIM and Mexicans (Saldívar, 2019). Moreover, the barrios in San Jose are well-known for the presence of MBAIM who have integrated into the Mexican population over decades. As a tribal elder asserted, “When I came to San Jose one child married a Mexican and another married a White, I had a hard time coping with that” (Ramirez, 2007, p. 117). Many families in the mixed-blood community of the Santa Clara Valley tend to have a similar family history, as described by a woman living in San Jose:

Both my parents spoke Spanish. My grandmother, my father’s mother, had married a Mexican man. My great-grandmother on my father’s side who was Indigenous, married a man who was Mexican and Chumash, who also spoke Spanish. Back then being Indigenous was like, it was not a very good thing to be. Mexican people were really prejudiced against Indians. (Ramirez, 2007, p. 129)

“Mixed bloods” vs. “full bloods”

The kids on the reservation didn’t accept us. If they knew the history of California Indians, we could communicate with the elders, because we could speak Spanish…The Indian kids didn’t accept him…they would say, “You half-breed! You are just a Mexican!” (Ramirez, 2007, p. 129)
The terms “mixed bloods,” “half-breeds,” “Métis,” and “Mestizos” originated as descriptive terms by European invaders to more precisely identify Indigenous people based on European standards of racial purity and to separate those deemed to be “half-civilized” (Nesper, 2021). The terms reflect Europeans’ insistence to associate people of the world by a rigid and constricted system that they introduced (Nesper, 2021). Saler (2015) notes that the word “mixed blood” was used as “another awkward expedient in American endeavors to organize and incorporate...according to a racially defined matrix” (p. 3). In essence mixed bloods and their racial classification were used to further undermine the Indigenous population by blood quantum, tribal status, and affiliation and to manipulate Red people by serving as stewards of the land issued to them by the federal government. Instead, they were expected to follow European American rules of comportment and infiltrate others with these same values (Nesper, 2021).

Unwilling participants of this scheme - the mixed blood Indians - were also designated as a group that could not benefit from white privilege because of their racial and societal status based on their phenotypical appearances: “The categories were new, fluid, and open to interpretation as they could reference physical appearance, clothing style, or religious affiliation” (Nesper, 2021, p. 33). This same can essentially be applied to all mixed bloods in the Americas who have suffered a similar fate of confusion regarding their racial identity and classification.

The process of separating American Indian ancestors from their indigenous identity, with terms such as mixed blood gained ground hundreds of years ago. Beginning with forced assimilation, integration, and interbreeding with Spaniards and then Mexican, or Hispanic, populations during the 18th and 19th centuries, a systematic whitewashing of American Indian identity and culture created a mixed blood group of people who no longer had an idea of their rightful identity (www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/coahuiltecans-indians). The mission
system and Catholic religion played a key role in eliminating the American Indian identity throughout the Southwest, along with intermarriage (www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/coahuiltecan-indians). Those who did continue to practice their Native religion, customs, and culture, did so in secrecy. After decades, and centuries in some cases, of interbreeding with European or Hispanic people and embracing this introduced culture, mixed blood Indians of the American Southwest would emerge. To this day, they are unofficially classified since they have not mobilized to establish a separate ethnic group like the Métis (Nesper, 2021).

The determinants necessary to prove one’s American Indian status interfere in analyzing college achievement and continuing enrollment. It is difficult for researchers to examine groups of people such as MBAIM who are not recognized as a legitimate ethnic group in the United States (LaRiviere, 2015) but rather considered a subgroup of the greater American Indian population. As a result, MBAIM are yet to have their unique educational needs met to the same degree as other more prominent ethnic groups (Faber, 2016). For example, the California Department of Education states that it is their goal to understand and improve educational opportunities for all people, which by extension includes MBAIM youth: “Teachers and school leaders ensure equity by recognizing, respecting, and attending to the diverse strengths and challenges of the students they serve” (https://www.cde.ca.gov/qs/ea/). However, California has yet to recognize their burgeoning MBAIM population as a separate ethnic group in state data and census information https://www.pewresearch.org/. As Castro (2019) states, “We occupy a liminal status in the United States, neither fully part of the status quo or apart from it” (https://ndncollective.org). The issue of tribal membership is a complicated one for American Indian people to prove, but the challenge is heightened when the individual is of American
Indian and European descent as this tends to be the overwhelming mixture among this group since, proportionally, they intermarry more than any other racial group combination (pewresearch.org).

To illustrate the points about the educational issues confronting the mixed blood American Indian population in the semirural Santa Clara Valley area, research concerning the overall American Indian community had to be used in this study. It is nearly impossible to differentiate the academic experiences between MBAIM and those who identify as solely American Indian for the purpose of comparisons between the two groups. One main reason is the United States does not recognize the existence of a subgroup within the general Native American population, in contrast with Canada where the Métis community are well-documented and represented in Indigenous matters (Kearns & Anuik, 2007). Therefore, this study necessarily relied on data for the general American Indian population and applied these to the educational experiences of MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley, where the research was conducted.

**Statement of the Problem**

**Challenges of American Indians in higher education**

American Indians as a group have the highest high school dropout rate in the United States (Swanson, 2004). They are the least likely group to complete college preparatory courses in high school (Chavers, 2002) and suffer from the lowest college enrollment figures at 0.8% of the total California college student population (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, & Fox, 2007). This statistic is even more pronounced among males with 65% of high school students graduating versus 70% of females (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015). Little prior research has addressed the college pipeline for MBAIM, which has become more of a college pipe dream. The lack of research on MBAIM youth contributes to public and scholarly misunderstandings of
this diverse ethnic group with different educational experiences and tribal affiliations. As Austin (2005) mentions, if higher education facilities were more aware of the political, cultural, and societal differences among American Indians, they could accommodate different tribal groups of Indigenous people.

American Indian people historically have functioned with a different cultural approach towards learning in general. Their methods of learning could be deemed unacceptable and rooted in paganism by most European Americans (Viola & Barna, 2012). U.S. higher education has been met with hostility by American Indians because of its reputation to indoctrinate and assimilate their community into the American way of thinking (Brayboy, 2005). The concepts of cut-throat competition and individualism are not in accordance with American Indian cultural ways of comportment, community belonging, and spiritual preservation (Brayboy, 2005).

**Challenges of American Indian Males in higher education**

Young MBAIM do not typically feel a sense of family, friendship, or an attachment to the university or college where they enroll. MBAIM in academia have trouble with trying to discover who they are as emerging scholars and young adults (Brayboy, et. al., 2012). MBAIM experience various obstacles during their formative years of adulthood which prevent them from finding a groove of consistent academic achievement until later in their adult years when many scholastic opportunities are out of reach. By then, MBAIM will have likely changed degree pursuits, schools, cities, and jobs. American Indian males much like non-traditional students in their 30’s or older, will have also dealt with further distractions to higher education including marriage, children, and financial obligations (Adelman, Taylor & Nelson, 2013).

MBAIM are assumed to benefit from a system of patriarchy - a concept based on generalizations about the entire male gender (Zmirak, 2006). College administrators, staff, and
students are allowed to make bold claims directly to all male students that they benefit from the same male privilege as their European American counterparts (Ramirez, 2004). This misguided notion can deter research taking place that focuses on the experiences of American Indian males in academia (Zmirak, 2006), because it can potentially be viewed as favoring the male gender.

Coincidentally, the male gender, which once outnumbered women by a considerable margin, has dwindled over the past four decades from 57% to 44% of the overall population at college campuses (Ramirez, 2004). That proportion is greater among American Indian women versus males in academia. American Indian women outnumber MBAIM four to one (Marcus, 2017).

Furthermore, this disparity is even more apparent in graduate studies where the overall population of women outnumber men 135 to 100 (Perry, 2017). This gap is greater in fields such as education, health sciences and public administration where women make up 76.3%, 79.9% and 78% of the student enrollment in those programs (Perry, 2017). These numbers show a need for more scholarly research on the male gender to determine their underlying issues regarding access to education.

**Background and Need**

This dissertation aims to show why California educators need to increase efforts to address systemic problems that persist in the Santa Clara Valley for mixed blood American Indians and how greater access to higher education for them can transform their community. Research shows that collaborative efforts are embraced by American Indian students, elders, communities, and tribal leaders, and leads significant educational improvements (Skousen, 2018). The findings from the study pointed out the educational issues that plague the MBAIM community, not only in the Santa Clara Valley, but in similar communities. The Santa Clara
Valley region, however, is where this unique group of MBAIM continue to carry on a culture steeped in traditions that have been influenced by American, Mexican, and Native peoples.

Yet, MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley suffer from a lack of federal recognition regarding tribal status, knowledge of one’s background, and unaddressed societal necessities, including educational needs. One reason for this is due to an opaque racial designation that interferes in self-understanding, especially during the period of uncertainty they tend to feel as young adults in a U.S. society that is race and skin color obsessed.

Consequently, more research is needed that focuses on secondary and tertiary education in mixed blood communities and the problems that are similar in American Indian communities on the reservation and in urban communities to understand what overlaps (Tachine, Cabrera & Yellow Bird, 2017). While American Indian students are acknowledged as the most underrepresented group in higher education in the State of California, mixed bloods are not accounted for and struggle with similar issues in accessing college. This study, therefore, attempts to explore the reasons underlying the lack of educational representation for mixed blood American Indian males, especially MBAIM in college. Furthermore, based upon the findings, the study will offer additional recommendations and tools for educational guidance on what can be done differently at traditional schools aiming to make MBAIM a significant scholastic, social, and cultural contributor (Tachine, Cabrera & Yellow Bird, 2017).

Young American Indian males embark in an uphill battle to enroll in college and then to achieve academically. This issue becomes amplified as they attempt to enter graduate or professional school. There is a need not only to document the causes and effects of the issue of college enrollment among American Indian boys and men, but also to research the most effective means of increasing the number of young MBAIM in colleges/universities. An increase in
college enrollment is necessary for MBAIM to have more of a voice in academia and to develop confidence and pride in their scholarly abilities. This improvement can benefit all American Indian communities. MBAIM can potentially come away with satisfaction from establishing a communal project that strives for academic betterment. Examples of success noted in this dissertation can inspire future generations of academic leaders within the American Indian community.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to provide an understanding of the struggles of young MBAIM living in the Santa Clara Valley and their barriers to enroll in college through the oral tradition of storytelling in North America. This was (and is) an important mode of communication for generations of Red people. It involves speaking about lived experiences to others and developing one’s oratorial skills and public speaking skills in the process. The study involves addressing the obstacles American Indians encounter that prevent college achievement during undergraduate studies and beyond (Saunders, 2011). The study intends to provide a greater understanding of the changes that must be made in secondary and higher education institutions where American Indians males are enrolled for them to succeed. The curriculum at these schools, administrative practices, and representations of American Indians must be altered for American Indians to thrive and find belonging within the academic community (Saunders, 2011). Collecting the narratives of MBAIM who were enrolled in secondary and tertiary schools in the Santa Clara Valley semirural towns uncovered more accurate details of the MBAIM experience and led to suggestions for improvement.

**Research Questions**

1) How do mixed blood American Indian males in the Santa Clara Valley describe their
higher educational experiences?

2) What are the barriers that have prevented American Indian males from entering higher education?

3) From the perspective of American Indian males, how does the portrayal and representation of American Indian people in the collegiate curriculum affect how American Indians view higher education?

4) From the perspective of American Indian males, what would motivate youth to enter college?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized is Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit), which is an offshoot of Critical Race Theory (CRT). This theoretical framework “provides a way to address the complicated relationship between American Indians and the U.S. federal government” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 425). TribCrit is grounded on the concept of colonization and its dominant role in U.S. society. It focuses on the proposition that U.S. policies toward indigenous peoples in this country are based on modern-day imperialism. TribCrit centers on racial dominance and how capitalism affects various systems in the US, including higher education and the American Indian involvement in this. TribCrit looks to the demands of Indigenous people to preserve their sovereignty and identities, tribal philosophies, customs, and beliefs.

Moreover, TribCrit suggests that assimilation is an underlying theme in racist policies. The existence of racism and assimilation happens in organizations as far-reaching as universities and professional sports teams who mock and belittle American Indians with racist and derogatory terms, cartoonish logo illustrations and fan gestures such as the “tomahawk chop” and the “redskins war chant” (Brayboy, 2006, p. 15). Racist terminology and acts of mockery
can convince uncritical followers of professional sports teams that American Indians no longer exist or have become so thoroughly Americanized as the general U.S. population, that they do not take offense to sports teams that connote racist names and satirize sovereign nations.

TribCrit expands on the idea of CRT and its evaluation of persistent racism in the US. However, TribCrit broaches the notion of colonization and its link to racism as it affects Red people. TribCrit investigates the way CRT is seen through the lens of American Indians, and how the accessibility to higher education for American Indians is compromised, or negatively shaped (Brayboy, 2005). American Indian students have been historically undermined by the system of education in the US, and the chaotic relationship between American Indians and the U.S. education system warrants dialogue in academia (Brayboy, 2005). TribCrit suggests an overhauling of the current educational system, and proposes that American Indian critical scholars be at the forefront of these changes. An additional recommendation is that college programs implement TribCrit as a framework (Brayboy, 2005).

U.S. education and its relationship to American Indians includes a history of forced assimilation, removal of children from families and forced enrollment of children into boarding schools. American Indian children were sent to boarding schools where physical and sexual abuse took place by priests and nuns, and language loss occurred (Brayboy, 2013). The current system of higher education includes a lack of Native American representation of students, faculty members and administrators at universities (Brayboy, 2013). TribCrit was created to encourage and validate research on American Indian people and their educational experiences. TribCrit is a framework that bolsters scholarly work done on comprehending the various concerns that Indigenous people have with U.S. systems and policies. TribCrit is used in this dissertation to
analyze secondary and higher education and the methods the American Indian community can carry out to improve opportunities to succeed in academia.

**Red People’s Oral Tradition Storytelling**

Red Peoples Oral Tradition Storytelling differs from conventional interviewing because of its special meaning to American Indians of passing on important lessons to future generations through word of mouth, or as Augustine (2008) put it: “stories, histories, lessons and other knowledge maintain a historical record and sustain cultures and societies” (p. 143). Prior to written forms of Native languages, oral tradition was the sole means of transmitting valuable information to people in North America: “oral traditions are the means by which knowledge is reproduced, preserved, and conveyed from generation to generation” (Hulan & Eigenbrod, 2008, p. 44). Red Peoples Oral Tradition Storytelling also differs in its approach to gathering data. It is informal in its practice but manages to still be a powerful and valuable part of transmitting knowledge and takes on a deeper meaning among Red people as opposed to modern and official forms of interviewing techniques usually practiced in academic research.

As a result, this study illustrates how Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling is an effective means of addressing the MBAIM population because it utilizes a valuable way of learning and expression for the American Indian community. While Red People’s Oral Tradition Storytelling sometimes involves proverbs and other expressions that could be dismissed as myths, fables, and folktales, these stories are seen by Red people as metaphorical and deeper in meaning than the literal sense of the words uttered; therefore, truths and lessons can be extracted from the details provided by the participants. Moreover, the meaning of the narratives is left up to the listener/reading to deduce and interpret, which makes oral tradition unique. In other words, each listener’s interpretation may be different or varied in some way (oneiaindiannation.com).
Limitations/Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited to male participants of mixed American Indian backgrounds in the Santa Clara Valley with some college experience who were born in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, the first generation of millennials. Since the participants have Southwest Indian lineage and have been influenced by the Hispanic/Mexican culture of California, the findings may not be generalizable to American Indians in other regions.

The study is based upon scholarly research, which does not include literature that represents the “common people” such as personal journals and music lyrics of local artists. Also, my close relationship with the participants may be deemed a limitation. I have remained friends with the participants since childhood and my family knows all the participants interviewed and their families. The participants could be more transparent with me as the researcher than someone they are unfamiliar with; therefore, my relationship with them is also an asset in this study.

I am a mixed blood Indian researcher. I am an unrecognized member of three separate tribal nations in the American southwest, although in American society I am deemed a “Latino” because of my surname. I am conducting research as a student of an institution with a low American Indian enrollment and only one self-identified American Indian professor on campus, who is outside the School of Education. The presence of American Indians at this university is nearly non-existent. Therefore, it was almost impossible to have an American Indian as a dissertation committee member. Though this did not impact the study itself, I was not able to benefit from having a committee member with actual lived experience as part of the Red community.

In terms of my positionality, I benefit from light-skinned and able-bodied privilege as
well as documented status, which may affect the outcome of the study. I should also point out that I am a privileged, mixed-blood Red, cisgender male, who benefits from patriarchy, hegemony, heteronormativity, and from my lower-middle class background. I am from a community with basically no racial diversity, since according to governmental census data nearly all people in the Santa Clara Valley would be categorized as White/Caucasian/Caucasoid/European/European American even though there is a substantial Mexican and mixed blood American Indian community. The participants’ racial background being no different than mine could be deemed a limitation in the study because of its narrowness and lack of representation of other mixed-blood people with different backgrounds than ours.

The study is limited to one gender (male) and to individuals from the early-mid millennial generation. The study focuses on people with little to no college education. The study could have included MBAIM with various levels of college achievement as more participants were interested in being interviewed. However, due to the pandemic preventing consistent in-person communication and traveling required throughout Northern California to meet with the participants, the study was unable to accommodate additional participants. The study is only interested in the gap in research for MBAIM who lack federal recognition regarding tribal status.

Another limitation is that the knowledge of the individuals had of their American Indian background could have been more varied. Only one of the participants knew his specific tribe. The way the participants self-identified could have been more nuanced as well. Only one participant claimed his American Indian identity and the rest fell into nebulous categories. Moreover, there could have been a wider set of educational experiences of the participants, including being educated in different parts of the state or country.

Finally, the study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. I was only allowed
access to participants who were unvaccinated since that was what I was at the time. All interviews were done outdoors and six feet apart where Covid-19 germs could not have infected any of us if we correctly wore our N-95 masks with glass visors and obeyed orders by Governor Gavin Newsom’s administration. These precautions prevented more sampling as other potential participants refused to speak to non-family members.

**Educational Significance**

This study aims to lead to further understanding of the overall educational experiences of young American Indian males in the Santa Clara Valley and their access to a college education. The study delves into the complicated and distinct economic, social, educational, historical, and mixed tribal backgrounds of the participants and how this status has complicated their self-understanding and acceptance of their rightful heritage by using Red Peoples Oral History (Grande, 2004). In addition, it explores the impact tribal status has had on the participants’ pursuits in academia. The study aims to recognize which factors are responsible for educational obstacles and to gain a better understanding of what can be done to effectively address and overcome issues faced by the participants. The study will hopefully produce valuable information for future members of the American Indian male community in semirural Northern California towns and individuals who want a better idea of how to address this group of individuals. For those in K-12 schools, educational administration or academia who want to understand the challenges endured by young American Indian males, this study provides insight into what can and should be done to help improve the access to higher education and ultimate retention for this group.

Raising public awareness of increased enrollment of American Indian male students can provide hope, inspiration, and guidance for other American Indian males. College-educated
American Indian males can serve as role models and mentors for male youth (Palmer, 2018). Additionally, an increase in college graduation rates for American Indian students is necessary to boost the numbers of American Indian professors and administrators at colleges across the country. Increasing the amount of American Indian college students could strengthen ties between higher education institutions, American Indian males, and leaders in their home communities (Palmer, 2018).

The needs of young American Indian students in semirural California living in lower-middle class or middle-class communities can get lost within the focus often placed on urban areas instead of a broader focus that includes rural America (Faber, 2016). Further, mixed blood American Indian males deal with societal misunderstandings toward them and their culture. Non-mixed blood American Indian people simply dismiss them as Hispanics because of their Spanish surnames and Native features (Miranda, 2018). This creates a problem at college campuses since American Indians will intentionally sequester themselves due to the discrimination and/or ignorance they experience from the greater campus community. Researchers have suggested that American Indians isolate themselves from the student body at college campuses to essentially ensure cultural preservation as American Indians are seen as an invisible minority by academia (Faber, 2016). The study explicates why higher education must demonstrate a greater understanding and compassion for mixed-blood American Indian males who are a minority within a minority group.

The problems with access to higher education began during primary schooling for the participants’ generation of mixed blood American Indians in the Santa Clara Valley (Salce, 2014). Lack of access to higher education becomes a more pronounced problem when individuals enter secondary schooling and then it continues into college (Roach, 2017). The
dissertation investigates the experiences of MBAIM and sheds light on a community that is not typically visible in scholarly research (Roach, 2017).

**Definition of Terms**

For the sake of familiarizing the reader with certain terms in this study, I will offer a brief explanation of terms commonly used in this proposal.

**European American**: defines people of European origin instead of the term “white”. White is a monochromatic color like black and does not accurately describe the origins of non-Native people such as Sub-Saharan African and Western European do.

**Mixed-Blood American Indian Males (MBAIM)**: Individuals with origins in the American Southwest/Northern Mexico and Southern Europe.

**Santa Clara Valley**: Area south of San Jose in the semirural working-class parts of the county.

**Young American Indian males**: People who are of American Indian descent and are no more than 39 years old when this study was first written.

**Red people**: This term includes people of a native background within North America whether they are defined as Hispanic, Latino or Native American.

**West End**: Westside Hollister or Villa Hermosa (VH), the barrio. The Red/Brown section of Hollister, California. This is the area where many working-class mixed-blood Indian and Mexican families once lived.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Restatement of the Problem

Nationwide, 17% of American Indian students continue to a college education after high school as compared to 60% of the general population (pnpi.org/native-american-students). Of those small number of American Indian males who do enroll in four-year institutions, very few receive adequate support and guidance; in fact, many indicate how this fact has resulted in disenchantment with academia and underperformance. The result of this situation is a large population of American Indian people who lack a college degree that is so pivotal to financial and career success in the U.S.

The history of American Indians in mainstream schools (those established and maintained by the U.S. Department of Education) has been plagued with problems since the institution of colleges and universities were first created (Eagle Woman & Rice, 2015). Various factors have contributed to the lack of higher education enrollment and achievement for young American Indian males. These include scant outreach programs at high schools and community colleges along with personal feelings toward academia that interfere in college enrollment and scholastic performance. American Indian males have voiced their disappointment with their educational experiences through negative testimonials. The narratives of their burdensome experiences then trickle down to their home communities and impact others’ perceptions due to the strong friendships that American Indian males tend to have, especially in rural/semirural areas (Eagle Woman & Rice, 2015).

Overview

This literature review is organized into three categories: 1) Racism in schooling for American Indian students, 2) Lack of American Indian representation in colleges and
universities, and 3) Effective strategies for outreach and retention in academia. The purpose of this literature review is to provide clarity on the issues that young American Indian males encounter while trying to enroll in colleges and universities and what they experience during enrollment. It also explores the racial make-up of the leadership at colleges and universities and the efforts for retention among the American Indian community. The framework of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) is used to give a nuanced and accurate understanding of the inequities in accessing higher education for American Indian males. As Writer (2008) states, TribCrit expands on the ideas of colonization, racism, and assimilation, and their relationship to American Indians and higher education.

Racism in Schooling for American Indian Students

History of education for American Indians

American Indian experiences in higher education had a dubious start in the US. In Virginia a college was made to house “Children of the Infidels” in 1617, and the American Indian reaction was one of revolt and refusal (Wright & Tierney, 1991). The wars that were waged between the Powhatan nation and the British may have not been successful in repelling the British for good, but it did prevent the planned construction of the college which intended to institutionalize American Indian people through “education.” Unfortunately for American Indians of the upper east coast, Harvard University was established in 1636. Wright and Tierney (1991) point out that in 1654, administrators designed an Indian college for 30 American Indian students. Documents by Oppelt (1990) show that only a few American Indian students remained enrolled in this school with the rest suffering illnesses attributed to European colonists.

The charter of William and Mary College [“that the Christian faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians, to the glory of Almighty God”] (WM.edu, 2020) and
Dartmouth College [“John Wentworth...educated a number of the children of the Indian natives, with a view to their carrying the Gospel, in their own language, and spreading the knowledge of the great Redeemer, among their savage tribes”] (Dartmouth.edu, 2020) essentially confirmed the notion that the British had intentions of institutionalizing American Indians during their time in higher education. However, neither school fully carried out this task to “educate” American Indian students. In 1932, only 385 American Indian students were enrolled in colleges and universities, and only 52 graduated from institutions of higher education in the U.S. during this time (Oppelt, 1990).

**History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Windchief and Joseph (2015) deconstruct the modern systematic era of American Indian education and how it began with the so-called “assimilation efforts” of 1824-1879. During this period, the U.S. government relocated students from their families and communities into boarding schools where teachers, administrators, and religious leaders carried out physical, sexual, and verbal abuse (Windchief & Joseph, 2015). The system of racism and sexual abuse intensified when the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) created Indian boarding schools throughout the 1900’s where some sites still exist today. The trauma that American Indians faced in these schools would go uncontested for decades as teachers, administrators, priests, and nurses collectively dehumanized students by molesting, raping, and torturing American Indian children hundreds or thousands of miles away from their home communities (Windchief & Joseph, 2015). By 1926 83% of American Indian children were in the 357 boarding schools in 30 states (boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/).
Impact of the media and curriculum in the US

Racist images created by Hollywood of the “drunk and lazy Indian” are openly discussed with American Indian students by professors and their peers as though these problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, homelessness, and idleness are not prevalent among all ethnic groups in American society (McLaurin, 2012). School curriculum in primary and secondary schools is dominated by stereotypical imagery of American Indian people. This objectionable material tends to go unchallenged by professors (McLaurin, 2012). Smith (2003) suggests that the imagery that American Indian students must contend with in the classroom includes them being presented as humble, trusting, and welcoming, but gullible people.

In many elementary schools throughout the U.S., students of all backgrounds are introduced to stereotypical depictions of American Indian people through literature and programming in the curriculum (Laskow, 2014). For example, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is routinely assigned to elementary-aged children with a text that includes ethnic slurs such as ‘Injun’ and ‘half-breed’ to refer to Native characters. American Indians are characterized throughout the book as a threat to the white man and his way of life and are shown to be savages who are constantly thirsting for war with the white man (Coulombe, 2011).

Moreover, Grandbois and Sanders’ (2017) study proposes that the media has influenced the perspectives that non-American Indians have at universities and in American society in general. American Indians are forced to live up to a measure of shamanism and/or paganism. They are expected to maintain languages, cultures, and religions and to retain other customs such as “Indian names.” Moreover, Park, Hongu, and Daily III (2016) suggest that American Indians are expected to eat traditional Native meals. These unrealistic presumptions of how an American
Indian is supposed to take a toll on the views of higher education for American Indian people (Grandbois & Sanders, 2017).

**Experiences of racism in higher education**

Desai (2017) examines American Indian students who contend with racism and the lack of cultural competence from fellow classmates while enrolled in universities. Desai (2017) implies that universities overlook or are unaware of the racism that American Indian students face during class sessions and other interactions on campus with students and faculty/administrators. Tokenization is an issue brought up by the American Indian community at college campuses (Desai, 2017). American Indians are grouped into a category where they are referenced as People of Color. This term was coined by radical Black theorist Frantz Fanon (1952) in France to refer to people of African descent but has since been adopted to describe all non-European people.

Reece (2010) indicates that the problem with this generalization label is that it happens in contexts such as campus-wide discussions about inclusiveness and plurality, thereby preventing American Indians from getting their exclusive concerns heard. Desai (2017) affirms that college campuses do not understand that American Indians have their own unique experiences and concerns regarding higher education that are not necessarily shared by all People of Color. However, academic and societal pressure has led American Indian people to accept the term, People of Color, forcing them to find parallels with students who are dramatically different in terms of life experiences (Reece, 2010).

As maintained by Norton and Sommers (2011), professors tend to have lower academic expectations for American Indian students. Professors tend to not offer American Indian students the same support as they do for students of other backgrounds (Norton and Sommers, 2011).
Based on Norton and Sommers’ (2011) data, discriminatory acts and exclusionary practices are not limited to European American professors. Racism and discrimination on college campuses can sometimes be attributed to other People of Color who carry out a form of discrimination against American Indians that hinders their academic and career progress (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

Racist, and in some cases, sexist attitudes, prevail as an institutional practice of discrimination and mistreatment toward American Indian males. To complicate matters, researchers like Crosby (2011) and Eason, Brady, and Fryberg (2018) have determined that tools that American Indians students often utilize to overcome painful situations in academia, such as setting up safe spaces, community building, eliminating cultural insensitivity, securing institutional support from American Indian professors (and non-Native supporters), and developing ethnic pride, are seen by many in the mainstream community as non-academic distractions.

**Impact of stereotypes**

Goodstar and Rohort (2017) explore why American Indian students often struggle in school and their criticisms of the institution. Goodstar and Rohort (2017) discuss the complaint of fans rooting for college sports teams that bear the name and logo of American Indian people which is deemed as offensive by American Indian people. Fans and students at various universities from the Florida State Seminoles to the San Diego State University Aztecs support teams with a Native logo and mascot. Fans partake in the tradition of making signs for sporting contests that evoke historical images of Native North American people defeated in battles against the Europeans. Goodstar and Rohort (2017) point out that these colleges enable fans to continue
acts of racism including singing and hand displays that mimic American Indian people by not admonishing them or doing anything else to quell the activity.

Danchevskay (2017) offers other examples of racism toward American Indian students including experiences with staff and administrators at college institutions who assume that American Indian students all live on reservations. This false assumption is the equivalent of assuming that all Black and White students live in urban ghettos and rural trailer parks, while in fact, 64% of American Indians live in cities (Danchevskaya, 2017). Danchevskay (2017) asserts that the urban American Indian experience is overlooked because of their relatively small population size compared to other ethnic groups.

**Microaggressions**

Subtle racism that is directed at American Indian students includes microaggressions, which are nonchalant and may involve the individual making the remark or partaking in the action and not realizing the nature of his/her racism. Microaggressions are seen and felt in everyday language (Nadal, 2014). This term was created by Chester M. Pierce in 1970 to refer to language consisting of insults and racism towards Blacks, which he personally experienced (Sue, 2010). The concept of microaggressions and who experiences this has grown to include all “People of Color” (Reese, 2010) notes that this general definition of People of Color is disputed by Native Americans as they are the original people of the western continent who define themselves as such).

According to Jackson and Smith (2003), American Indian students at an early point in their adult lives develop issues with self-esteem and microaggressions that produces increased levels of self-doubt. Jackson and Smith (2003) note that American Indians question their academic abilities when professors and students make ignorant racial remarks. American Indian
youth become detached from their mainstream peers because of this. Jackson and Smith (2003) showcase that non-native student do not have to endure the same criticism and racism based on ethnic identity. Non-Native minority groups in the U.S. have more respect shown towards their ethnicity and racial background due to more public knowledge about them.

**Lack of American Indian Representation**

Keith, Stastny, and Brunt (2016) document the barriers that American Indian students grapple with. In the study, American Indians suffer from the lowest retention rates in college among all ethnic groups in the US. These rates are 39.4% for four-year schools and 17.4% at mainstream two-year schools (Keith, Stastny & Brunt, 2016). 8.7% of American Indian students were enrolled at 36 tribal colleges and universities with a 23% increase documented between 2001 and 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Research has affirmed this trend with only 15% of the American Indian population having a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Dep’t of Ed).

**Struggles for recognition**

According to Guzman-Lopez (2019), many in the American Indian community feel that the ideas of multiculturalism and inclusion on college campuses have not included their ethnic group in the same way as others with more societal, political, and educational clout. Although Woodard (2016) confirms that American Indians are the most proportionally gunned down ethnic group in the U.S., there is not a strong reaction involving activism and community protests demanding justice for American Indians at college campuses. The lack of acknowledgment of American Indian people at college campuses has served to alienate and discourage American Indians from joining mainstream societies and pursuing their scholastic goals (Guzman-Lopez, 2019). Instances of racism play a role in this decision. Such instances include two American Indian men at Colorado State University detained by campus police during a campus visit
because of a parent concerned about the well-being of her child (collegefund.org), at Montana
State University Northern an American Indian student reported that she overheard students
indicating that they should “just kill them all anyways. I should bring a sign to school that says
kill them all”. After American Indian students reported this incident to the university the Dean of
Students sent out an email indicating the remarks were “threatening”, but not racist
(idahostatejournal.com).

**Issues with enrollment**

American Indian males are forced to find ways to balance ethnic pride, traditional
masculinity, and communal loyalty with performing well in academia where racism and
discrimination against American Indians persist among both European American and People of
Color (Gay, 2004). Clarren (2017) suggests that American Indians – even more than
international students - must face the added challenge of maintaining college enrollment while
working full-time. This is in contrast with other students from wealthy backgrounds, who at
times include People of Color, who are international students (Hawkins, 2019). These
international students of color have the luxury of focusing all their attention on their academic
careers instead of being preoccupied with non-academic challenges.

According to Olson and Dombrowski (2019), young American Indian males of all
socioeconomic backgrounds have struggled to enter higher educational institutions upon
graduation from high school. The authors (2019) cite several factors for this issue, including lack
of educational resources and knowledge of the application process, community encouragement
Indians have with obtaining a college education alongside desensitized students, teachers, and
administrators. These researchers suggest that American Indian males face difficult treatment
from a university system that is not accountable to them (Cech, Metz, & Smith, 2019). As a result, Cech, Metz, and Smith (2019) propose that American Indian males have become disinterested in continuing with their institutional education. The issues make succeeding in academia increasingly difficult for a group trying to find their place in academia (Bryan, 2019).

Taylor, Nguyen and Grey (2018) conducted a study that looks into why American Indians have struggled with increasing college enrollment figures. One reason offered by Taylor, Nguyen and Grey (2018) is that colleges and universities focus their retention efforts on other ethnic groups. Furthermore, institutional racism in the American educational system and discrimination by teachers and administrators during high school interferes in the interest in college for American Indian students (Cech, Smith, & Metz, 2019). According to Vedder (2018), low enrollment figures for males can also be linked to discrimination toward males. Bryan (2019) posits that there should be a concerted effort between American Indian communities and universities to address how to increase college enrollment for American Indian people, particularly males.

**Limited opportunities**

Gonzalez (2005) states that American Indians face cultural persecution because of the stereotypes that guide the views of the general public. Larkin (2014) maintains that American Indians are seen in the public eye as a group immersed in an antiquated lifestyle because universities and colleges do not emphasize their contributions to U.S. society. This negative scholastic experience hampers American Indian males from advancing in college according to Castagno and Brayboy (2008). The authors (2008) suggest that the lack of participation in academic life at colleges throughout the nation is responsible for low college enrollment. The issue interferes with opportunities to become active members of the university. Castagno and
Brayboy (2008) remark that American Indian males could gain a foothold on altering the pipeline from high school to college for future generations if correction action would be taken to adequately address this problem.

Higher education institutions can develop more of an understanding of American Indian males and their struggles if they were to consider the experiences and concerns of American Indian males, according to Castagno and Brayboy (2008). Morgan (2009) advances this argument by looking into why administrators should realize that American Indian studies must become a bigger part of the college curriculum. Furthermore, Gervais (2017) states that college resources should be more accessible to American Indian males to gain their trust and commitment. If true inclusivity is to be achieved, then needs such as this must be on campuses (Adelman, 2013). One effective means of achieving these goals includes culturally responsive schooling, which Castagno and Brayboy (2008) demonstrate support in their study. One key underlying theme of culturally responsive schooling is:

a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular tribe…fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally responsive educators, curriculum, and schools. (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2008, p. 2)

Moreover, Adelman (2017) views marginalization and isolation as two common problems for American Indian males as they have resulted in a lack of representation on college campuses. American Indian males continue to struggle with gaining visibility at colleges and universities. The number of graduate students of American Indian descent is dramatically lower
among males (Diverse, 2018). Henceforth, American Indian males struggle to find male camaraderie, mentors, and inspirational figures of their own gender (Wilson, 2018)

**Transition to graduate degrees**

Woodford (2005) examines undergraduate experiences of American Indian students and the difficulties they undergo during the transition to a graduate program. Negative experiences lead to a lack of belonging and self-doubt. In some cases, this causes students to drop out or to retreat to the company of their communities (Woodford, 2005). American Indian male graduate students have expressed further disapproval of the lack of American Indian representation in specifically graduate school. Students report feelings of exclusion and lack of support (Gruenzel & Stuwe, 2019). Rodriguez-Rabin (2003) suggest that American Indians are unable to focus on their studies and their academic performances suffer as a result.

According to Gruenzel and Stuwe (2019), the reality that American Indian students often are the only members of their ethnic group in courses as well as in their programs or departments results in issues such as anxiety, increased pressure, and persistent self-evaluation. American Indian males may have little contact with faculty and other students, along with confronting the hurdle of cultural misunderstandings from students. This situation distracts American Indians from their intended purpose of completing an advanced degree (Gruenzel & Stuwe, 2019). American Indian graduate students and males often battle with depression and voluntary isolation. which is amplified as males advance in academia, and are outnumbered by the female gender (Burnett, Lee, Easton & Lawler, 2015).

Museus and Quaye (2009) analyze how the lack of American Indian representation on campuses hinders academic progress as well. However, they add another aspect to the discussion by suggesting that European American and Asian professors show preferential treatment to
members of their own ethnic background through close, personal, academic, and career support. The favoritism that is overlooked by administrators is to the detriment of students who are non-Asian/European American (Museus & Quaye, 2009). American Indian males who seek a college education in this sort of academic climate must rely on self-resiliency to overcome these burdens.

*Machismo as hindrance*

American Indian women face an assortment of issues which interfere with their academic careers; some of these overlap with American Indian male peers in academia. The commonalities and differences should both be given their due place in academic research. However, American Indian women, unlike their male counterparts, do not face the pressure from their communities that college enrollment somehow diminishes their femininity (Salce, 2016). American Indian male students must cope with their masculinity being questioned, especially as they enter graduate programs (Baumann, 2019). Essentially, American Indian males are targeted more so when they have committed themselves to the system of American education instead of other determinants of Indigenous masculinity (Baumann, 2019). Moreover, the number of American Indian women is considerably higher than American Indian males in universities and colleges (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). The statistic of American Indian women enrolling in college rose from 37,600 to 111,000, which is an almost 200 percent increase (National Center for Educational Statistics). Unfortunately, this success by American Indian women has coincidentally made it harder for American Indian males to find others of their same gender with whom they can identify (Gay, 2004).

In addition, Sessions (2017) identifies the inability for many college-aged men to take pride in their masculinity on college campuses as such behavior may be deemed patriarchal or a
form of toxic masculinity. The inability to uphold traditional forms of masculinity that predate any imported behavioral expectations by thousands of years interferes in the way American Indian males view the college experience.

**Effective Strategies for Outreach and Retention**

*Developing an interest in college*

Strong, Carbonneau, and Austin (2019) suggest that colleges must make the extra effort to set up outreach programs in American Indian communities. The effort should not stop at reservations where many people in the U.S. believe American Indians continue to only live at. American Indians have active communities in cities such as Minneapolis, Phoenix, and Seattle, as well as in ethnically mixed communities in San Antonio, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area (Strong, Carbonneau, & Austin, 2019). These locations were destinations for many who “volunteered” in the Indian relocation programs of the 1950’s (Saldivar, 2019). Saldivar, (2019) asserts that it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to visit high schools where American Indian male students attend and set up partnerships with the leaders in the American Indian male community whether this is on the reservation or in downtown Los Angeles.

Efforts to improve the scholastic abilities and performances of American Indian male students should be made during primary and secondary schooling, according to Strong, Carbonneau, and Austin (2019). These efforts support the transition from high school to college for students. The authors propose that during adolescence American Indian male youth become indoctrinated and feel entrapped by their social surroundings and interpersonal interactions. The possibilities of college and its benefits to personal growth and career prospects must be introduced to young American Indian males and then supported by their communities (Quintana, 2007). Young American Indian males who do not achieve what they are capable of can
experience various psychological problems that linger as depression and midlife crises are commonplace for this group of people (Quintana, 2007).

Crosby (2011) attests that for mainstream colleges, changes that accommodate American Indian students would mean an overhaul to the teaching practices, curriculum, and pedagogy utilized by professors, and improved relations between Native leaders and college administrations. Crosby’s (2011) study recommends that administrators at colleges and universities would have to forge a closer working relationship with reservations and American Indian urban communities. Suggestions for making American Indian males a greater part of the university environment include reparations, empathy, research, community building need and Native-only spaces (Crosby, 2011).

**Increasing college rates for American Indian males**

Singson and Tachine (2016) broach the point about American Indian males and their experiences in academia, detailing how universities that show sincerity, compassion, and encouragement toward American Indian males are successful regarding increased student performance and retention (Mosholder, 2013). This contrasts with the poor academic performances and low retention rates for American Indian males at schools that do not try to address this population (Wilmott, et al, 2015).

In Turney, et al.’s (2019) study, American Indian males struggle to receive the guidance, encouragement, and other academic and institutional support. Correcting this issue is necessary for academic success and a good overall educational experience as improvement of enrollment rates at colleges and universities leads to higher performance for American Indian students (Lee, 2017). Wong (2015) notes that with the assistance of faculty, administrators, and home
communities, American Indian males excel in academia and create academic opportunities for succeeding generations.

In fact, partnerships between the American Indian community and universities have led to increased graduation rates. One such example is at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities where between 2008 and 2018, the graduation rate jumped from 27% to 69% (hechingerreport.org). The improvement in the graduation rates was due in large part to the campus center, Circle of Indigenous Nations, that seeks to provide a space to assist, encourage, and retain American Indian students. The scholastic support and camaraderie available to American Indians is invaluable, according to students and faculty, who have witnessed more young American Indians feeling welcomed on campus (hechingerreport.org). This flagship plan is one that the American Indian community feels should be emulated at other campuses that serve American Indian students. The University of Minnesota has also seen its American Indian population increase from 339 to 418 students from 2008-2018. Though this is a small increase compared to the overall number of students of other racial group the population of American Indians versus other non-Native people remains in the country (hechingerreport.org). But the increase in student numbers and graduation rates for American Indians at the University of Minnesota is a step in the right direction as nationally only 39% of them graduate in six years and in 2017 students of traditional college age, 18-24, consisted of only 1/5th of the entire population of American Indian college students which is the lowest rate among all racial groups (hechingerreport.org).

**Void of American Indian Males on campus**

Brayboy (2017) asserts that institutions should have more leaders who are American Indian male to meet the need of its American Indian male students. American Indian males in
these positions offer examples of overcoming the vices to which many young people fall victim (Quintana, 2007). Brayboy (2017) contends that access to college must be made a realistic goal for American Indian males. Scholastic success for American Indian male students is linked to having more American Indian faculty and administration members at college campuses (Brayboy, 2017). American Indian male scholars stand as beacons of hope for other American Indian male students and can lead increased rates of members of this group in college. Brayboy (2015) infers that it is necessary for schools to employ American Indian male faculty and administration members to work closely with the American Indian population.

Wilson, (2018) has shown that American Indian youth and their families are most receptive of academic and career advice when given by other American Indian people. Regarding American Indian male students, the educational and job advice is more well-received when it comes from American Indian male professors (Wilson, 2018). Pennamon (2018) propounds the notion that American Indian people do not feel their college experiences have been valued and understood by mainstream universities and non-Native people at campuses and an increase of professors of their ethnic group would generate interest for incoming American Indian college students. Other studies back Pennamon’s (2018) claim as scholars have acknowledged the value of employing additional American Indians in staff and administrative positions on college campuses because of their success rate and ability to connect with and motivate American Indian students (Newell, 2010).

**Educational training and practice**

Goodluck (2002) examines the ways in which employing school psychologists who are trained with cultural competence and designing programs to address the unique needs of American Indian students, have been effective in outreach and retention efforts. However, the
spiritual, communal, cognitive, and academic needs of American Indian male students must be understood before school psychologists can effectively communicate with American Indian male students (Robinson-Zanartu, 2011). School psychologists who are already trained to work with American Indian students point out in the research conducted by Robinson-Zanartu (2011) that American Indian males value their people’s sovereignty.

Other unique cultural desires are attributed to American Indian people, including the preservation of Native languages, and holding onto culture and ethnic identity. Robinson-Zanartu (2011) finds that sovereignty, language and land preservation, and reciprocity are all major points that need to be taken into consideration for the purpose of training psychologists to work with American Indian male student. As claimed by Robinson-Zanartu (2011), psychologists can then better understand American Indian males and their perspectives.

**Culturally competent approaches**

U.S. schools that evaluate American Indian male student performance based solely on research conducted by non-Native academics do not have the same credibility as studies completed by Native students according to Walters, et al, (2008). Singson and Tachine (2016) suggest that American Indian researchers have a more culturally competent understanding of what needs to be done to improve academic performance and retention rates for American Indian students and, therefore, should have their research and involvement in academia represented.

**Space and place**

Singson and Tachine (2016) mention that place and location are an important concept for many American Indian males. American Indian males have a traditional spiritual belief that a connection must be made and understood with the surrounding environment. (Though this idea is still valued by some, many American Indian males are as Americanized as any non-Native
groups and may not emphasize this theme of space and place). American Indian males, as with any other ethnic group including European Americans, have lost touch with the spiritual beliefs of their family members and ancestors (McHenry, 2002). For those who do value spatial ways of looking at the world, space is necessary at a university for American Indians to connect. According to Tachine (2016), colleges should empathize with students who struggle with academic performance and understand this may be due to feelings of not belonging to this social world.

**Importance of land and its meaning**

European Americans often overlook the component of place and spatial meaning to American Indians and what North America (Turtle Island) means to them (Sellers, 2013). The land is vital to American Indians because their evolutionary stories explain how each tribe came into existence from the land which they belong (Sellers, 2013). This understanding could benefit all non-Native people in the US, as many people view the land as nothing more than a place they can use and exploit with no repercussions (Woodward, 2016).

**The four Rs of education**

Singson and Tachine (2016) propose that colleges and universities can help in the healing processes between American Indians and European Americans. According to Singson and Tachine (2016), it would behoove universities and colleges to follow the Four Rs of respectful, relevant, responsible, and reciprocal relations between American Indian people and European American students. However, Universities and colleges do not usually acknowledge the people whose lands the institutions occupy (Guzman, 2014) although the history of Christianization and persecution is no different than the way pagans were treated in early Europe (Magee, 2010). The removal and massacre of Indigenous people in the Americas by an invading group of people with
different religious beliefs is similar to what occurred to European pagans when modern religion was “introduced” to them (Magee, 2010).

**Community building**

Community building is a key factor for American Indians in any community. American Indians are encouraged by their communities to seek out people with whom they have a connection (Moon, 2003). Sustaining friendships through meals and other fellowship opportunities are hallmarks of North American Indian culture that lead to developing a certain comfort and belonging with those around you (Moon, 2003). American Indians who enroll in colleges and universities are exposed to American institutional education and indoctrination that take away from Red people-based ideas of community. Moon (2003) suggests developing and encouraging a space to function where American Indian people can practice the tradition of building community with other students as a way for colleges to address the low rates of American Indian enrollment.

**Supporting the needs**

Mosholder (2013) finds it to be integral for researchers to point out the factors that are accountable for the lack of American Indian male college enrollment. These include strong family commitments and the amount of academic support at college campuses (Mosholder, 2013). Instructors, staff, and peers also play an important role (Mosholder, 2013). A dedicated team from the university which recruits and helps American Indian male students with the transition to college is vital. The support system in place helps students to determine their collegiate and career goals (Mosholder, 2013). Increasing the numbers of more American Indian males in academia is helpful to American Indian male students by establishing a level of comfort with other people at the university (Keith, Stastny & Brunt, 2016).
Hermanowicz (2006) asserts that outreach and retention at the college level for American Indian students has increasingly been addressed more widely due to their high drop-out rate. Social and academic support are referenced by Karp (2001) as successful aspects that lead to improving retention of American Indian students at universities. Since American Indian students tend to graduate for personal satisfaction and return to serve in their communities, Heavyrunner (2002) determines that these ideas are part and parcel of understanding the reasons that lead to post-college pursuits for American Indian males. According to Karp (2001), American Indian males tend to have pressure put on them from their home communities to graduate and return to them to be of service. Karp (2001) recommends that colleges and universities understand this importance of community relations for American Indian male students.

**California: blazing a new trail**

California schools can make changes to their campuses that meet the demands of the American Indian community. California schools have accomplished this in various ways in the past by creating opportunities for American Indian students when other states made no educational concessions to this population. Some examples of progress include American Indian Studies departments set up by community colleges and four-year universities (De La Torre, 2001). The University of California, Davis, is home to one of three Native American Ph.D. programs in the country. It has been involved in partnership programs with the nearby D-Q University (now a defunct tribal school that still holds events). The University of California, Berkeley, now has an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in the revitalization of Indigenous languages. Powwows are held at various mainstream colleges in the state. In addition, the researcher operated the only Indigenous-based organization at the University of San Francisco for three years, 2017-2020 (USF).
These achievements at traditional schools are outlined to show proof that California has persuaded American Indian people to enroll in colleges in the state and is responsible for positive action in the great American Indian community. However, academic institutions must continue to make the effort to accommodate the needs of American Indian students by creating new opportunities for them to thrive. California colleges and universities can be allies of American Indian people when they create a niche for them on campus (https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/statetribes/strivingtoachieve).

Conclusion

Throughout U.S. history, American Indians have dealt with a history of racism in education. The reality continues to affect both how the university system addresses the needs of American Indian students and the mixed attitudes of American Indians toward college enrollment and participation in this inequitable system. The lack of American Indian representation in colleges and universities is tied to both racist practices in the U.S. educational system and how college is looked at within the American Indian community. More research is needed into effective strategies for outreach and improved retention efforts in academia for American Indian people, especially American Indian males, as their enrollment numbers are drastically lower than those of their female counterparts.

This literature review serves to introduce research carried out by the Native and non-Native community as to why access to higher education is a concern for the American Indian community. Scholars realize that higher education achievement can create more career and societal opportunities for everyone who functions within the political, economic, and educational systems of the US. The examination into American Indian enrollment in higher education is also
important for those who want to understand their educational experiences and those who want to provide more inclusive and equal opportunities for all ethnic groups.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to raise awareness and draw understandings from the educational experiences of mixed-blood American Indians males in the Santa Clara Valley. The study documents and analyzes what these experiences entail as well as ways to improve cultural pride and dignity in the Santa Clara Valley and the educational outlook for the current generation of American Indian male college students. The study focuses on three aspects: 1) recording the educational experiences of American Indian males in the Santa Clara Valley, 2) understanding Western norms of education imposed on the interviewees, and 3) making use of the information gathered to create critical social and educational changes.

Research Questions

Four guiding questions assist the study in gathering information from the shared experiences:

1) How do American Indian males in the Santa Clara Valley view their educational experiences in high school and college?

2) What are the barriers that have prevented American Indian males from entering higher education?

3) From the perspective of American Indian males, how does the portrayal and representation of American Indian people in the collegiate curriculum affect the views that American Indian people have toward higher education?

4) From the perspective of American Indian males, what would motivate youth to enter college?
Research Design

Red Peoples Oral Tradition as methodology

The dissertation employed Red Peoples Oral Tradition and storytelling as a methodology tool for Red People. “Red” in this context is used to refer to people who have proudly embraced and defined themselves through a color that denotes their cultural, ethnic, and racial background. This is done in the same way that African and European people have used the monochromatic colors of Black and White to identify themselves in the U.S.

Prior studies on American Indians have tended to use traditional, western, Anglo-American methodologies in which the researcher and the participants do not share common lived experiences. This study is unique in that I employed Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling advanced by such scholars as Grande (2004) and Brayboy (2006). As a MBAIM researcher, I collected the stories of MBAIM through the oral tradition practiced in North America for thousands of years (Van De Logt, 2015). This method has been the main mode of passing down lessons and maxims for other generations to learn from the preceding generation with (Borgia, 2014).

Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling involves both the interviewee and interviewer describing past events in a jocular, informal way, but still focused (Yi, 2016). Both parties build on the informality of the interview as it is structured more like a casual conversation with the interviewer adding his interpretation to the running dialogue. The interviewer may also give short responses to support and guide the interviewee back toward the main topic of the question asked.
Alignment with theoretical framework

The Native-based methodology of Red People’s Oral Tradition is linked to the TribCrit epistemological framework that guides this study’s analysis of American Indian males in higher education (Brayboy, 2001). The method is the American Indian version of testimonios which is a documented oral account of lived experiences used in the Latino/a community (Hernandez, 1997). The study used Red Peoples Oral Tradition because of its close association to TribCrit (Brayboy, 2001). Red Peoples Oral tradition allows people to speak of their own life experiences for the listeners to learn from. New understandings and applications emerge from this Native-based scholarly technique of obtaining knowledge. The concept “knits generations together...Some stories are intended to teach a lesson, and they are passed from generation to generation to show others how to behave, how to act, and how to properly care for each other” (oneidaindiannation.com).

Impact of Red People’s Oral Tradition in this study

Red People’s Oral Tradition Storytelling facilitates the understandings of the narratives given by American Indian males in this study. Participants reflected on their time as youth in the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of higher educational system, and what these experiences consisted of (Brayboy, 1999). The methodology deconstructed numerous examples of institutional racism, discrimination (from all non-Native people), racial barriers, lack of inclusion, and, in some instances, success. The study investigated ways of overcoming scholastic obstacles and suggests strategies for improvement at college campuses.

During the interviews I chimed in occasionally with terse but encouraging responses such as “right on, bro” or “cool, my niijii (Ojibwe for friend)” to suggest I was either paying attention, expressing approval, or simply could identify with their points but I did not want to disrupt the
ebb and flow of the interviewee speaking. The interviewees continued to speak with self-assurance and trust for the duration. Though the goal of the interaction was to gather data for the purpose of the study, it was also to maintain the age-old tradition of Red people practicing a framework that has been applied on this land since time immemorial and continued with this study conducted even during the height of the global pandemic.

The stories from the interviewees gathered during the practice of Red Peoples Oral Tradition Storytelling were told with colorful language and involved a high comfort level between the two parties. This approach allowed me to extract the most accurate data related to the main interview questions of the study. I first embarked on the same process to gain the trust and confidence of the interviewees by explaining to them who I am, what my intentions are, and what the interview questions consisted of. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable both sharing relevant and irrelevant content without me interrupting. Because of page constraints in the study, I did weed out what was most useful to this study, though.

**Language usage**

Due to U.S. dissertation standards and expectations, this study is documented in writing using the Roman alphabet in the English language. The writing of any modern language is no more than 7,000 years old, while spoken languages stretch back considerably longer. Spoken words were the first method of communication between Red people. Though other forms of recordkeeping have been used, spoken communication is the most valuable. It is an outlet of expression that the writing of a language cannot measure up to.

Red People’s Oral Tradition in this study was executed in the English language, but this was never used during pre-Colombian times. Red People’s Oral Tradition in its heretofore sense would have been utilized in a common Native language spoken by the interviewer and the
participant. Tribal people who are fluent in their Native tongue may still engage in Red People’s Oral Tradition the traditional way. But among MBAIM this is rarely done.

For this study only a handful of Native-based words were introduced by the researcher to the participants such as nijjii (Red Man), pindah (White man), and zhinni (Black Man) which was done to enhance their knowledge of Native languages and to specify individuals they spoke about. Also, for this study Red People’s Oral Tradition puts an emphasis on listening to the participant with the goal of showing respect to them and valuing their willingness to share personal details of their lives. Red People’s Oral Tradition was used in this study to not only gather data for academic purposes but for personal and spiritual growth which is at the root of Red People’s Oral Tradition (Palmer, 2014).

Therefore, silence in this study was used to both follow a fundamental guideline of Red Peoples Oral Tradition and to communicate with other non-verbal cues which were understood by a fellow Red man. Among Red people, including mixed-blood American Indians, these unspoken methods of communication serve the same purpose as speaking aloud to the individual. Palmer (2014) indicates this idea regarding the Western Apache people:

Apaches communicate and express deep feeling by remaining silent at crucial times in their daily discourse...during important ritual moments cues are given to participants to remain silent so that the deeper meanings can take root in the mind. (p. 521)

**Research Setting**

The study took place at the homes of the participants, where they feel most at ease with the setting for the interviews. Since I am familiar with the participants and m from the same community, I was allowed to do the interviews in the Red People’s Tradition Storytelling which is the culturally acceptable method in this community. There was no need for modern
communication apps or relying on formal European American ways of contacting and meeting with people. None of these ways of communicating with the participants will be insisted on. It is simply the way individuals in the South Bay American Indian communities greet and welcome those of their same background into their personal lives and home spaces. Finally, only the IRB protocols that I am using could affect the outcome of the interviewees as the participants have never been documented in this way by a local researcher. Traditional research has a culture and language system very different than the one found in barrios throughout Northern California.

**Participants**

I chose the participants by inviting five of the most knowledgeable people I know within the South Bay town of Hollister who met the selection criteria. These are individuals who tend to be proficient at answering questions and with whom I have prior experience interviewing for my digital films. They range in age from 27-40 years old. I spoke to the participants months in advance of the scheduled interview dates to determine who would be committed to the interviews and would provide the most accurate and informed answers to the interview questions. Therefore, for this study I am using these criteria to determine inclusion in the project. The participants must:

1) Be originally from and currently living in the South Bay;

2) Self-identify as American Indian or mixed-blood American Indian male;

3) Have experienced racism and discrimination in the local school district and community;

4) Have an intact memory of one’s educational and communal experiences from the 1990’s-2000’s;

5) Be willing to be interviewed by the researcher about his experiences;
6) Allow the researcher to record the interview using semi-professional video and audio equipment;

7) Agree to have the emergent findings be written about and filmed which may lead to further exposure.

**Data Collection**

The study took place in the Santa Clara Valley towns of San Jose, Gilroy, and Hollister. I handed out the questions regarding educational experiences to the five participants and recorded the encounter via a microphone connected to a Sony 6400 mirrorless camera that is used document the video portion of the interview. The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes. The participants provided narratives about their educational experiences and offer suggestions for how the educational system could have been improved.

Participants were given a copy of video footage transferred through an SD card and any other relevant information regarding its usage within a week after the interview date for their knowledge and understanding of the project. Each participant received a chart that included: names using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, what sort of information was gathered, and the comparison of common emergent themes. Participants’ identity is not disclosed. Information will only be available to the researcher until the project is completed. At that point all findings and details regarding the participants will be destroyed.

**Data Analysis**

The study delves into the most prominent themes that emerge during the interviews. It looked at the issues the participants encountered in gaining an education that was inclusive of their people’s contributions to the US. The study analyzes the perceptions that participants have of their time spent in the secondary and tertiary educational system of the South Bay.
Once the interviews were finished and transcribed, the researcher looked at the most important themes, concepts, and overarching ideas that came about during the interviews. Each research question was answered by focusing on the most prominent and relevant ideas from the dialogue. The researcher then synthesized the data among all the transcripts to determine the ideas relevant to educational experiences for American Indian males and how their educational system can be improved. I shared transcripts with participants to check for accuracy and to get feedback from the initial findings. This process occurred for a period of four-six months.

**Background of the Researcher**

I am from the South Bay town of Hollister. I have remained in close contact with the participants and the community throughout the duration of my undergraduate and graduate studies. I have worked on several doctoral-level class assignments and film projects in the South Bay that focus on societal relations and career outcomes for people in working-class neighborhoods throughout the country. While I have previously examined the local Hollister educational system in my documentaries, I plan to do so in a more thorough and extensive way in this dissertation.

I was lucky enough to be one of the few MBAIM in Hollister in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s to enter a four-year university after high school. Neither the teachers nor administrators at my high school in Hollister ever encouraged our aspirations as MBAIM to enroll in college. However, I personally saw the advantages that college enrollment had in terms of academic and personal growth as well as career development. But I also witnessed issues at the university that would be off-putting for many in my home community, including the lack of American Indian representation and misunderstandings by non-Natives during encounters with Red people.
The institutional atmosphere of San Francisco universities was very different than anything I knew in the South Bay working-class and middle-class neighborhoods. My experience made me realize why many people in my home community did not want to make the leap to a university after taking community college classes at Gavilan College in nearby Gilroy. I understood it would have been difficult for mixed-blood American Indian males to be a part of a social climate where they remained underrepresented. I realized why other mixed bloods in my hometown felt more comfortable staying in their familiar confines. They may have done this to avoid the same level of racism, judgments, and ignorance from non-Native people at universities elsewhere.

Eventually I had to look at my educational experiences as just a sacrifice I made where it was rare to find others of my same ethnic background. I had to sit quietly in the back of classes overhearing students and professors claiming to be experts on topics with which they had no first-hand experience. What solidified my sense of students’ arrogance and lack of understanding of the real world was how unaware they were of the problems faced by American Indian males in communities not far from campus. My history in academia has inspired me to investigate the ways that the educational system in the South Bay failed to encourage MBAIM to enroll in college. It also revealed to me why universities in the greater Bay Area do not serve the needs of MBAIM and how they can improve outreach efforts within the mixed-blood American Indian community of Northern California.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Overview

This chapter begins with the profiles of the participants to provide the necessary background information that familiarizes the reader with each person. The participants’ details are presented with relevant points about who they are and why these are important to the study. This section showcases how being an American Indian was not fully understood by the participants. In some cases, it was just a passing thought. People simply tended to define themselves more by their nationality and the community that they were raised in, instead of their rightful ethnic identity.

I then present the themes that emerged from the data gathered from the interviews with participants and synthesized these with my own experiences of growing up in the community. I did this to establish the connection that I have with the interviewees and the shared histories we have. It is my intention to not avoid this linkage and to rather point out the strengths in being an insider to this research study. The strategy reveals how personal of a topic the study is to me. It also shows the potential complications and limitations of my role, but in the end, this became a duty to the community and strength of the study.
### Participant Profiles

**Table 1: Background of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Post-high School Ed.</th>
<th>Knowledge of Nativeness</th>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Generation in U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>One semester</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Western Euro/Hispanic</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>American Indian/Irish</td>
<td>Immemorial/3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Somewhat, Developing</td>
<td>Hawaiian, Mexican, Apache, Pinoy</td>
<td>Immemorial/3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>A.S.</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Tejano</td>
<td>Immemorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Mexican-American, Irish, Scot</td>
<td>2nd/4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anthony

Anthony is nearing 30 years of age, but like Brandon, he tends to pass the days playing video games incessantly. He also shares the same habit of “dabbing” (smoking butane hash through a glass pipe) throughout the day. The difference between Brandon and him is that he has a full-time job. He is working on metal-parts orders and assembly for his grandfather, who owns the business.

Anthony’s mother is of mixed Western European background, and his father claims to be primarily a Spaniard, with some distant Southwest American Indian blood. Anthony was born in San Jose, like his parents, but grew up in foster care in Gilroy. His mother was addicted to amphetamines, and his father relocated to Los Angeles to avoid the responsibility of raising a child. In the same vein as the other participants, Anthony had no real interest in pursuing college. But he did enroll in courses sporadically in his early-mid-twenties. He did this just to accompany his girlfriend who would have felt lonely had he not joined her. The classes he took were simply the same general education courses as his girlfriend.

Anthony never found his niche at the local community college and is content working his job position surrounded by family members and people with whom he grew up. Anthony did not receive any encouragement from school personnel or his family members to develop an understanding of his American Indian background. Anthony struggled with his parents being in and out of his life and both periodically on drugs. He was forced to be cared for in foster homes because of this but learned the value of a dollar through his hard-working grandfather. His grandfather was the only person in his entourage who provided some mentoring and bestowed a job on him.
Brandon

Though Brandon is a later millennial born in the 1990s, the educational experience of early millennials in the community are very parallel to his own. Brandon grew up in various parts of Hollister. Without any experience in the West End (the barrio section of Hollister, California), he sensed racism from the Mexican community due to his White skin. Brandon is Irish American and Blackfoot Indian through his father’s side of the family, while his mother has Indigenous ancestry from Chihuahua, Mexico. Brandon was raised to believe he was half White and half Mexican American. Neither side of the family let up on this idea of emphasizing how he was different from the rest of the family members due to his mixed ethnic background.

Brandon’s family never felt the need to motivate him to pursue a deeper understanding of his background. While they did occasionally mention their Indigenous background to him, these references were casually and subtly mentioned, and were insufficient. There was no additional follow-up, because, as with the other interviewees, money making was the constant goal. In the case of his family members, money and how to get as much of it as quickly as possible was the only thought on their minds. Though Brandon was born in the 1990s, there was no apparent difference in the education he received regarding inclusion of American Indians from the primary to the secondary levels of schooling.

On the home front, Brandon’s mother and father never married and were young when they had him. Both parents were from Generation X. It became increasingly popular and acceptable to not marry and to stay together for the sake of the child. In previous generations, these aspects were essentially mandated by family, religion, culture, and the community at large, no matter how dysfunctional the partnership or how oppressive to the woman it was.

Brandon would eventually drop out of high school; he saw no reason to continue since he
was not interested in what was being taught to him. According to him, the content became boring, and teachers were merely concerned with collecting a paycheck. Fortunately for Brandon, his parents allowed him to live with either one of them. Both promised financial support while he pursued his lifelong dream to become a professional video gamer from the comfort of his own bedroom. Brandon also developed a coping mechanism in the form of a concentrated butane hash oil addiction or “dabbing,” as it is referred to. His family members apparently had no problem with these decisions, and he continues at 27 years old to believe that a day will come when his video game playing skills provides him with additional funds in lieu of legitimate employment.

**Ernesto**

Ernesto was born in the 1980’s and differs from the other participants in that he is of a quad racial background. His mother is a Hawaiian/Filipina from Salinas, California. His father’s family is Mexican and Mescalero Apache and has been in Hollister for a few generations. He defines himself as simply a Brown man. Ernesto grew up in a solidly middle-class neighborhood on the southwest end of Hollister. His family members are strict Christians. His household culture insisted that he become Americanized, and the parents Anglicized his given Spanish first name. Ernesto began to rebel against his parents during his fifth year of high school, when he wanted to blaze his own trail in life and not follow in his parents’ church-going footsteps. As devout Christians, they never questioned the teachings of Christ or the bloodshed and carnage the religion was responsible for during the Spanish invasion of Turtle Island.

Ernesto simply did what he could to get by in primary and secondary schooling, and the minimum effort resulted in him being held back in high school. College was never a prospect of his, but, as with other people of Generation Y, when open community college enrollment became
a trendy way to spend one’s youth, he enrolled in general education classes. Shortly after, Ernesto disenrolled from college. Much like his high school career, he never found his way in academia and never realized the importance of his ethnic background. These were mere passing thoughts in his life, and he was more focused on how to generate quick revenue, which he did while working blue-collar positions in town that subsidized his purchases of mass quantities of marijuana, cocaine, and amphetamines.

During this time, Ernesto was not inclined to want to know or do anything to honor his Indigenous background. He was simply doing what he could to make as much money as he could through a few different avenues: his employment, rap career, and drug trafficking courtesy of the Mexican drug cartels of Sinaloa. Eventually Ernesto’s life would change dramatically as he was facing major prison time and his first child was born to a local Michoacána. She was raised in a traditional Mexican household and demanded he focus on their partnership and provide a better future for his son. She threatened to jettison him for a wealthier drug cartel member. Ernesto would ultimately abandon his gang ties and take up a steady job working for the city’s parks and recreation staff. After further soul-searching, he gained more insight into his Indigenous background and impart this wisdom to his son, wife, and newly born daughter

Juan

Juan grew up on the West End of Hollister, the main barrio of town, but was born in San Jose, California, just like his parents. They came to Hollister looking for a better life for their children, in what they believed was a bucolic setting. The West End in the 1970’s was a calmer barrio community, where Mexican Americans and American Indians once lived before being replaced by Mexican migrant communities in the 1980’s and beyond. This generation of people came to work in the nearby orchards and other laborious blue-collar jobs that previous
generations of Brown and Red people once worked in. However, in Juan’s case, he came from a family that lived in one of two blocks on a side of town that was not defined as low-income housing. There, recent add-ons to the neighborhood were mainly Anglo-Americans. His friends tended to be Anglo-American, or people referred to as “coconuts,” who were Americanized, fourth or fifth generation people of undefined Hispanic/Latin descent, including Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese people. All the so-called Hispanic/Latino groups tended to focus more on a racially neutral identity, in order to not feel ostracized by their European-American friends.

In the case of Juan, he was one of the few people among his friends who had to struggle with dual personal issues of having a Spanish first name and dark skin. He was more Indigenous-looking than his friends who, even as mixed-blood American Indians, were usually more light-skinned and in some cases bore even stronger European features, such as lighter hair and eye color with Mediterranean features.

After working at a Papa Murphy’s pizzeria in town and dabbling in college courses at Gavilan Community College, Juan eventually realized that he had to make up his mind quickly about his future and began taking courses at a medical school in San Jose. It was here that he discovered what he loved and was passionate about to study. Although his interest in human biology was present since he could remember, he was never inspired by anything or any teacher to want to pursue this career path upon high-school graduation. Juan refers to his eventual career in the medical field as something that sort of landed in his lap with a brief stroke of luck that he was fortunate enough to act upon and continue to be interested in today.

**Junior**

Junior was the lone participant who grew up out-of-state in San Antonio, Texas. Although the South Bay community is shrouded in a history of mixed-blood American Indian
people, who refer to themselves as Hispanics coming from the American Southwest and primarily Texas, that migration pattern for the most part ceased in the 1980’s. Therefore, Junior’s relocation to Hollister in the 1990’s while in high school was an ongoing struggle. Having to adapt to a new geographic area, culture, and society, while being exposed to European Americans which he was not familiar with in his barrio of West San Antonio, led to very challenging social dynamics.

As the other participants, Junior came from a working-class background which stressed the value of hard work and the importance to provide for one’s family as soon as one had the ability to do so. Although this outlook on life is admirable, it also took away from Junior’s academic focus. Junior was more interested in extracurricular or non-academic activities throughout his youth. Basketball was more of an appealing outlet for him than anything school-related, but his dreams of making it to the NBA did not go beyond the basketball courts of Westside Hollister.

Junior is the only participant to have had a job while in high school, since his mother demanded that he kept busy with something productive, instead of succumbing to the vices that befell other young men in the area such, as alcoholism, delinquency, and gang membership. Junior’s mother was a single young woman who relocated with her sons to California to be closer to her family members in Gilroy. Junior’s father stayed back in San Antonio in the community where he grew up. However, he remained an active part in Junior’s life, as the son continued to spend summers back home with his father. The dad was a hard worker who insisted that his sons be raised with the same work ethic instilled in him at an early age. This Southern take on hard work is what families who migrated to California beginning with the Great Depression years brought with them, a view prevalent in the culture in rural and semirural parts
of California.

Junior would ultimately find employment in the computer industry, after stumbling onto an opportunity while working in Morgan Hill. The money he earned in an entry-level job was too appealing to think of any other pursuits, and he dedicated his weekdays to working long hours and dealing with long commutes. Junior would later turn this career into one where he was making close to six figures in the burgeoning Silicon Valley computer tech industry.

**Steven**

Steven is another individual who grew up on the West End of Hollister. He is biracial, born to a Mexican American father of northern Mexico Indigenous ancestry and a mother of Irish and Scottish ancestry. As with Junior, he was forced to relocate with his mother to another area and spent years in San Diego before returning for good to Hollister, while his father vacated Hollister for the central valley for other job opportunities and a fresh start. The relocation and separation of his parents would take a toll on Steven, as he searched for father figures to provide him with the guidance, he missed receiving from his father with whom he did not live.

Steven would find a network of people to connect with through gang membership. He joined the Norteños street gang organization that was originally made up of mixed-blood American Indian and Mexican American people in the 1960s and expanded northward to include the South Bay. Within this gang, no one emphasized the importance of a college education, but within the prison system, they stressed knowledge of *La Raza* and self. Steven was a member during a time when the enemies of the Norteños, the Sureños, fought with hand-to-hand combat rarely involving weaponry, which was crude and non-lethal at the time. The more savage warfare that involved guns would not take hold in this community until the latter part of the 2000s. Steven’s involvement in the gang organization resulted in his incarceration on numerous
occasions, beginning with his juvenile years.

Steven realized upon graduation from high school that he could make good money by working as a landscaper. Since he wanted something that provided him with more satisfaction, he eventually became a welder. After a while, he realized this career and membership in the local Welders Union could provide him with job security and some financial stability for a change. He then made the decision to continue forward with this job path, especially after realizing that he and a local Yaqui Indian woman were expecting a daughter. Notably, his girlfriend was a minor and he was only a few years older. Though Steven never enrolled in college, he took courses at a trade school and graduated with a certificate in Heating, Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC). Steven now emphasizes the value in one’s Indigenous identity to his five children (and expecting more) and advocates for his wife’s Indigenous familial influences on their rapidly expanding family.

The major themes identified in the interviews include the following: 1) Prejudgments/misunderstandings, 2) Stifled academic pursuits, 3) Societal effects on MBAIM and 4) Identity contradictions for MBAIM. These themes surfaced naturally during the interviews and spoke volumes of the experiences which have hampered many in the community. Through the methodology of Red People’s Oral Storytelling, participants were allowed the opportunity to speak freely and not feel pressured into using academic language or having to “sound white” because of the intended purpose of the project. While talking about their educational experiences, the interviewees alluded to how the education system could have been improved. They specifically noted the importance of teachers and administrators not prejudging them and falsely assuming that MBAIM students were not capable or had no desires to enroll in college. The participants believe that if they had had educators in their lives who encouraged them that
they could have developed confidence in their academic pursuits and dedicated more time to this endeavor.

Furthermore, some of the participants mentioned that gaining an understanding of their American Indian background could have helped them to enroll in college by showcasing their ethnicity’s contributions to academia. This underlines the practical need of many American Indian students who want to feel represented in academic life. American Indians want to be aware of other Red people who have successfully participated in academia while maintaining ties to their own communities (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021). Some of the participants, therefore, had negative views of higher education because of its lack of inclusivity. The participants pointed out how they associated higher education with hypocrisies and how their home communities looked down on faculty and students in higher education because they took part in this.

**Prejudgments/misunderstandings**

**Historical elements**

Participants suggested that American Indian male students in the Santa Clara Valley were made to feel isolated in their own community, literally and figuratively, because of their heritage. The participants felt that Red people and their culture in the Santa Clara Valley were misunderstood by the educational system and belittled, questioned, and/or tokenized. As Brandon stated, “I took ceramics classes for fun. That’s what I associated with Native Americans, pottery. I didn’t know any better back then” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). The participants gave examples of going on random school field trips, including ones to the San Juan Bautista Mission, without being provided any historical context. Similarly, the participants’ school curriculum included the historically inaccurate lesson covering Pilgrim-Native interactions to explain the Thanksgiving holiday, “The whole Thanksgiving myth, and the
fact that they mentioned it only when that time came around in the year” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021).

Meanwhile, an agrarian and domesticated image of American Indians was presented to European American and Mexican children that depicted them as humble California Indian peasants. As Junior described, “By the time I came from Texas I was already in high school, so I didn’t go to San Juan Bautista for the mission like my little brother and kids his age did” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). The participants indicated American Indian people were represented as having abandoned paganism and adopting Catholicism once they were shown the light of day by humanitarian Spaniards. Ironically, California Indians and other Southwestern tribes, including the participants, continue to bear the last names of these same colonizers. As Ernesto expressed: “They say we aren’t Native American, then they say we aren’t Spaniards but we got their names so what is a kid supposed to think when his parents don’t have the answer?” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). When the school curriculum included any mention of American Indians, it only did so in a passing way during assemblies. Such examples entailed showing “Indian” products: abalone shells and sage, corn, acorn, beads for children to touch and marvel at. As Juan recalled,

I remember how we thought it was so cool to go out into the courtyard to see the stands that were set up like a farmer’s market where everybody could see the crafts, food, and artwork of Native Americans. It reminded me of the Indian market in San Juan [Bautista]. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021).

But what the MBAIM participants found even more patronizing as well as historically and culturally inaccurate was the sole focus in the classroom on Mexican Indigenous people, neglecting Native American tribes in the United States. The participants interpreted this tendency
as the schools pandering toward the local Latino population while ignoring their identities. As Brandon observed:

Well, one of the things that they taught us in school about Native Americans...well, we learned a lot about Aztecs and stuff like that. Just like the other tribes from Mexico...a lot about their rituals and the Gods they worshipped and stuff...we seen a lot their weapons in history classes. The obsidian and the sawtooth, you know, blades and stuff...The Mayans were mentioned. We learned about Christopher Columbus. (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021)

In addition, Aztec dancers (not endemic to the area) occasionally appeared during lunch time school events. According to the participants, the only pretext for this appearance was to show an “exotic” culture for entertainment purposes:

They would bring out those Aztec dancers especially around Día De Los Muertos. I guess it was a way for them [school staff] to show that they knew that there was people here [in the Americas] before White people got here. We didn’t see much of it in school though. It reminded me of the opening to “Blood In, Blood Out” (1993), you know, there was all that Brown Pride stuff going on back then. I’m sure the white kids got a kick out of it too. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

MBAIM students chose to use umbrella terms to describe themselves, such as Brown, American, Hispanic (due to surname), or simply a disparaging term such as “mutt,” to avoid any further harassment from non-Native people. As Juan expressed:

What kid is gon’ be, like, yeah, I’m Native American, like, that’s just like a target on your back, like, I mean, like, for whatever...I grew up mostly in Hollister with white kids
and there was not really any ethnic diversity there, man. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

The participants attested to the difficult experience for American Indians to have to deal with prejudgments from every non-Native in the community, including other People of Color who racialized them as much as European Americans did. As Juan asserted: “The Mexicans, they weren’t going to tolerate us claiming to be Native American, not speaking Spanish, and skating on their side of town...they were the most racist ones out of all us” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). Participants spoke of the negative impact this had on them; they lacked an identity, felt shame, had no sense of ethnic pride, and in turn, learned nothing positive about themselves:

So, the title is Native American, right? You’re not Native, you’re not American. That’s not a tribe...The only reason we got labeled as Indians is because our people looked like the people in the West Indies...Why did we start speaking Spanish? Because Cortez and the Spaniards...all this and that was always the Conquistadores and settlers always infiltrating the Natives. So why didn’t they teach us that in the educational system. Why? What was going to happen if you enlightened us with that education? You were going to empower us, and you didn’t want to see us empowered. (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021)

The participants tended to cite the way that the historical representation of Native Americans during their schooling affected them. Native Americans were portrayed in a negative light as being primitive and no longer a factor in society. This misrepresentation led to the participants questioning their own identity and wondering how they fit into the Santa Clara Valley when Mexicans and European Americans constituted the majority in the area. Historical
representations of Native Americans, therefore, both disallowed the participants from developing a desire to claim their natural heritage and made them ashamed, perplexed, and uncertain about themselves. The participants mentioned how the tokenizing of Native Americans during Columbus Day and Thanksgiving deterred them from exploring their background because they could potentially be ostracized. Themes of confusion, misunderstanding, and conclusions on Native Americans based on what was told to them by their teachers and the school system were common among the participants.

**Racial hostility**

Juan and Junior were especially vocal in mentioning the experiences of racism that the MBAIM community dealt with that would suggest that other People of Color were just as blameworthy as European Americans. As Juan expressed, “It was the first-generation Mexicans [in the Santa Clara Valley] who were the most racist, I felt” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). Essentially, the participants found themselves not only caught in a crossfire of racial animosity in the community between European Americans and Latinos, but each group directed their anger and aggression towards MBAIM as well. For example, Junior stated: “I grew up in San Antonio, but I saw more racism between people here in California” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021).

However, Juan pointed out that only Latinos expected MBAIM to be in solidarity with them and in opposition to their adversaries - European Americans - who they viewed as the primary aggressor in the community. Latinos possibly could have had the expectation of unity between Red and Brown people against European Americans based on having the same physical complexion, a shared history of colonialism in North America, and ties to the same West End barrio. As Juan remembered:
I went to school with like one or two Black kids, literally from kindergarten to high school. And, so to me, Brown and white just seemed, like, normal...He was in a Mexican neighborhood. Sean Elliott, he was the only white kid for fuckin’ like five or six square blocks. Orlando and all those West Siders would pick on him, every day after school they would get big ol’ sticks in the orchard from the Apricot trees next to Calaveras and swing at him (elementary school on the West Side). … those Brown pride gangs that started up. It’s one and the same, like, a group of people. Like starting a clique, that kind of becomes something else. Like us versus them. Then it becomes, like, a us versus them. So, you can see how the whole BHT (Barrio Hollister Territory) and WSL (Westside Locos) started. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

Although European Americans were the main target of Mexican racial hostility, according to Juan, MBAIM sensed racism from both Mexican and European American groups. In other words, MBAIM were perceived as not White or European enough to be accepted by their European American peers and too Americanized and different (American Indian) looking to be accepted by Latinos. According to Brandon, “At my school the Mexican gangsters were over here and the white boy skaters were in another part (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). In addition, the participants indicated hearing disparaging Spanish remarks to refer to them such as güero or Indio once their identity was disclosed.

Ernesto corroborated how perplexed MBAIM were growing up in the Santa Clara Valley because of their treatment from the two main racial groups. “I had an identity crisis. That’s where it started (upbringing in the South Bay). I never had an opportunity to grow up with an open mind” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). This misunderstanding regarding MBAIM racial classification resulted in uncertainty toward their own identities. Ernesto
mentioned how MBAIM like him usually avoided the subject of being American Indian to escape ridicule and public scorn and because he knew little about his real ethnic identity: “I knew nothing about being Indian. All I got taught was “the Indians”. And I use that term because that’s what they told us” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Due to negative historical experiences of people in the U.S. who identified as American Indian, the participants’ main coping mechanism was to simply assimilate. They accomplished this by opting for a more generalized interpretation of their ethnic identity “on the West Side of town where we grew up, we were surrounded by Mexicans. So, you don’t want to be treated different... Then when you’re in school you’re celebrating American holidays to not be looked at funny again” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021).

In addition, Ernesto commented on the educational system neglecting to educate MBAIM on their identity and deconstruct what this meant to them as a community “just influences, you know whether it be religious influence, or educated elders at school, that influenced me being secluded. My parents came from the same educational system” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). Ernesto further asserted that this could have led to MBAIM empowerment while they were high school students, “Why were we labeled Mexicans when we’re not from Mexico? We are Native Americans. Why am I barely finding this out 30 years into my life when I thought you guys wanted to educate me?” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Ernesto revealed that understanding the oppression that MBAIM overcame in American society instead of learning about the black/white binary would have been more relevant to who he is. The local educational system, according to Ernesto, played a role in subduing MBAIM scholastic interests as well. Ernesto pointed out that this was done to preserve the servitude of
Red people to European Americans: “I just became educated on it (being American Indian) from self-education and research on myself, searching what somebody else sought out” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

The participants generally came to the conclusion that because of their racial background and financial status, they were not entitled to knowing the truth about their ethnic background from the educational system in the area. They also alluded to the racism from both the local Mexican and European American communities and how this doubly interfered in their understanding of their own ethnic background. Since the participants and other mixed-blood American Indian people were outnumbered in the area and generally did not seek out the rare groups of people who emphasized their indigeneity, they assimilated into whichever group was present whether at school or in their neighborhood. While reflecting, the participants suggested that having more positive role models from their own background who encouraged their exploration of their rightful identity would have enabled them to develop pride in themselves and others who looked like them, instead of focusing on stereotypical American Indian representation in the classroom and the media.

Culturally competent schooling

Assumptions that MBAIM students were not interested in school and learning are rooted in racism and still currently practiced by the European American, Native American, and Mexican personnel of the South Bay school, according to the participants who have children enrolled in this area. As Ernesto stated: “I don’t see many changes since we were in school. I know they have exposed them to other things that we never heard about since we were adults. But nothing that has to do with their Native American background (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). The systems have been entrusted with the care and guidance of the youth; instead, they
have failed in their responsibility to spark an interest in the MBAIM students to pursue academics and then to support that effort. As Juan suggested, “We never learned about Native American or indigenous populations in school. I think it was just the pilgrims, you know, like Mayflower and shit like that” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). The participants mentioned that the educators’ lack of understanding of the academic, social, and psychological struggles that MBAIM faced, coupled with being unrepresented or misrepresented in the curriculum, proved to have damaging consequences for the youth “They taught us what they wanted us to learn about history. Not actually what went down” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). Many MBAIM were working in low-paying retail jobs and becoming addicted to drugs to deal with oppression and lack of opportunity. This set the tone for MBAIM students’ lack of academic interest, distrust for school authorities, and uncertainty with what was being taught to them:

I don't think in any...there was any effort or attempt with the California public education system at that time, to emphasize those [Native American] details. It was like, the whole teaching method, the whole cookie cutter pilgrim Thanksgiving storyline, and maybe you put in, yeah, like, okay, the White man came, and they kind of took advantage of the situation, of the Indigenous population, but everything was all cool. And, you know, that's why we have Thanksgiving because they show you know, like, you know, the Native Americans and the pilgrims coming to like a truce. But that's all bullshit. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

MBAIM students were, therefore, pigeonholed into being looked at as a group that did not value academics and not expected to continue their education beyond high school. As Ernesto pointed out,
The school is going to teach you what they think is best for you. And I mean, not to go so hard on private education...It’s not like there’s a 99% success rate in the public school system. So, it’s like, futile. So, just my personal observation, is the educational system is not going to nor was it designed to put people in a position to empower them. The system let me down, but not just me down, it let my parents down, it let my grandparents down. But we didn’t have the resources to say, you know what, we’re not going to be in that system anymore. (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021)

Ernesto attested that the school system prejudged MBAIM students and assumed they were not college material or had serious plans to attend college. The school system, according to Ernesto, practiced a racist and rote learning model that was unchallenged in the community as it disempowered collective MBAIM voices: “At the age of 30 that’s when I desired to be educated...I just remember looking at my son and thinking I don’t want him to go through what I did (educationally)” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). The curriculum never deviated from the normal conventions of American higher education in the 1990’s and 2000’s. It also did not present the full picture about U.S. society both historically and in the modern era. According to the participants, themes of a narrative of historical and societal experiences of American Indians and Europeans was presented to them. The participants explained that MBAIM students saw their people portrayed in textbooks as an uncouth, antiquated, and manipulable group whose land was easily taken from them.

Stifled academic pursuits

Attitudes against college

Higher education was generally perceived as an unattainable feat in the South Bay working-class communities regardless of race, as indicated by the participants, “college was
beyond my grasp. I struggled to just get out of high school. The only reason I took classes at Gav (community college) was to get my parents off my back” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). The exceptions to this included rare academic standouts or student athletes who could enroll in a four-year college after high school. The participants indicated that Middle class European Americans saw more of their members enrolled in college, proportionally, than other working-class people (including Italians and Portuguese) and the MNBAIM population.

Ironically, the local high school had college recruitment and assistance programs that catered to first-generation Mexican immigrants that helped them to enroll in college in greater numbers than MBAIM. As Juan mentioned, “The first-generation kids had MECHA and other Mexican student organizations to help them get into college. We (Juan’s friends) were burnouts and didn’t care” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021).

The pervasive attitude in the Santa Clara Valley of looking at higher education as something unattainable was mentioned by the participants as pertaining to their set of friends who consisted of European Americans as well. Part of the reason for this may have been that Italians, Portuguese, and Irish people, although Americanized, suffered from internalized racism. These groups generally did not value and act on their academic potential. As Junior suggested: “It was just something I saw in Hollister, people caring more about working than school” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). Therefore, from this standpoint of self-doubt and a lack of self-esteem and confidence, even some ethnic “White” working-class populations struggled with access to college because of costs, closeness to family, historical discrimination, toxic masculinity (excelling in school and higher education enrollment was/is viewed as effeminate by some members of these communities), and an emphasis on job security (Alba, 2005; Kirrilova, 2018).
Juan mentioned that MBAIM oftentimes viewed Mexicans, the primary Latino ethnic group in the community, as either gang members who were destroying the community with their criminal activities, or “squares” who posed no visible threat to the status-quo. The MBAIM community viewed Mexicans (along with some European Americans) as meekly following the White man’s educational system and being the benefactor of school personnel that sought to help students most in need of their services. The participants noted that college was not seen as a viable option because no one they could identify with was enrolled. They therefore did not have the desire to attend college both because of how the community conditioned them to think about it, but also because of the type of people who attended college.

Juan indicated that European American educators are perceived, comparatively, in a more favorable light by Latinos. This contrasts with the way they are viewed by Red people in Hollister who view them as reinforcing the status quo of the educational system. MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley, according to Junior and Juan, do not show reverence for European American educators. This reverential trait may be a remnant of the colonial era in Latin America when people of European descent were looked at more favorably than the indigenous populations (Billings, 2021). According to MBAIM such as Junior in the community, European Americans seemingly understood the reverence that Latinos had towards them. They in turn exploited this power by altering the traditional cultural values of Mexican people in the area. The American Indian population, on the other hand, was more resilient when it came to questioning the educational system and fully integrating into it as pointed out by Juan:

Kids in that whole clique only spoke Spanish...They didn’t want anything to do with us...They were in that MECHA and talked about Aztlan bringing them here. They wore those Mana (Mexican Rock en Espanol band) shirts... spray painted their cars those loud
ass n****r colors with Aztec art. They used to meet up all crazy, like ten cars of them at El Grullense (local Taqueria in the West End barrio of Hollister) ... they got pretty good grades though, I guess. I know they went to college. I don’t know how. They spoke (English) with an accent and were really slow and quiet, but they did all the homework when we were out partying and acting up. I would probably get called travieso and burro by their parents if they ever brought me around them. All the tagging I did, wearing super baggy jeans because I was a skater, always talking shit, making fun of teachers like Mr. Reed, telling them to fuck off like Tony Gabriel used to. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

Therefore, the participants developed a belief about college that it was not a place that catered to them and their ethnic group. The participants, like other MBAIM, wanted the comfort of being surrounded by people from their same background and with similar ideals. College was viewed as an environment where they would be forced to assimilate and integrate with other people they could not relate to. Besides the struggles the participants had academically, morally, spiritually, and personally with the system of college, their attitude towards college presented the greatest challenge to their continued education after high school.

**School neglect and apathy**

The participants spoke of persistent neglect and apathy within the semi-rural areas of the Santa Clara Valley south of San José, far removed from the opulence of Saratoga, Los Gatos and Campbell. In the working-class barrios of West Morgan Hill, Gilroy, and Hollister, MBAIM detected a lack of support from the schooling system. The participants, such as Juan, Steve, Ernesto and Junior, felt that Mexican students received much more support at the time because of them coming from a community that was more politically well-organized. As Junior expressed,
“The Mexicans were deep at the (high) school. They outnumbered us (Mixed blood Indians)” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021).

According to the participants, European American teachers and administrators had not prejudged the Mexican students in the same negative vein as MBAIM students, who were seen as troublemakers and slackers. Brandon claimed, “I never got the attention from teachers...might have been because I hung out with a bunch of gangsters” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). Juan suggested that MBAIM students were also viewed as financially privileged in comparison to Mexicans and were destined to remain local because of being most comfortable in these familiar but unchallenging surroundings.

From this standpoint, Juan said:

My dad worked his ass off to support my family and have us on a block in a two-story house where we were the only Brown (skinned) family... The problem is me and my siblings took all that for granted and just cruised it in school... we could just work part-time at the outlets (Gilroy shopping outlets) and pocket all the money after high school or not work at all ‘cause we knew our parents weren’t going to kick us out just ‘cause we were eighteen. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

According to the participants, some non-Native people in the schools they attended felt that since MBAIM students came from middle-class neighborhoods they were seemingly content with being provided for by their families. Rather than viewing MBAIM as a people who were close to family and staying to close to them out of loyalty, they were looked at as people with financial privilege compared to recently arrived immigrant groups, “I was half white so that complicated things more but, nah, just ‘cause our families had a little bit of money the teachers’ focus was on helping out those who needed the most help” (Steven, personal communication,
March 2021). The participants indicated that their choice to continue living at home with family members into adulthood should not have had a bearing on their access to academic resources and support from the school system. According to Steven: “Being from a small town you have that against you already. Then you lack knowledge, and your parents do about the educational system, then they (the educational system) have problem with you staying local” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021).

However, participants such as Juan and Junior, did assert that MBAIM’s ability to live in a middle-class neighborhood with their family was exploited by some MBAIM as they refused to work full-time, were enrolled part-time in community college courses, or opted to simply consume drugs and alcohol and remain unemployed. Brandon and Anthony did not mention this idea of exploitation, but it may have been because it was too personal to them as they are still living at home unlike the other participants who have more financial responsibilities. Juan and Junior suggested that this convenience affected MBAIM academically. MBAIM understood that the trappings of a middle-class existence in the semi-rural areas of the Santa Clara Valley would be provided to them by their families regardless of the decisions they made in life.

Participants proposed that although MBAIM were not as financially and socially privileged as European American students - whose families had moved from the more prosperous inner Bay Area - MBAIM did enjoy a level of financial privilege that was not afforded to most People of Color in the semi-rural areas of the Santa Clara Valley, as indicated by Steven’s remarks:

We moved out of the westside of town (local barrio) as soon as we could--it was this way with a lot of families. Nobody wanted to raise their kids in the same part of town they grew up in. Everybody knew about the drama and gang bullshit that happened in VH. I
knew white kids who spent their whole lives in town and never came on this side of town.

They used to make fun of it—call it Taco Flats—and say it was on the other side of the tracks. (Steven, personal communication, March 2021)

Meanwhile, Juan suggested that American Indians were incorrectly perceived as an underachieving group that had been given previous chances by the school system to excel at various points in their scholastic career but ultimately failed to do so. Juan took accountability for this himself although his experience was unique in its nature. Furthermore, the participants’ parents did not consider that although they raised their children in lower middle-class and middle-class neighborhoods the enrollment at a four-year university for their children could have led to further economic prosperity:

We were lucky to even be able to get out VH. That’s probably why people tripped out that we didn’t do better in school. But nobody knew that our parents weren’t pushing us. They wouldn’t check to see if we did our homework. It was, like, cool, you’re back from school, I’ve been working all day, so, as long as things look okay and I’m not hearing from the school then things should be alright. (Steven, personal communication, March, 2021)

Latino youth, according to the participants, benefitted from a clean slate in this country (although they battled with other issues that MBAIM did not including transitioning to a new country, racism, and poverty) and were not viewed as rebellious by the school staff. However, MBAIM youth were looked at as being a truculent group. As Juan suggested, one of the more persistent reasons MBAIM did not revere their teachers was due to their parents’ attitude rooted in the practicality of financial gain as opposed to scholastic achievement. For example, Junior stated: “I wanted to be in the tech industry even as a kid. It paid more (than other jobs that
required a college degree) and it made my mom happy” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). MBAIM came from families in which their family members made more money working in blue-collar positions, unlike primary and secondary teachers who had to earn a B.A. and then spend additional years in a credential program.

The parents of the participants overlooked that schoolteachers worked only about nine months a year and did so from the comfort of an air-conditioned building as opposed to the more lucrative working-class careers where Red people worked grueling hours outdoors or regularly moved from site to site. As Steven described, “It was hard labor at first. Having to get up at the crack of dawn with all my welder’s equipment especially after a night of drinking with the homeboys, it was tough” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021). Moreover, Red people in the working-class semirural areas of the Santa Clara Valley looked at California State Universities with suspicion. This was because people from their communities with less than stellar academic records attended and graduated from these schools:

Nobody gave a shit if these teachers had a piece of paper that said they graduated from some two-bit CSU or whatever. They were making less money than people who worked as electricians, construction workers, or carpenters, so why should their kids look at them, like, wow, this teacher is awesome because they went to some school to get a degree in ceramics or some shit, then they got a teacher’s credential, like, what the fuck, people only had their kids in school because it was a law. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

It was interesting to hear that Brandon and Anthony had a different perspective on the issues that the other participants brought up regarding school neglect and apathy. Although they mentioned how the educational system did not teach them about their racial background and prevented them
from engaging in anything outside of the usual lessons about American Indians such as the Thanksgiving myth, each did delve into this notion more critically. Both Brandon and Anthony were mindful of how the educational system was limited their own knowledge about themselves and it was not in tune with them advancing as scholars, but they did not want to point the finger as harshly as the other participants did and detail how blameworthy the school system was for their struggles and other friends who fared no better during their young adult years.

No expectation of university enrollment

All the participants reiterated that university enrollment was never an option for them. The participants based this outlook on their grades and life interests. As Anthony expressed, “It was a frustrating thing to all of us here in the community. That downtown Briggs building (satellite location of community college) is all we really had” (Anthony, personal communication, May 2021). The participants pointed out that a certain group of students, primarily middle-class European Americans, was nurtured by the school system during primary and secondary years to believe that attending a four-year university was an idea they could look forward to upon graduation from high school. Ernesto commented: “So what did I want to be when I grew up? What could I be? I didn’t have the options. I’m not educated so I had to work at this job” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

The participants were glossed over by the teachers and administrators at high schools they attended. Ironically, none of the participants brought up racism as the leading cause regarding why European Americans students were favored. Instead, the participants simply believed they were not on the same track as those deemed to be college-worthy, regardless of race, by the staff, faculty, and other students in high school. As Junior suggested:
I wouldn’t even say it was trendy (community college), it was our only choice, to be honest with you. I didn’t have the grades or the money to go to Santa Clara University, San Jose State, UCLA - it just wasn’t in the cards, and for several reasons. (Junior, personal communication, March 2021)

Junior commented that he and other MBAIM friends opted for the local community college because it was the next natural progression after high school since they did not feel university enrollment was attainable. According to Junior, attending Gavilan College with open admission or another local college was the result of a cost-effective decision that allowed students time to figure out their next step in life.

The participants’ themes that emerged related to no expectation of university enrollment revolved around finances, academic performance, interest, and no encouragement from others. The participants commented on how the lack of four-year university enrollment went part and parcel with their upbringing and their lack of scholastic ambition. Parents and other family members either made disparaging remarks about higher education enrollment, or simply did not talk about it whatsoever. Family members were more focused on the *here and now* issues in life, such as making money immediately instead of taking many irrelevant classes for four to six years that had nothing to do with earning money immediately.

*Community college experience*

The negative feelings towards college affected the MBAIM community with the participants developing an attitude that four-year university enrollment was confined to a privileged set of people with either good grades and money, or both “If your parents didn’t have the money and nobody was pushing what were you going to do especially as a kid from small town” (Ernesto, personal communication, April, 2021). This mindset was at its peak in the
1970’s and 1980’s according to Junior, the elder statesman of the participants. However, in the 1990’s community college access became more affordable and accessible due to changes administered by the Department of Education. Financial aid was available for low-income students (and so was increasing amounts of debt after graduation). Open enrollment practices became widespread. Shifting attitudes emerged about college enrollment. Part of this was also because higher caliber and better-paying careers for working-class students were less difficult to obtain than previous decades (Raza, 2021).

Nevertheless, MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley rarely pursued college beyond community college, and many did not graduate because of various distractions, as Juan succinctly put it:

As far as college, fuck nah, the kids I hung out with were more interested in skating, chasing girls, partying. Nobody thought about the future. We were just getting by. Nobody thought about what we were doing then was going to affect us later on. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

Meanwhile, other participants like Anthony agreed with Steven about the value of blue-collar employment and the sense of satisfaction he felt towards his job. Although like the other participants, Anthony dabbled in community college enrollment. While Steven spoke of having to work after high school instead of continuing to take community college courses, he did not criticize those who enrolled in college at any level: “I’m hoping my daughters can finish Gav. since I never did” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021). Anthony was the only participant to have friends who enrolled in nearby state universities, but they were European American. Overall, Anthony’s and Steven’s views on community college expressed the same discouragement among their peers:
The thing about the friends that went off to college is they are still looking for jobs. They’re back home. I used to see them all the time, online anyway...They went to college, but they used to post about all the partying they were doing, going to smoke fests, or meeting up at smoke shops and reggae concerts and stuff. I never really heard them talking about the classes they were taking or what they majored in. They weren’t far away either, just here at (CSU) Monterey or Stanislaus. (Anthony, personal communication, May 2021)

Anthony’s response underscores how the importance of community college experience was not emphasized or supported by his community. Anthony’s non-Native friends illustrated the notion that college was not a strong point in the whole community. The other participants expressed similar themes of not believing that community college was the best decision for them either academically or career-wise. What is more unsettling is that attendees of college with racial privilege did not excel in college. They also felt detached from their college peers with more privilege and the academic environment away from home. The former college students then came back to the Santa Clara Valley after graduation to look for a job and to reconnect with family members and friends. According to Anthony, his friends regressed into the same pattern of indolence and nonproductivity as other non-college educated people. The other participants mentioned that friends who transferred from Gavilan college to San Jose State or another local CSU never took advantage of having a BA and went into a career that was profitable but unrelated to the BA degree they graduated with. Therefore, it is understandable, in a disjointed sense, that the participants felt discouraged about college enrollment during their youth.
**Societal effects**

**Consequences of gang membership**

Some participants, including Juan and Ernesto, reflected on the racism they felt from Latinos, “The Mexicans never accepted me even with my first name because I wasn’t a hard core Norteno, hung out with white boys, and wasn’t into their culture” (Juan, personal communication, February, 2021). Juan and Ernesto also did not understand why they were pressured to support Latino race-based causes in the community just because they were Brown skinned. In Ernesto’s case, however, his avoidance of Latino gang membership would only last until his young adulthood in his 20’s. This is when he realized the financial benefits and physical protection that Latino gang members could provide when he was targeted by his opposition for being a successful and well-known drug dealer throughout the Santa Clara Valley. “Who wouldn’t want to have pull? People knew not to mess with me because of what I did for the West Side Locos (local Norteno gang)” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Steven’s experience was an exception compared to the other participants because he was a bona fide member of the Norteño street gang at an early age and maintains friendships with his confidantes to this day. “I only have a few true friends to this day and they’re all homeboys... all of us encourage our kids to do better than we did in school” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021). Though Steven, being half Irish and Scottish, struggled to prove himself to his fellow Latino gang members who doubted his authenticity, he won them over with his experiences of criminal involvement and subsequent incarceration.

In contrast to Steven, Juan and Ernesto suggested it was off-putting that Latinos tended to focus on race regarding their interactions with people. The other participants, Brandon and Anthony, did not mention anything about racial preferences Latinos had and expressed being
aware of Latino gangs only through cousins who claimed affiliation. Another possible reason for Brandon and Anthony’s lack of involvement in gangs could have been their interest in video games. They also could have been viewed as merely “square white boys” who would not have been deemed reliable gang members that could carry out the street-based goals of the Norteños.

Meanwhile, Ernesto and Juan remarked that they noticed the prominence of race-based gang membership among Latinos and race-focused views among some European Americans. Ernesto and Juan believed they could not identify with any street organization or the views of the Latino community that were finite in scope including not valuing higher education or knowledge of any kind besides what could advance the gang organization. Although Ernesto eventually reneged on this initial impression of gang organizations for a brief period, he maintained that his first reaction to the Norteños was to avoid contact with them because he understood how dangerous and racist, they were. “Their parents called me a pocho. I didn’t know what it was at first...They never knew that our parents didn’t want us speaking Spanish” (Personal communication with Ernesto, April, 2021). Ernesto asserted that his later involvement with the Norteños was motivated by financial gain more than the fellowship and brotherhood that Steven mentioned. Ernesto also asserted that matters in the community should not be decided by race. While Juan reiterated that he had many European American friends who supported him and stayed loyal to their friendship through the years. As a result, Juan never needed to explore a gang organization that demanded he only associate with Latinos who were involved in criminality and linked by a fondness for the color red.

Juan indicated Royal Brown Crew (RBC), the youth-led movement and organization that Latinos on the west side of Hollister started in the 1990s, as a more positive example of the far-reaching and racially motivated goals of Latinos. RBC emerged in the barrio as a way for local
youth to rally around a common cause based on knowledge of Brown pride, culture, and the marginalization they experienced living in their neighborhood. This movement’s message was unlike that of the Norteños, which formed in California state prisons to battle against the Mexican mafia and members from Southern California but morphed into a street-based gang that violently attacked suspected members of the Sureño street gang (Drugs and Crime Gang Profile, 2003). Coincidentally, RBC’s uplifting goal of promoting Indigenous Mexican-based knowledge and unity among Brown people on the West End resonated so deeply that it caught the attention of Teatro Campesino, a well-known local Chicano theater company started by Luis Valdez.

However, over time RBC would eventually deteriorate into a street gang characterized by anger, hostility, racial prejudice, and violence towards non-Brown people, especially those who ventured into the barrio where RBC maintained a stronghold. RBC’s main targets were unsuspecting European Americans:

Royal Brown Crew with Jose and Victorio Garcia. They were the ones that started out over there on Teresita Court and then it spread to all those first-generation Mexican kids.

It turned into a gang. They wanted to fight over race right there. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

For the participants, the race-based mentality of RBC and the Norteños interfered in their peaceable relations and the educational goals. The participants were either targeted for not being a member of the two main gang organizations at the time while living on the west end of Hollister, or they were actual associates of the gangs. Moreover, the participants asserted that the preconditioned race-based thinking of RBC and the Norteños were adopted by Red people who joined the gangs. As Steven noted: “Well, you had a bunch of dudes who got jumped in-Meza,
Ronnie, Spider, Leonard, Alex Hurtado, Jumbo—they all had Indian in them and looked it
(Steven, personal communication, March 2021).

Furthermore, gang membership gave the educational system and local law enforcement a
haphazard justification to racially profile MBAIM and Latino youth. According to Ernesto,
“They saw us as a liability. It didn’t matter what we were. They saw us as all the same and
caught up in freakin’ gangs (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). The deterrence of
racial profiling ruptured Red and Brown peoples’ educational and career opportunities. Both
racial groups grappled with racially motivated harassment by employees of the school system.
As Steven suggested, “All the homeboys were Mexican or Indian...The teachers knew what was
up seeing a bunch of kids coming to class in Red” (Steven, personal communication, March,
2021). In addition, the participants mentioned that Red and Brown people were subjected to the
fear of being stopped and frisked at any moment by the police even while walking home from
school. The harassment was backed by local law enforcement system at the time that sought to
carry out civil gang injunctions (Herd, 1998).

Gang membership played a substantial role in the lives of the participants whether or not
they were members; it was a mainstay in the community among Red and Brown people. Some of
the community members’ parents were involved or somehow associated with local gangs even as
their children became young adults. Anthony and Brandon grew up in the 2000’s, in contrast to
the other participants who were in primary school in the 1990’s. Still, the second wave of
millennials experienced the ills of gang membership in the community as it became more
widespread and tolerated as an inescapable part of the community. The component of gang life
present in the South Bay during multiple decades at times sidetracked the participants from any
educational goals they might have had. This common theme showcases how something that
evolved from Red and Brown people fighting for street supremacy became an increasingly disruptive force for all members of the community.

**Impact of substance abuse**

Anthony and Brandon, as a consequence of being born in the early 1990s, mentioned partaking in drug use earlier in life than the other participants and being introduced to harder drugs, but limited their addictive behavior to only marijuana. As Brandon commented, “My stepdad gave me only fire strains so I didn’t need to step outside the box and do what my cousins did” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). However, Anthony and Brandon both noted their family members responsible for bringing destructive hard-drug addicted lifestyles around them, ultimately interfering with their studies. Juan and Steven were the two participants who mentioned that their hard drug abuse was a factor that disrupted their educational advancement. While Junior and Ernesto mentioned being associated with the drug trade in Hollister and were mindful of its effect in the community, they did not indicate whether they abused drugs or if drug use had any impact on them enrolling in college. They did, however, bring up other childhood friends who were once promising students but then did not pursue their academic interests because of drug addiction.

Instead of college becoming more accessible with MBAIM born in the 1990’s as it did in the 1980’s, Anthony and Brandon suggested that their peer group struggled mightily. Anthony and Brandon said that besides holding negative generational views of college enrollment as the older participants asserted, they were exposed to a greater number of vices, including heightened levels of hard drug use and homelessness. Moreover, Anthony and Brandon indicated that constant hours spent on social media and video game addiction distracted them from dedicating more time to their studies but did not confess to this interfering in any plans to enroll in college.
In Brandon’s words, “Video games and social media were a big thing but I wouldn’t say it got in the way of me going to college” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021).

Ironically, Anthony and Brandon grew up wealthier than the other participants, which afforded them more material possessions and finances. However, their greater wealth may have decreased their motivation to pursue college. Anthony and Brandon knew they could rely on their families for their personal well-being, regardless of their life choices. Moreover, Anthony and Brandon had parents who were teenagers when they were born and more likely to condone indolent behavior. Both Anthony and Brandon were allowed to reside in their home after turning eighteen and now nearly 30 years old are still at home.

Anthony and Brandon’s parents were addicted to hard drugs. This did not bode well for Anthony and Brandon enrolling in college as each asserted:

My mom went through her own battles with drugs and alcohol. She was cool and let me stay over at the pad no matter what. My dad was hardly around. He would check in when he could, but he was doing his own thing too and didn’t stay for long. They never mentioned anything about college to me. But I don’t blame them for dropping out. School was never anything that kept my attention. (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021)

My parents were never really together. They were super young when they had me. So, they couldn’t be there to tell me to go to college since they were separated. My mom let the courts take us (he and his brothers). My parents never went to college themselves. My mom studied the Bible a lot though and is crazy religious now (Anthony, personal communication, May 2021).
Therefore, drug use impacted both Anthony and Brandon by their consuming drugs themselves and/or having their outlook of college enrollment framed by drug-addicted parents who raised them without any sense of the importance of college.

The participants understood how narcotics fractured the fabric of their community. However, college enrollment was just one of many experiences in life that the participants and their families neglected. Since the participants’ families were never encouraged to go to college themselves, they ended up raising their children with the same attitude toward higher education. Overall, college was not a life option pursued in an incipient way by most Red people in the community. Drug abuse by parents and their children during the 1990’s and 2000’s just furthered the lack of consideration for anything related to tertiary education. In other ways, drugs also affected the participants because they were entrenched in the cultural practices and rites of passage for MBAIM. As Brandon suggested:

There were two things we did when I was in high school when we got out of class, smoke bud and pound beers. I had a friend who was really good at it and would crush beer cans in front of us.... We weren’t thinking about how this was going to affect us going to college.... My parents were okay with it since they were doing the same thing (drugs and alcohol) and probably did the same thing when they were my age. I stayed away from the hard stuff. A lot of friends and cousins I had were popping pills, doing meth, or whatever. I guess it was part of the life if you dressed in red and you were in (Norteño) gangs... The kids who were taking classes at Gav were just like anyone else...a few of them transferred to San Jose State or Monterey but commuted from town. We were all gamers, so it was fun to be part of something everyone else was doing. (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021)
Meanwhile, Anthony spoke of how drugs and alcohol were a fundamental part of his home life which, while making the environment toxic, became something he and his sibling grew accustomed to:

My Mom was doing lots of drugs when she lost us. My dad was never in the picture, so I only heard stories about what he was doing when he wasn’t in town to take care of us...I never thought much about (community) college till my girlfriend told me she wanted me to take classes. She thought I would find out what I wanted to do with my life. I got my classes at Gav paid for because we were in foster care when I was younger and back then I was under 26 so the system took care of you... all my friends just blazed. Dabbing was the main thing with us when we got older. (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021)

In addition, Ernesto spoke more to the point of how hard drugs changed the complexion and, in turn, the potential learning environment of Hollister, dismantling the peaceful memories he had of his community:

It started with some kids I knew doing peanut butter (slang for brown-colored powdered amphetamines that was ingested through the nostrils) when I was in high school. It was the first time I saw something harder than weed. I guess by then coke was too expensive and people knew they could get a stronger high for cheap... Remember Screech? He went to Cal State (LA) with your sister (speaking to interviewee), remember him? He was one of the jigs (derogatory term for Latinos) who left Hollister. He would come back to town and was all hooked on crank. He said it was a good high and helped him study. Probably what kids were doing before Adderall. (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021)
Ernesto continued with his narrative, stating the aftermath of crystal methamphetamines during its infancy in the Santa Clara Valley and how it negated the possible ascension to college for other MBAIM he associated with at the time:

In just a few years after meth hit us it seemed like everybody was sucked up, all spun (addicted to drugs). We never had people living at the river, by the train tracks, none of that. By this time (mid-2000’s) the whole town changed...Nah, I wasn’t thinking about college. My mind set was me and my brother could go into business and make money off that crystal rock since everybody was doing it...You remember stopping by my pad after I hadn’t seen ‘cause you were in San Francisco and I offered you two lines of blow, gratis? That’s what I thought about kids in college, they wanted to get as high as my (meth-addicted) customers just off the good shit to study all night. (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021)

For many reasons beyond the scope of this study, foreign drug substances are particularly detrimental to Red people and have resulted in the annihilation of entire communities whether mixed-blood people in the Santa Clara Valley or “full-blood” Indians on the reservation. These damaging effects have been compounded in recent years by the arrival of newer and more potent drugs into Red communities. Tragically, pursuits of college or any course of action that could uplift Red people throughout the state of California have been relegated to a secondary concern in the wake of a continued drug epidemic. The participants were aware of what drugs did to their lives. They understand how harder drugs, especially, relegated the Red community to suffering from chemical dependencies. The participants, especially the older ones like Ernesto, Junior, Steven and Juan, remarked on how they focused their time on wallowing in a lifestyle in which drugs were highly visible and consumed. While Anthony and Brandon were both marijuana
addicts and understood the severity of the drug epidemic in their community and its effect on the chances people had of college enrollment, they did not focus much of their interview time on explaining how this dissuaded them from college.

**Identity contradictions**

**Historical context of generational trauma**

The MBAIM community in the Santa Clara Valley has dealt with historical trauma because of their racialization both from within the local community and outside. As one of the participants attested, “There was no, you’re Native American, no, we were all Mexican or Hispanic. They didn’t us knowing we were from Northern Mexico and had indigenous blood. They wanted us to know about the thanksgiving, pilgrims and Plymouth rock” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). This experience has framed their racial and ethnic identity which could explain why they have, in general, avoided the topic of being American Indian, as Juan mentioned. Considering the racism, personal misunderstandings, societal neglect, and lack of representation in schooling that Red people have endured, they collectively have struggled with the racial identity assumed of them by the community and school system. As Brandon noted, “Not every type of kid is going to be smart enough to know you aren’t Mexican but Native American. Not every kid is going to leave learning stuff like that” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). Previous generations of MBAIM tended to seclude themselves from mainstream European American society to escape racism and harassment. The millennial generation that participated in this study, however, was more actively involved with other racial groups during their education from primary to tertiary schooling. The participants’ generation would have had greater difficulty sheltering themselves from racism and other non-Native groups.
Though the participants may have wanted to develop more of an understanding of their racial identity and to participate in events in the community that highlight this, they were hamstrung by career and familial commitments. Junior shared, “I always wanted to take Chicano classes at San Jose State but it wasn’t going to pay as much as computers which I eventually got into” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). However, the participants who were fathers (Juan, Ernesto, Steven, and Junior) would like their children to develop more consciousness of their ethnic background. These participants said they would encourage their children to forego the same personal identity crises that plagued them. According to Steven: “My wife being Yaqui...children do dancing with knives. That’s an indigenous ceremony and I want them to know” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021).

Due to societal pressures, the participants remarked that they were forced to assimilate into mainstream American culture by identifying as strictly American, or Hispanic, when questioned about their ethnicity. The participants claimed that part of the reason was not having Anglo (sur) names like African and (Western) European Americans: “My name never helped me out. It sucked looking as Brown as I did with this name and not knowing Spanish” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021).

The participants did not have the opportunity to investigate and address why they felt shame or misunderstanding regarding their true ethnic identity. They were unable to determine why they struggled with their ethnic identity and how this affected them, especially as they became young adults with close circles of friends who battled with the same issues, as Ernesto attested:

I knew I was Apache. But at the same time, I have this name and I don’t know anything about my background. Like, did we come from Mexico? Or did the Conquistadores just
come here and gave us their names? The school system wasn’t telling us anything about
that and neither were our parents. So, you can’t blame the kid for not knowing. (Ernesto,
personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Ernesto implied that most MBAIM had only scant information about their ethnic identity,
and much of it was misleading or inconclusive. “Wait a minute. My dad’s Mexican, but my
dad’s not quote, unquote from Mexico like a Paisa. His dad was from Hanford [California] and
was Apache” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). This lack of knowledge could be
traced back to the way MBAIM have historically identified themselves in an ambiguous way to
escape public scrutiny for being Native American. This ambiguity was complicated for those
participants with a mixed ethnic background (Southern European and American Indian).
However, Ernesto argued what was most responsible for MBAIM not understanding their
identity was how family members and their community defined themselves: “My family was no
different than anyone in town. We were just worried about making money. Plus, nobody around
us was talking about being Native American. We knew that we were here when the border
crossed us though” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Since the beginning of modern-day California and the American Southwest when control
was overtaken by the U.S. from Mexico in 1848, American Indians and mixed bloods have
occupied a racial and societal position below European Americans and even Mexicans at one
time. In fact, identifying as Hispanic or simply Mexican was a step up in societal terms
throughout much of U.S. history. However, this sentiment may have changed after anti-
immigration aimed at the Mexican community emerged during the Trump administration from
2016-2020. Regardless, the participants all demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding their
American Indian background, marked by shame, denial, and misunderstanding. Instead, they
opted for a generalized term of identity like “Hispanic” to describe themselves and to avoid further discussion on their backgrounds.

**Lacking knowledge of self (Mexican, Hispanic, American, or “Indian”?)**

Some of the participants, including Junior, Juan, and Ernesto, pointed out that understanding their Native background would have improved their chances of taking school more seriously and culminating in college enrollment. As Junior noted, “It would have taken a greater effort from the (Gavilan) community. Peers my age who would have said, hey, let’s take this route and learn more about our history” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). Meanwhile, Steven, Anthony and Brandon did not feel that having a better understanding of their Native roots would have impacted their likelihood of enrolling in college. A possible reason for this difference may be that since the latter all had one parent who was European American, the greater Red community viewed them simply as “white boys.”

Among the three participants who did emphasize the value of knowing their Red background, Junior indicated that having a deeper knowledge of his background, instead of claiming to be Tejano or Mexican American, would have served dual purposes. Junior suggested he would have identified as a MBAIM and would have been prideful of his ethnic identity. Consequently, Junior mentioned he could have connected on campus with other MBAIM: “If I had known other people who were from my same background, and we clicked up on campus at Gav. or San Jose State it would have been all good.” Junior continued to reiterate how much of an asset it would have been to know others of his same background who were attending local colleges. In addition, Juan felt that knowing more about his ethnic identity would have helped him gain a foothold on the fast track to college:
I just never thought anyone like me was going to college. No one was talking about it...

So, to have more knowledge about who we were and how we got in this position to be able to go to college would have made me think, like, okay, this is how you do it (to enroll in college). But none of us ever seriously looked at who we were and how that fit in with going to college, and what was there for us that would make us stay. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

Juan remarked that his circle of friends had no ambition to enroll in college at any point during their adolescence, which influenced him to feel the same way. Juan associated MBAIM with having no desire for college enrollment, although he did have examples of others who obtained a college education and worked as professionals in his hometown.

Similarly, being of a quad racial background, Ernesto felt that knowing more about his ethnic background - instead of just categorizing himself as Mexican and “doing what Mexican kids did in the 2000’s” - would have discouraged him from gang membership. Another complication for Ernesto was that he desired to be accepted by working-class Red and Brown people, but his middle-class, Protestant upbringing interfered with this goal. Ernesto’s father also worked long hours to provide for his family. Ernesto alluded to a lack of male leadership and father figure in his life. Ernesto felt that having a positive male influence, especially from his father, could have deterred him from joining the Norteños: “My dad was busy working all day so it was just me and my brother trying to find our way in Hollister” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Ernesto stated that he believed he would have gained the same level of camaraderie, brotherhood, and loyalty that he had as a gang member from knowing other MBAIM in college. Ernesto sought male influences and people of his ethnic background who he could depend on for
emotional support and could confide in for various concerns in his life. Including not feeling accepted in the barrio. He commented: “So you’re basically neither here nor there. You’re Hispanic and part Apache. But what does that mean when you’re looking for other people like you” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Ernesto yearned for a group of people who would show him unconditional friendship and work in tandem for a common goal. Ernesto argued that this effort would have been more empowering if the goal had been rooted in embracing one’s ethnic identity and pursuing college and a career. Ernesto subsequently noted his admiration for higher education enrollment, at least theoretically:

It’s either you go to college, or you work...It’s that empowerment from college and the people you hang out with that encourages you to pursue what it is that you need to become what you want. Not everyone is trying to become a rocket scientist, mathematician, lawyer, some people just want to go to college and then figure out what they want to be... Having other Native Americans there would have been a plus since we could have all discussed how we were going to do some kind of action in the community, instead of talking about how we were going to rumble against some scraps [derogatory term for Sureños] who we saw at Quikstop [gas station chain]. (Ernesto, personal communication, April, 2021)

Ernesto pointed out how a deeper knowledge about his own background could have gone part and parcel with university enrollment. He indicated that this knowledge of one’s Indigenous background - whether Mexican or American Indian - could have been distributed among the community. According to Ernesto, residents could have taken further action to highlight their shared ethnic identity once they embraced the reality of themselves. Ernesto argued that
obtaining this knowledge at an earlier point in his life might have led to greater scholastic and career goals because he would have viewed himself as a representative of his ethnic community, “I had a little brother and I knew he would follow me. But college seemed out of the question to us since we weren’t school boys” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Along with Junior and Juan, Ernesto felt that having a support system of Red youth would aid MBAIM with personal enrichment attempts, such as soul-searching, self-reflection, and determining career pursuits in life. Additionally, Ernesto alluded to other positive activities that MBAIM could engage in that were non-scholarly: participating in the local pow-wow in San Juan, playing baseball games that involved different neighborhoods in the barrio, and music production, as he eventually became a local recording artist. Ernesto indicated that any of these endeavors would have been more fulfilling than gang membership as MBAIM could have come together under one banner of ethnic solidarity and communal empowerment. As Ernesto stated, “I don’t need to be educated to know this. If we had more options, we could have gone on to a four-year university and learned about ourselves and our community” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

In other words, not knowing the true origin of one’s ethnic background distracted the participants from developing self-confidence that is arguably conducive to life success. According to Juan, MBAIM did not witness an outspoken and mobilized activist presence in the Santa Clara Valley made up of Red people:

Nah, this was the ‘90s and 2000s. These kids today have it easier where they can take their time to learn about themselves, online. There’s communities, video sites, forums for that stuff. We didn’t use phones for that. People had slow internet connections, and
nobody was talking about starting some revolution on a little ass Nokia 3310. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)

According to the participants, a sense of solidarity and activism could have encouraged MBAIM to explore their own ethnic pride and discover that a four-year university would provide them with ample opportunities for more scholarly research on their community. MBAIM also could have gathered en masse at the university level of Santa Clara Valley schooling to demand curriculum changes that better reflected the presence of Red people. According to Ernesto: “So the brothers have 40 acres and a mule as their end goal, right? What about us? Give us 40 Universities and $400,000 to liberate me as a homeowner who is slaving his life away!” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021).

Meanwhile, Junior argued that recruitment programs at colleges could have directed attention to MBAIM to help them better understand their ethnic identity. The desire to learn and research their own culture, coupled with the presence of other people with the same background as role models and mentors in academia, might have positively influenced the participants’ chances of four-year university enrollment. In Junior’s words: “Yeah, if we had Raza like Victor Zaragosa [Bay Area radio host] at San Jose State who was reaching out to Chicanos to come to the university and it’s easier than you think, and you could learn about your history, that would have been different” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021).

The participants never received the proper knowledge from their community to learn more about themselves and develop pride in their ethnicity. They mentioned how they carried on through their developmental years lacking a sense of self overall and part of the reason for this was not having any idea about their true ethnic identity. As the years progressed and they got older, the participants began to wonder about themselves and their community. It was through
introspection, retrospection, life experiences, and additional wisdom that came with age that they finally began to question the root causes for why they did not feel comfortable identifying how they did and what possibly could have been responsible for this feeling.

“*It wasn’t Never an issue growing up*”: the Americanization of mixed-blood males

Residents of all backgrounds in the Santa Clara Valley, according to the participants, may be aware of their ethnic background in some capacity but do not generally emphasize it. One explanation, according to Juan, is that there is no financial incentive: “You would have people coming out of the woodwork to claim that they are Native American if they were entitled to some money” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). However, it is a misconception that anyone with American Indian blood is entitled to financial reparations and/or they maintain tribal ties.

As the participants show, Red people, especially those who live off reservation land and are mixed bloods in a state like California, are as Americanized as African and European Americans. However, the participants reiterated the notion of Americanization and how it prevented them from exploring their ethnic identity. As suggested by Juan:

I had my friends and half of them were White and half of them were Brown. You know, and there was no friction. There was no mention of people’s background...My best friend was a guy named Matt Mulholland. I don’t see him as some white dude. I don’t think Matt sees me as some Brown guy. That’s just one of them-Matt Carpenter, Matt Gutiérrez, Shawn Elliott, David Brockbank, Donna Rovella, Ray Smith, Travis Byers- I think Ray was, like, half Asian, but you could consider them white, but they were just my friends. We all grew up in Hollister doing the same things. (Juan, personal communication, February 2021)
Juan showcased how the MBAIM community was generally not singled out for their ethnicity or skin color. Juan implied that MBAIM connected to other people in the community based on their shared community identity; everyone Juan associated with originated in the Santa Clara Valley and was American, as he pointed out.

Another effect of this process of being Americanized, however, was that Juan never felt a strong desire to examine his ethnic background: “I also didn’t need to look into my background since I hung out with a bunch of white boys and Americanized Mexicans” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). Although having friends who did not view Juan differently was important for him to value the friendship, Juan suggested he never completely understood his own racial background. Juan instead mimicked the behavioral characteristics of his mainly European Americans friends who never talked about identity, or intentionally avoided the topic if they were Southern European and had a stronger sense of their ethnic identity as opposed to the Anglo Americans.

This situation prevented Juan from developing a sense of ethnic pride. He mentioned this could have beneficially served him in innumerable ways. As with the other participants, Juan indicated that he never developed a critical consciousness towards himself and his community. Juan did not have the opportunity to discover more about his ethnic background and to undergo a process of introspection. In Juan’s words: “Dude, when all you know is being American as a kid it’s going to take something out of left field to awaken your senses (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). He suggested that having a community of MBAIM who were attempting to learn more about themselves could have resulted in forming a support network before and during college enrollment.
Meanwhile, the process of Americanization that disrupted MBAIM from exploring their identity and connecting with others interested in pursuing college was not limited to European American influences. The participants grew up in the turbulent 1990’s and 2000’s when hip-hop music and culture were defining what was thought of as youthful, cool, and masculine for Brown and Red men. In this respect, it was people of African descent who were responsible for this media influence that would have life-changing impact on the self-perception of MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley. As Junior described:

At the time I was thinking I was going to take this class and I’m going to college. And I’m going to continue with my education. But all it took was someone telling me you’re not going to do that for me to say, like, yeah, you’re probably right. What else was there to do, I mean, let’s go hang out and do stupid shit in San Jose...But the media we watched it and the messages in those rap videos for a gullible kid was like, be cool, fuck school. We got Dre and Snoop to look up to, let’s be about that gangster shit or wannabes, anyway...I met this girl at a frat party, and she was going to Santa Clara University. I wanted to go to a big college instead of Gav so that made her more attractive...She was trying to help me go that route and it just didn’t happen because my (male) friends were doing shit we saw in rap videos, just doing some shit we weren’t supposed to be doing.

(Junior, personal communication, March 2021)

Junior suggested that external influences that came from people of African descent led to the same results for him and the other participants: not realizing their ethnic identity, looking up and following a racial group with more media access, and engaging in criminal or indolent activities. He described: “We were just all kids then, influenced by everything and following
each other. We wanted to be like who we saw on MTV since we didn’t get BET in town back then” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021)

Moreover, Junior represented many in the MBAIM community during this era who questioned their self-worth when exposed to others who seemed more ambitious, such as a young woman he was dating who was enrolled in college. Junior was embarrassed by his friends who were immature and imitating scenes they saw in rap music videos. Junior believed he was not worthy of enrolling in college because he listened to others in his community who did not encourage his college ambitions. As an impressionable youth, Junior, like Juan, Steven, and Ernesto, became their own biggest critic and concluded that some individuals were destined for college, and others like them were not.

The message delivered from rap music videos then and now has not helped contribute to the MBAIM following their ambitions to enroll in college, according to the participants. No rap music videos as commercially successful as releases from Death Row Records, which Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre were signed to, were backing college enrollment for the youth who adored them. At that time, being fans of West Coast gangster rappers took its toll on the career plans of MBAIM youth in the South Bay by embracing the messages of these rappers to commit criminal activity, instead of chasing after their dreams whether college enrollment, gaining knowledge of one’s Indigenous background, or discovering the right career path. According to Brandon, “I only did it to follow my cousins and their gangster friends. I never liked rap enough to dress and act like them but my cousins did and they were older than me” (Brandon, personal communication, April, 2021).

MBAIM routinely found themselves involved in frivolous activity as depicted by local barrio slang used by the participants and their friends: “acting all hard (core),” “going flamed up
(dressing in red clothing as a member of the Norteños to signify allegiance and preparation for gang warfare in the community) to a scrap (sureño) ‘hood,” “chunlin’ (fighting) ‘em niggas and mad doggin’ (looking at someone in an antagonistic way), and “blazing a dub (twenty dollars’ worth of marijuana), or pouring out liquor for the dead homies”. These were popular sayings and terms linked to west coast hip-hop. MBAIM were swayed to take part in various activities counter to their academic pursuits to prove their dedication to west coast rap including immersing themselves in misogyny, toxic masculinity, violence, gang membership, and other destructive behavior.

MBAIM proclaimed the lyrics of their favorite artists and attempted to mimic what they saw and heard from their rap idols: “I got my Glock cocked ‘cause niggas want these (Dr. Dre, 1993). “… to all my niggas in the pen, here we go again, ain’t nothin’ separating us from a Mack 10 [type of gun] (Tupac, 1995). “The click ain’t that deep, but we still Norte siding, riding on your bumper with heat [possession of firearms]” (Woodie, 1998). “I got bitches in the living room getting it on (engaging in repetitive acts of bacchanalia), and they ain’t leaving till 6 in the morning” (Snoop Dogg, 1993). “Look up in the sky, it’s a bird, it’s a plane, what’s that nigga’s name? Captain Save-a-Hoe, main (men who financially accommodate and attempt to reform women with questionable reputations)” (E-40, 1994).

Although this kind of jejune activity by MBAIM and other similarly aged people of the 1990’s and 2000’s can simply be dismissed as the youth of every generation emulating their heroes in the media, it nevertheless was not conducive to college enrollment for MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley. As Junior noted, “I was like all the other chavelitos, like Bear Alvarez used to say, trying to fit in with my friends by listening to the same music and all that” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021).
The trend would continue into the 2000’s as the participants along with their favorite rappers aged physically but their song content did not: “Mob niggas living a little healthier, a little wealthier without helping her, but I’m a pimp so I’m gon’ get help from her” (Mac Dre, 2004). “Fuck all the time while we high, pussy got a trigger, fuck just getting by, we use this time to stack these figures” (Johnny Ca$h, 2005). “AR-15s and infrared beams, pointed at domes, backs and spleens, ambulance sirens, suspended license, police indictments, it all boils down to who’s the wisest” (E-40, 2002). The lyrical content of the idols that MBAIM followed focused on notions that were counterproductive to the academic pursuits of MBAIM. Juan remarked, “I wasn’t even like my other friends who got caught up in that stuff (hip-hop street lifestyle), but yeah, it definitely, wasn’t helping me out to go to college or know more about myself” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021).

According to the participants, parents would occasionally intervene to persuade the youth to not engross themselves in the musical content of their hip-hop idols. The parents of the participants were young people themselves in the 1990’s and early 2000’s who sometimes listened to the same music as their progeny because “it had a good beat” as many community members once uttered, but they did not internalize the lyrics. The parents understood the difference between reality and music. However, one of the reasons the participants’ complaints did not get acknowledged by the youth is much of the logic used in interactions between parents and children was race-based with Black music held culpable for the bad decisions the youth made. As Juan noted, “I admit it I’m a racist. Our parents’ generation was even worse. But it was also racist for people my age to think all Black people were like the rappers we liked” (Juan, personal communication, February 2021). The youth, therefore, dismissed their parents’ intervention as a class of generations and rooted in mild forms of racism.
**“damn, bro, I guess I Am indian after all”: the ultimate realization finally comes**

Though it may have taken several years into adulthood, the participants for the most part, realized their mistake by not recognizing their ethnic identity and the trouble they experienced because of this. The participants, including Junior and Juan, mentioned how college was potentially a place where they could have successfully built community on their shared ethnic identity but never entertained the possibility of this. And although Steven valued his knowledge of being American Indian, he believed his oldest daughters were in a better position to follow this path. His daughters had just started to enroll in courses in the nearby community college. The children’s mother is also full-blooded Yaqui Indian, which Steven suggested will assist his daughters with learning more about their ethnic identity: “I want my daughters to know more about their other side. A friend of my wife said our daughter can communicate with the star people” (Steven, personal communication, March 2021).

Anthony and Brandon, the younger participants, felt that knowing more about their ethnic background was a valuable concept in their lives. However, they were content with being who they were, nearing 30 years old and their lives essentially unaltered since high school. Brandon expressed: “I’m hoping that since I’m a big gamer I can do something online to make money playing video games” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021). Both participants were also the only ones who did not have children, suggesting that they did not have the responsibility of imparting ethnic identity knowledge to their offspring. Anthony, coincidentally, believed that knowing more about his MBAIM background could be traced to his European American mother, who wanted him to explore more of his father’s side of the family, since he was estranged from them for so long.
According to Anthony: “My dad was the one who looked Brown. Actually, more Spaniard and Native American. A tribe from California. I want to know more about them” (Anthony, personal communication, May 2021). Nevertheless, Anthony believed his father had more Spanish ancestry than American Indian blood. Therefore, Anthony indicated it would have been disrespectful to suddenly claim tribal ancestry and join the local community that participated in sweat lodges, ceremony, and other Native-based functions in an Ohlone cultural site south of Hollister called Indian Canyon.

Brandon was in the same position as Anthony growing up. He too was half Irish American with a physical appearance suggesting to many that he was nothing besides European American. From this standpoint, Brandon felt it would have been insulting to claim American Indian identity on social media, where most of his interactions with others of his age group took place. As Brandon expressed, “I was just looked as a white boy. If I claimed to be Native American to everybody they would have wondered, who is this white boy acting like he has some Native American” (Brandon, personal communication, April 2021).

Finally, Ernesto, being of a quad racial background, always knew he was Western Apache and was the only participant to grow up claiming this as his partial identity since birth. However, he married and had children with a Michoacana, who knew nothing of her Indigenous background. “My wife must have some indigenous blood. But don’t tell her anything about that. She was raised to not claim that” (Ernesto, personal communication, April 2021). In addition, referring to her family members as Indios or Indias was deemed derogatory for a variety of reasons by Ernesto’s wife, stemming from Mexican cultural values and views on Indigenous people that can be traced to Spanish racist attitudes from their first arrival in her homeland of Mexico.
Juan and Junior, who visually appeared more American Indian than Steven, Brandon, and Anthony, described knowing about their “distant Indian blood” from Texas and Arizona, respectively, but they remembered identifying as Mexican American and Tejano since childhood. Juan and Junior respected self-identifying American Indians and those who were “born again Indians” (rejecting the term Hispanic and Mexican and now claiming Native American) and had recently joined the local Ohlone-led cultural practices in Hollister. They too felt that the best effort they could make at this point was to teach their children about what their true ethnic identity. Coincidentally, Juan’s children were half Sicilian American, born to a woman from East San Jose who grew up with Brown and Red people. While the mother of Junior’s sons was a local mixed-blood American Indian woman who fell into the same category as MBAIM regarding ethnic identity problems and self-perceptions: “Cindy is just as bad as me, bro. Her family didn’t raise to know anything about her background. They don’t even call themselves Chicanos and they’re from Watsonville” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021).

The children of the participants are testaments to the growing and expansive Indigeneity in the Santa Clara Valley. This group affirms the notion that more and varied non-Native women have intermarried and interbred with Red men to create a new generation of MBAIM and females. The local mixed-blood Indian community is now more nuances and representative of the local population than before and is ever-changing with migration from the inner Bay Area. The present generation will presumably carry the torch of American Indian awareness and march into the 2020’s with a burgeoning sense of identity and all that it entails on their social media accounts.
Summary of Findings

This Red people’s oral history study looked at the lives in relation to education of MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley. The results of the study focused on these four main themes: prejudgments, stifled academic pursuits, social effects, and identity contradictions. Findings from this study suggest that there are struggles for MBAIM with first obtaining a culturally competent primary-tertiary education, and then a college education at both the community college and university level. The participants indicated that the educational system of the Santa Clara Valley semi-rural communities provided an inadequate and limited view of Red people in the U.S., denoting the racism, ignorance, and archaic nature of the curriculum that remained largely unchanged since the previous generation of MBAIM was enrolled in the school system in the same community.

The findings in this section indicate the participants’ issues with the educational system which did not accommodate and support them as MBAIM and did not even make mention of their ethnic group in the community. The participants mentioned that the lack of emphasis and subsequent curriculum reflecting the presence of Red people in the area or their contributions to American culture and history. Instead, the community and the educational system attempted to Americanize all people to accept a general identity. For the participants, as MBAIM, this approach did not make note of their identity which would have led to greater understandings of who they naturally are as (Native) Americans, Santa Clara Valley community members and contributors, former students, and employees of the area. The failure of the community and the educational system, as suggested by the participants, resulted in their lack of interest and pursuit of higher education.
Personal Narrative

As a member of the Santa Clara Valley community, I remember similar struggles with accessing a quality education as the participants. The participants’ experience with not getting the support they needed was of particular concern as I recall the same situation at all levels of schooling. I understand that the most beneficial path I could have after high school was to enroll in a four-year university in an urban area with all the available opportunities and resources present.

But my path to college was not conventional and was filled with pitfalls and multiple moments of questioning myself and coping with uncertainty. The unrelenting need to read and write - even if it was not for school -helped me with any discouragement I felt as a student and member of the community. I was motivated to want to learn as much as I could about the outside world to be nothing like members of my community who tended to not value exposure to the outside world. I had an unsatisfied thirst for knowledge, especially for learning about history and cultures throughout the world to be more informed about places no one I knew had ever heard about, much less traveled to. This is what kept me grounded through the more dire of times.

However, I always felt that I could have easily traded places with any of the participants, and the same could have been said about them being in my position. I only wish other MBAIM, even if not from the Santa Clara Valley, would have been alongside me during this journey through academia. It would have made the experience a lot more bearable, as no one including close family members and friends of mine could ever understand what it was like sitting in class surrounded by people of other races and backgrounds engaged in issues irrelevant to what I saw in my home community. It was also tough not seeing my own racial group represented in the curriculum or anywhere else on campus including the student body, faculty, and staff, because
all the attention was focused on other racial groups. I have been outmanned throughout my time in academia completing five collegiate degrees, but nothing is gained without sacrifice. My hope is to serve other MBAIM in some capacity to ensure that they do not feel alone as they face the same uphill battles with accessing college.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This study focuses on the primary-tertiary level of educational experiences of MBAIM during the 1990’s and 2000’s in the semirural communities in the Santa Clara Valley. The study highlights the male gender in this area because of the different set of issues that hinder their academic achievement including notions of toxic masculinity and societal views towards higher education being for only “sissies” and “white boys, according to some male members of the Santa Clara Valley community. The study aims to provide information on the intersectionality of race, gender, socioeconomics, and location.

The participants each described how their educational experiences were fraught with instances of racism, neglect, and misunderstandings by the school personnel and their community. They detailed how their educational interests were not supported by anyone in their community from faculty and staff at their schools to their own family members. This created a problematic learning environment for the participants. They sensed no reason to continue with their academic interests if they were not going to lead to additional job opportunities. The participants’ parents also raised them with the notion that working in a menial job was more worthwhile than a college education because of the immediate financial rewards.

Moreover, the participants demonstrated how Santa Clara County lacks a noteworthy history of higher education. Only two four-year universities are present in an area that is home to nearly 2 million residents. The participants are just some of the Red members of the county that is home to a mixed-blood American Indian population struggling with educational ascension but with a presence in the community that stretches back to the 1800’s, and even earlier. Mixed
European and Native people have occupied this area since the first encroachment of Spain into what would become California. The participants, therefore, detailed educational experiences amongst this backdrop of struggles with identity, poverty, and the search for academic success. The study intended to first document and then clarify what the participants underwent during their educational experiences and to discuss what could be done differently to potentially provide a more inclusive and competent primary and secondary education leading to academic achievement and college enrollment.

**Discussion**

In this section I look at the original research questions proposed in this study and answer the questions using data and comparing it to the existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The participants shared their experiences regardless of how traumatic it would be to relive these moments. But the participants also expressed how much they have grown since their youth and understand that these moments determined the profession they would eventually select and the person they have become. They all have evolved beyond adolescent and post-adolescent rebelliousness and do not have any vendettas against the educational system of the Santa Clara Valley, nor do they feel it is a system that cannot be improved. The participants maintain a belief that future generations of MBAIM can grow up in a community that is more in tune with their needs as scholars and mixed blood Indian people. The participants expressed more hope than sorrow or animosity towards their community and the educational system there.
Research Question #1: How Do Mixed Blood American Indian Males in the Santa Clara Valley Describe Their Higher Educational Experiences?

_{Shrouded with racism_}

The participants referenced how there are so few examples of Red people who succeeded in academia. They suggested that obtaining a Bachelor’s degree from a local four-year state university in the Santa Clara Valley or Central Coast and remaining near family and friends is more common than those who enroll in a school further away. The participants indicated that they did not know that schools further away, such as Stanford and UC Berkeley, were campuses where they could have gained advanced degrees. This is in line with Desai’s (2017) findings that American Indians experience racism and a lack of cultural competence when confronted with non-American Indian people. Due to this, American Indians retreat to their home communities where they feel safe and comfortable with others, they are familiar with and from the same background (Desai, 2017). Although the difference with my study is the participants are MBAIM, the same issues of belonging, insecurity, and experiences with racism and discrimination are applicable. The participants underlined Desai’s (2017) point about American Indians struggling with education because of a school curriculum that does not positively represent their group.

Just the simple designation of “Native American” was problematic for the participants as they struggled to find meaning in who they were and how they identified. McLaurin (2012) suggests that the terms “Native American” or “American Indian” allude to the dividing up of the land and its people. These designations created racist views among non-Natives who viewed
MBAIM as Mexicans because of their proximity and apparent physical appearance akin to Latinos. As a result, the participants complained of hostile, anti-immigrant sentiment directed at them during their educational experiences in the Santa Clara Valley from primary schooling to community college enrollment. Also, this division of people in the Americas and the terms used to differentiate among people who once had mostly peaceable relations with one another was not a practice of Native people; instead it was yet another European-imposed belief system that MBAIM embraced (McLaurin, 2012).

As Coulmbe (2014) mentions, the participants attempted to break free of the images that non-Native people in the community had of them based on images of Red people in the media and literature. These stereotypical interpretations have led American Indian writers to engage audiences to see American Indian people in a new light (Coulmbe, 2014). Coulmbe (2014) states that American Indian people have had to “consciously foster intersections of thought to educate a predominately white audience regarding American Indian opinions and experiences” (p.10). Similarly, the participants have had to overcome the same form of racism. This study gave them their first opportunity to change the public perception of American Indian people and to “unite readers behind unique solutions to enduring social problems” (Coulmbe, 2014, p. 10) affecting the Red community.

Also, according to the participants, MBAIM who moved away from their community for purposes of college tended to disassociate themselves with members of their own race even if they grew up with them. This decision divides MBAIM from their brethren and makes them perceive college as a source of negative change for those who enroll. As a result, higher education is continually looked down upon as it does not guarantee financial prosperity. Since it is rarely presented in a positive or attainable light, a scarce amount of Red people enroll in four-
year universities (especially outside of the area), and career obligations are prioritized and prevent the participants from entertaining notions of a college degree.

Community development

The college experiences detailed by the participants amplify Crosby’s (2011) research that suggests that American Indian students need community established at the colleges they attend to achieve and to ease the transition from the home life to the college environment. MBAIM, according to the participants, grapple with gaining a foothold in academia especially when they do not represent an active and noticeable part of the campus they attend. The same issues of lack of belonging, questioning one’s self-worth, and academic preparation and determining the correct path to graduation that is exhibited in Crosby’s (2011) is applicable to the participants in this study as they underwent the same levels of uncertainty and feelings of ineffectiveness and competence.

The participants described how their own educational experiences of the omission of American Indian people began during primary schooling. The participants whose American Indian features were more visible and/or understand that they had American Indian ancestry were most susceptible to dealing with shame and denial when questioned about their ethnic identity. This form of racism and the way that American Indians are not represented and adequately supported in the classroom is one of the first memories reported by the participants in the study. These data corroborate Norton and Sommers’ (2011) study that suggests teachers have lower expectations for American Indian students and do not provide them with the necessary encouragement and guidance that they need to be successful in school.

Moreover, Norton and Sommers (2017) allude to professors practicing racism and discrimination at the collegiate level. Their study indicates that American Indian students must
grapple with institutional racism from primary to tertiary schooling which the participants even as mixed-blood Indians had to experience as well. The issues of enduring racism and discrimination while enrolled in schooling at different levels impede the academic progress of Red students (Norton & Sommers, 2017). The participants deduced the same idea of unfair and racially motivated acts practiced by faculty and staff interfering in their outlook and academic performance.

Eason, Brady and Fryburg (2019) attest to the importance of community development for American Indian students, which the participants brought up in the interviews. Eason, Brady and Fryburg (2019) suggest four levels of culture to aid American Indian students with finding their way in academia-ideas, institutions, interactions, and individuals. The participants desire more community involvement in academia to increase rates of attendance for MBAIM and to promote a more inclusive learning environment. Eason, Brady and Fryburg (2019) affirm that higher education needs to be altered to create more spaces in which MBAIM feel more comfortable and welcomed. The participants felt that this can happen only when their community comes together, establishes a presence on campus, and showcases that higher education matters for them.

Unmet needs

The casual dismissal of the original people of the United States has devastating consequences for the academic prowess and mental well-being of American Indian students including mixed-bloods, confirming Holter’s (2018) statement: “Despite resilience, many Native Americans continue to experience difficulties associated with mental health and academic achievement that can have negative outcomes” (p. 28). Holter’s (2018) study bolsters the participants’ claim that the school system in the Santa Clara Valley semirural towns did not meet their needs to be inclusive of Red people in both the curriculum and teaching approaches. The
participants asserted that only European American history, culture, and society are valued and represented in the system of education they were subjected to.

Furthermore, Ernesto suggested that European American society values higher education and views it as a catch-all answer to life’s tribulations, a point previously underlined by McNamara, Harvey and Andrewartha (2019) whereas American Indians view the educational system with more suspicion and distrust because of their historical experiences. The lack of critically viewing education and believing in all its tenets is a simplified concept that does not take into consideration the experiences of others wronged by the same system of oppression and manipulation (McNamara, Harvey and Andrewartha, 2019). The history of American Indians in the U.S. provides information to better understand why American Indians have the highest high school dropout rates and lowest college enrollment figures (Center for Native American Youth, 2016). The problem of a relatively high number of high school dropouts within the American Indian community reiterates the findings of Harman’s (2017) study that suggests that the ostracization and subsequent depression that Red people deal with in high school is due to their ethnicity parodied in the curriculum or dismissed by the educational system because they are viewed as a nonexistent group.

The participants described their experiences similarly to other American Indians in Reese’s (2011) study in which their community, both Native and non-native, did not take into consideration how to encourage them to pursue and succeed in higher education. Lacking adult supervision during their adolescence as well as mentors with a stake in their success while enrolled in community college took a toll on the participants’ attitudes towards their academic careers. Reese (2011) proposes in his study that tribal colleges are a possible option for students seeking guidance and a more familiar environment to pursue their studies. The addition of a
tribal college in the lives of MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley could have helped to increase interest in higher education enrollment and boost attendance rates for American Indians (Reese, 2011). A tribal college in or near the Santa Clara Valley could have functioned as both a learning environment and cultural center for the participants. Reese (2011) suggests that the strength of tribal colleges is that they do not just serve the purpose of providing a college education to attendees but also “help preserve tribal culture and to allow Native American tribes increased self-determination” (p. 19). The establishment of a tribal college in the Santa Clara Valley could be the missing ingredient for the mixed-blood Indian community to both gain a culturally competent college education while maintaining ties to other Red people who understand their unique challenges in higher education and American society.

**Desensitization**

Nevertheless, Junior said he felt unaffected by the negative portrayal of American Indian people as he does not identify as a member of this racial group. Miranda (2013) indicates that mixed-blood American Indian people contend that they belong to another racial group because of the stigmatized image of Red people. MBAIM educational experiences in which they struggled with identity issues stemming from the inaccurate representation of American Indian people also may explain Junior’s denial of his MBAIM roots (Miranda, 2013). It was not until later in life that Junior came to terms with being American Indian. Therefore, Junior explains that even though he sensed inaccuracy in the ways American Indians were portrayed in his educational experiences, he does not indicate that this impacted his educational prowess and feels he is responsible for not completing college.

Junior’s assertion of American Indians not being presented in the proper light during his educational experiences supports Juan and Ernesto’s claims that the school curriculum in the
Santa Clara Valley presents American Indians as either not existing at all or only living on Indian reservations. The participants’ reflections align with Jackson and Smith’s (2003) study that indicates American Indians face discouragement after witnessing their negative portrayal in their school’s curriculum. The realization of people who look like the participants either unrepresented or depicted as subhuman distracts Red people from wanting to learn and continue in higher education (Jackson & Smith, 2013).

Meanwhile, Anthony, Brandon, and Steven, who have Celtic or Anglo ancestry, each sympathized with the conditions of American Indians and their misrepresentation in the school curriculum, but did not feel that this discrepancy impacted their own educational experiences. Though these participants feel undisturbed by the portrayal of American Indian people while growing up, Steven and Brandon dropped out of college. American Indian retention rates are the lowest among all racial groups in the U.S. according to Keith, Stastny, and Brunt’s (2016) study. Therefore, the participants’ experiences in college suggest that even as mixed-bloods, and furthermore, as individuals with an Anglo/Celtic parent, they too are impacted by the same inconsistencies regarding academic performance as other American Indian people.

The participants alluded to what they felt was a desensitized educational system that was unable to understand how the curriculum and representation of American Indians affected the MBAIM population and their probability of enrolling in higher education at the university level. Nadal, et. al (2014) allude to the desensitization that some European Americans have toward American Indians and other minorities. Although in the modern era it has become increasingly uncouth to act deliberately racist towards non-European American people the reality of racial biases continues (Nadal, et., al, 2014). The participants were aware of the desensitization in the education system and how their ascension in higher education was limited because of their racial
background. The participants encountered microaggressions and systems of racial privilege in their societies that seemed designed for non-European Americans to not overcome (Nadal, et., al, 2014).

**No support**

The participants indicated that their educational experiences consisted of little to no academic support from primary through secondary or tertiary schooling, if they attended college. The issue of lack of support emotionally affects MBAIM and dissuades the participants from embracing education and envisioning what it could lead to-academically, personally, and career-wise, as suggested by Guzman-Lopez (2019).

The participants felt that immersing themselves in the college experience is not suitable because neither their teachers while growing up nor their communities ever encouraged them to focus on education. The participants’ negative experiences in higher education point out the findings in the study by Guzman-Lopez (2019) which suggests that American Indians do not feel a strong connection to college campuses because they are not embraced by campus environments. The community colleges the participants attended, instead, focused on students who were bound for universities, received good grades and high-test scores, and showed an interest in their education. This parallels the participants’ experiences in high school and how they asserted that the teachers and administrators catered to students who were determined to enroll in a university after graduation.

The participants suggested that their schools’ personnel assumed that they were not in dire need of their assistance. The participants mentioned that these staff members felt MBAIM did not seem destined for college enrollment based on their grades and attitudes in the classroom, and because they came from lower-middle class/middle-class backgrounds whereby their parents
would financially support them regardless of their employment status. However, the school personnel, according to the participants, overlook that MBAIM do not have families who emphasize scholastic achievement, and the lion’s share of them have no family members who attended college.

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) bring up the point of tribal people needing to take charge of their own educational missions to ensure self-determination and sovereignty. This would guarantee that all Red people are supported by their tribe(s). The participants stand to benefit from this process because they would have access to more opportunities and resources along with a defined community plan that encourages them to pursue their educational ambitions in the company of other Red people. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) emphasize the concept of culturally responsive schooling because it can behoove American Indian people the moment they enter mainstream education. The participants suggested that if they had been educated in a system that supported their need and desire to want to learn more about their identity and if they had been exposed to a more culturally sensitive curriculum, then they would have taken a greater interest in academia and excelled. Castagno and Brayboy’s (2008) study underlines this concept of why it is vital that American Indian take ownership over the education of their people. Education, according to Castagno and Brayboy (2008), is a facet of the American Indian community that needs to be amended and absorbed into the agenda of tribal people as a way to demonstrate another form of independence from the U.S. government.

**Impossibility of university enrollment**

The participants were often hindered by their own circle of friends. While most of the participants’ friends were MBAIM or European American (besides Steven, whose friends were composed of mainly MBAIM and Latinos), the one thing they had in common was not viewing
higher education enrollment as a possibility. The participants suggested that the educational system could do more to nurture academic pursuits of students who are more concerned with matters unrelated to scholastic endeavors. The participants indicated regret over not entertaining the option of college enrollment, which often resulted in their less than stellar academic performance in school. They found little incentive to do well in class since they felt their fate was pre-determined.

The participants asserted that they lacked educators and specialists at the schools they attended. These people could address and find solutions to problems of not valuing education and acting on academic interests for MBAIM. The participants indicated that this kind of support and intervention as well as understanding more about their American Indian background could benefit them in innumerable ways possibly leading to enrollment in higher education. Their insight here aligns with Bordelon and Atkinson’s (2020) findings which suggest in their study of American Indian students in the Midwest that only when the students felt supported by the mainstream university could they excel and trust both administrators and non-Native students. This partnership between the administrators and the American Indian students was rooted in cultural competence and seen as a benefit for the whole campus community.

Morgan (2009) proposes that Native Americans’ own outlook on life and career advancement may hinder their intellectual and academic growth based on cultural values that focus on humility, community, and harmony with their surroundings. In this vein, the participants remained humble and soft-spoken during their academic experiences. They mentioned that their lack of being forthright and insistent on curriculum changes and demanding more American Indian visibility on campuses deterred them from taking education more seriously. Morgan (2009) validates this claim of American Indians differing from Anglos in terms of their views
and modesty they possess regarding upward mobility: “In Anglo culture possessions and property have different meaning than they do in Native American communities...possessions are important because they can be shared, while in the Anglo culture they are more likely to represent a person’s individual status or worth (Morgan, 2009, p. 2).

The participants alluded to how they wanted to remain local amongst their friends and family, but this obstructed them from transferring to a university. They felt more comfortable in the company of others of their same background or people who they grew up with. Morgan (2009) substantiated this point of American Indians viewing education from this standpoint and how this presented a problem for their more deliberate pursuit of higher education.

Research Question 2: What Are the Barriers that Have Prevented Mixed-blood American Indian Males from Entering Higher Education?

Questions about identity

Juan and Ernesto, who physically appeared to be more “Native-looking,” indicated they experienced many levels of racism that ultimately discouraged them from their academic goals. However, they noted that this racism is complicated as it emanates from teachers and staff of various ethnic groups, including mixed-blood American Indians. Juan and Ernesto also included that they were not viewed as American Indians, or even MBAIM, per se, but rather Americanized Mexican Americans “with distant Indian blood”. Nevertheless, the lack of acknowledgement and cultural competence in the curriculum and overall educational experience disheartened Juan and Ernesto. The representation of American Indians as lowly peasants or bloodthirsty savages proved to be overwhelming for Juan and Ernesto during their primary and secondary schooling and resulted in disengagement from learning and wanting to continue their education at a four-year university.
Taylor, Nguyen, and Grey (2018) speak to this notion that colleges could do more outreach in American Indian communities. In the context of the Santa Clara Valley as in this study, MBAIM youth are longing for positive images of their people. These connections between colleges and communities could inspire MBAIM to enroll in colleges and universities that are recognized as establishing retention efforts in communities of Red people (Taylor, Nguyen and Grey, 2018).

**No educational accommodations: too little, too late**

Cech, Smith, and Metz’s (2019) study supports the notion introduced by Juan and Ernesto that MBAIM dealt with racism and discrimination from the educational system in the Santa Clara Valley and that their experiences framed their outlook on accessing higher education. The participants referenced how the educational system did not accommodate MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley at the higher education level, discouraging attempts to access higher education for MBAIM as pointed out by Taylor, Nguyen and Grey (2018). Colleges and universities have historically been unable to provide the same opportunities and resources for the American Indian population as they have for other ethnic groups (Taylor, Nguyen & Grey, 2018). The situation at the college level for American Indians has therefore become a barrier for them developing desires to enroll after high school.

**Yearning for the spirit of the revolution**

Meanwhile, Junior felt more concerned how “Brown people” (as he refers to all Indigenous people) are showcased in the curriculum, believing that both American Indians and Mexicans are negated from inclusion in what is taught to him. Junior did not sense the need to want to learn while growing up, since the racial group he identifies with was either not represented or misrepresented in the curriculum. This issue of a lack of connecting with and
being interested in the curriculum has resulted in disassociation for Brown people as suggested by Rodriguez (1996). In his scholarly work Rodriguez (1996) points out how young Brown men can feel detached from wanting to learn and engage with their high school experience when what is being taught to them is of little relevance. However, Rodriguez (1996) does not allude to how this lack of connection and pursuit of academic interests affects those of mixed-blood Indian background who identify as simply Brown people. According to Junior, this encompasses all people in the Western hemisphere with origins there.

Junior wanted to learn about what Brown and Red people did during the civil rights movement as he found this to be uplifting and continued to resonate with his generation during the revival of Brown Pride in the 1990’s. Instead, the education he received focused on European Americans and their successes. Junior did not feel the desire to do well, not necessarily because of his experience targeted as an MBAIM, but rather because he felt he could have had the idea of college imparted on him by his parents. Junior felt he would have benefitted from members of the Brown community speaking to him about how both Mexicans and American Indians were successful in college. Also, he wished he had learned how the spirit of the revolution during the civil rights era was still active and prompted Brown and Red people to make changes to the university environment (Rodriguez, 1996). Junior also mentioned how his high school should have made the idea of college enrollment more attainable. The void of this idea of college enrollment resulted in him believing educational achievement was limited to European Americans.

**Rebels without a cause: “white boys” who lack role models**

Anthony, Brandon, and Steven, who are more “European-looking,” did not cite the representation of American Indians as barriers to their education; rather, it was their upbringing
that dealt them the most serious blow. They mentioned that if their parents had been more encouraging of their academic abilities, then possibly they would have taken school more seriously. In this way, the participants suggested that their family background was a reason for why they did not continue to perform well in school, developed an interest in scholarship, and enrolled in a four-year university. Anthony, Brandon, and Steven’s educational experiences differ from DiAngelo (2011) described in her study on Whiteness. DiAngelo (2011) suggests that European Americans benefit from a privileged status in society. However, the participants with a European American parent were in the same situation as the Red and Brown residents of the Santa Clara Valley who struggled to find success in academia. Family members of the participants with European American parents battles with drug addiction or alcoholism. This could explain why they were unable to provide the participants with the necessary assistance they needed to do well in school. In addition, strong male role models were lacking in the lives of these participants. Being unable to seek advice and guidance from their fathers who were preoccupied with other personal matters was dejecting for the participants’ morale, let alone their educational pursuits. However, the literature does not refer to this theme of American Indians (with one parent who is European American) affected by the lack of a strong father figure in their lives.

Anthony, Brandon, and Steven mentioned that they did not receive any encouragement from their teachers even when they did well in certain class subjects. During primary schooling, the participants began to sense that academics was not emphasized among their family members and, for the most part, by their communities. During secondary schooling, enrollment at a four-year university became noticeably impossible as they were not made to feel by the school system that this was in their forecast. It is a simple case of the *haves* and *have-nots* as noted by the
participants. They understood that attending a four-year university was unattainable.

*Media and its effect on Red youth*

Other barriers for the participants included the previously mentioned thug/gangster lifestyle furthered by Hip-Hop culture at the time. The older participants born in the 1980’s, regardless of their racial appearance and identity, were most prone to this bad boy image emulation as Pim (2018) discusses in his article on the influence of hip-hop and young millennial-aged men. The participants suggested that instead of focusing their time on their studies during the 1990’s and 2000’s, they were preoccupied with embracing and displaying the criminal personas of their favorite rappers to fit in and “the chicks only wanted you if you were a Norteño or a wannabe” (Junior, personal communication, March 2021). Participants were pressured by society to mimic the activities, mannerisms, and on-air lifestyles, as well as personify the lyrical content of hip-hop artists, even if many of them were not living what they rapped about in real-life; their artistry was also simply a marketing tool. Pim (2018) notes this idea as well of Hip-Hop and brandishing a message of violence for economic gain.

The participants mentioned that as young people, they did not understand the difference between what they saw in the media and the real lives of the celebrities who inspired them. No one in their communities told them otherwise, although family members of an older generation warned them about the destructiveness of their fanaticism with commercial hip-hop, potentially understanding the consequences of media images on the youth and their inability to divorce fact from fiction. The thug/gangster image, according to especially the older participants, however, was the trend for the majority of two decades for their (born in the 1980’s millennial) generation. Though not conducive to scholarly growth and personal enrichment for the participants, this Hip-Hop image nevertheless shapes and defines their generation (Pim, 2018).
Even Anthony and Brandon, being born in the 1990’s and noticeably more European-American than the other participants (and struggling for accepting from their Mexican and American Indian peers), recognized the significance of thug/gangster rap music and its impact on youth of their same age bracket because of the older relatives they had. All the participants, however, agreed that Hip-Hop music, at least the popular artists during the 1990’s and 2000’s, distracted them from their education. No popular music artists rapped about the importance of a college education or the increased job opportunities that would be available to them. While several mainstream rappers of this era had college degrees or some college experience, including Kanye West, Lil Wayne, Paul Wall, David Banner, and J. Cole (https://bestaccreditedcolleges.org/articles/rap-and-hip-hop-stars-who-went-to-college.html), for whatever reason they chose to not rap about this (besides Kanye West who dedicated an entire album to being a college dropout). Also, in Hip-Hop’s defense, plenty of conscious rap music was available to the participants then and now, but this was not the music they consumed. The media’s influence on Red youth differs than what was suggested in the literature as there was no mention on the media specifically affecting the youth and creating a deterrent from college enrollment.

Disadvantaged location

The geographic location of the semirural towns of the Santa Clara Valley was suggested by the participants as a hindrance to their educational achievement. San Jose State University (SJSU) is the de facto choice after graduating from Gavilan Community College for those who continue their education. However, SJSU, according to the participants, did not inspire them to do well in high school so they could have enrolled in the school without taking classes at Gavilan college; as SJSU’s reputation located in a downtown barrio surrounded by several Norteño
subsets is more known for the active party scene that overshadows its scholastic achievements.

The semirural towns of the Santa Clara Valley do not emphasize higher education enrollment, according to the participants. The working-class nature of these communities emphasizes hard manual labor and alternatives are not entertained. This thinking is ingrained in the communities. It is testament to generations of people who sow the land and take pride in physical contributions to the Santa Clara Valley which boasts thriving agriculturally based towns. The participants noted that they were proud of family members and friends who toil the land. However, the participants recognize that a lack of a commitment to education framed the way they viewed higher education as being unattainable. Gonzales (2005) and Larkin (2014) suggest that one’s location is a determinant in lack of access to college for American Indians. The studies showcase how American Indians may either live in remote locations or areas with a scarcity of resources and opportunities available. American Indians may therefore not be exposed to the idea of college enrollment. Also, American Indians in this situation may not have an institution nearby where they can continue to live near their families and friends (Larkin, 2014).

**Hypermasculinity**

Toxic masculinity must be pointed out as a factor that disrupts academic prowess and higher education enrollment for the participants. Higher education is routinely referred to by community members as only for “fags and white boys” or “chicks” and “real men don’t work office jobs” as Baumann (2019) suggests in her study on toxic masculinity in the American Indian community. From the onset, the participants remembered hearing such smatterings. Although they did not echo these sentiments, wholeheartedly, they were affected by the views voiced by those who subscribed to these notions of looking at college in a negative light
(Baumann, 2019). Contrary to misconceptions of higher education administered and dominated by (European American) men, student populations indicate roughly a 60% to 40% imbalance of women to men and much higher in certain disciplines such as nursing and education (https://hechingerreport.org).

The participants were, therefore, encouraged to work full-time after high school, and usually in laborious jobs. Doing otherwise is regarded as feminine by community members. The participants suggested that they were relied on as males to earn money and contribute to the household, a belief not extended to female counterparts. The participants indicated how this expectation disallowed them from exploring higher education enrollment options. The idea of toxic masculinity shaping the views that American Indians have towards higher education and themselves is evoked by Baumann (2019). In her study, Baumann (2019) suggests that dwindling numbers of college enrollment for American Indians can be traced to their society’s views on higher education as a distraction to their hypersexualized manhood and machismo because it does not fit the narrative within the community of manly occupations.

Research Question #3: From the Perspective of Mixed blood American Indian Males, How Does the Portrayal and Representation of American Indian People in the Collegiate Curriculum Affect How American Indians View Higher Education?

Visibility needs

The participants, particularly those who identify more with their American Indian roots, (Juan, Ernesto, and Junior) felt that having more American Indian representation in the programs and student life at universities, and in the population of students, could have benefitted them by making their own ethnic group more visible in different aspects of the school. These participants indicated that having more classes dedicated to the studying of American Indian people could
have ensured that they had an opportunity to learn about themselves and their communities. Moreover, Holter (2018) posits that U.S. society does not understand that attending a university for Red people can be a complicated decision. Red people make up a small amount of the overall U.S. student population. They are relocated from their home communities where presumably other Red people live. And Red people enter a new community that lacks a proper knowledge of their unique needs (Holter, 2018).

On a side note, the participants mentioned no racial differences between being mixed bloods and those “real Indians” living on the reservation. But they did point out the differences in their societies, identities, personal narratives, cultures, upbringings, and public perceptions. This may allude to their own doubts about their identity and if they would be accepted by other American Indians with more knowledge of their background and association to their tribe(s). In other words, even if there were “full-blood Indians” who had a presence on campuses attended by the participants, there would have possible conflict or detachment between the groups.

**Knowledge of true self**

The participants mentioned how they would have benefitted as scholars and individuals if they had understood their American Indian origins. And if more people of their mixed-blood American Indian background had attended college, they believed this would have been an incentive to enroll as they would have been surrounded by familiar faces and people with identical or similar backgrounds. Furthermore, some of the interviewees felt that an overhaul of academia could result in younger MBAIM becoming inspired and enrolling at a local college to complete an undergraduate degree. This supports the claims of other scholars in the field of American Indian education and the issues encountered regarding access to college (Findling, et. al 2019). The studies conducted allude to the need for increased opportunities in higher
education for American Indian people through outreach and retention programs, hiring American Indian faculty and staff, and supporting visibility and inclusive attempts in the Red community (Findling, et. al 2019).

Meanwhile, the other participants with more Celtic or Anglo appearances pointed out that it would have been a plus if they could have learned about American Indian people at Gavilan College or SJSU in a more in-depth manner. The participants also indicated that if more MBAIM were students at Gavilan College and SJSU and had an active presence that promoted their ethnicity, their interest would have been piqued as well. However, even if Gavilan College offered an occasional course, it was not enough to attract the participants to enroll on those merits alone. In addition, SJSU, to this day, still has just a minor in Native American Studies through the Anthropology Department offered to students, which points out the lack of course offerings and concentration on American Indian people in the region.

*Deeper understanding*

The participants noted the need for a greater understanding of what is beyond the negative images of American Indian people and why Red people are not represented in course offerings at the collegiate level. Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) mention that “Native children need to know something that is relevant to their world and that supports their fundamental ability to thrive” (p. 84). When the K-12 curriculum does not demonstrate American Indian people in an accurate light and does not present any opportunity to overturn this cycle of misrepresentation, issues regarding the need and will to learn are inevitable (Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018). The participants engaged in how the college curriculum did not stimulate their interest or inspire them to want to pursue higher education. The community colleges with a population of MBAIM students, according to the participants, did not make it a point to represent American Indian
people. Notably these community colleges were in areas with a concentration of mixed-blood Indian people and other tribal people.

A branch of the Ohlone people, who had more knowledge of their identity, existed in the area. They were vocal proponents of their presence and why society needed to come to grips with this. Moreover, the participants sensed that their people lacked a voice in academia, viewed the system of Anglo education with suspicion, questioned its validity and uncompromising competition, and broached how this experience led to dejection and depression. This outlook among Red people is backed by Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018), who discuss a different approach that permits a critique of the educational system and more involvement from the Red community. As they state, “We must look beyond the metric of achievement to question taken-for-granted notions and ideologies about what schooling should be (p. 91).

**Research Question #4: From the Perspective of Mixed blood American Indian Males, What Would Motivate Youth To Enter College?**

**New plans and approaches**

The participants indicated that having a better support system of family members, school personnel, community members (who could attest to completing a college education), American Indian people with ties to their reservation and knowledge of Indigenous culture and religion, and early exposure to higher education, could help to prepare MBAIM to enter a four-year university. This is in line with the study conducted by Woodford (2005) that examines the successful transition of American Indian people from undergraduate studies to graduate work. Woodford (2005) suggests that a thorough understanding and conditioning model executed by parents that encourages college enrollment and stresses the value of obtaining a degree, can have positive impacts on American Indian youth. Woodford (2005) also argues that a presence of
American Indian students at universities who establish community ties can aid students in finding a sense of belonging in college and their academic purpose. Therefore, the participants suggested a community undertaking was needed to improve the chances of higher education enrollment.

The participants felt that making college more accessible to MBAIM would require retention efforts at an early stage in their lives and school personnel must make efforts to help their families to keep their children on the path to college and aware of the application process. Those who have knowledge of this process or have the correct personnel to guide them to college have an advantage over other students. Simply stated, having parents without knowledge about how to prepare the student for college puts the student at a disadvantage compared to other privileged students and their families.

Cultural importance

Museus and Quaye (2009) recommend that American Indian and other underrepresented groups have their culture represented at the college they attend. Museus and Quaye (2009) note that minority students cannot integrate successfully into a college environment when they are asked to disavow their traditional culture in favor of an imposed mainstream Anglo-based, middle-class, youth-centered experience. Museus and Quaye (2009) stress the concept of “cultural integrity” because of its importance to upholding the students’ backgrounds. Cultural integrity gains a foothold in minority communities at the collegiate level because it gives recognition to who they are and how this can create more powerful educational experiences and environments for all students (Museus & Quaye, 2009, (p.69)).

The participants brought up similar concepts to cultural integrity. They would have been
more likely to enroll in college at the university level if their culture and ethnicity had been more represented. The participants suggested that they would have appreciated if college campuses in the area offered Native American Studies programs, recruited more mixed-blood Indians, and had more American Indian student organizations.

Strong, Carbonneau, and Austin (2018) suggest that American Indian students fare better when they attend school with other American Indian students and when their traditions, cultures, and ethnicity is integrated into the curriculum. Strong, Carbonneau, and Austin (2018) point out that location and resources based on empirical studies are not indicative of educational goals for American Indians; rather the experiences including self-evaluation and teacher expectations are what dictated how a student fared. This is in line with what the participants alluded to regarding how colleges can reframe their institutions to better reflect the demands of the American Indian community. The participants buttressed Strong, Carbonneau, and Austin’s (2018) point that institutions should not introduce an Anglo American-based system of education; rather they should promote one that integrates the cultural customs of Red people and highlights their contributions to the U.S. The participants did not find their location blameworthy for their lack of educational prowess so much as what could have been done differently to improve their knowledge of themselves. They felt the focus should have been more on their relationship to their tribal backgrounds and the empowerment this emphasis can bring.

**Insistence on college enrollment**

The participants feel that MBAIM should be kept abreast of why college is an important step and vital to their career opportunities. Thus, the demystification process of college as being attainable must be stressed early in the students’ and families’ lives. The participants mentioned how a four-year university seemed to be out of range for them, especially with their families
unaware of how to enroll a student in a four-year university. This impossibility of higher education enrollment weighed on them heavily. The recommendations made by the participants for successful college access and retention affirm the claims by Gruenzel and Stuwe (2019) that American Indians would benefit from parents and a community that values higher education. Gruenzel and Stuwe (2019) suggest that youth feel discouraged when their academic work is not monitored and supported by family members, or when communal values do not insist on higher education as a goal for the youth.

On television programs and during the movies the participants watched with family members, everyone was going to college or had a college education. But no one asked why MBAIM were not doing the same thing. Rodriguez-Rabin (2003) recommends a greater emphasis on higher education in American Indian communities for success at this level of education to be achieved. Rodriguez-Rabin (2003) asserts what the participants indicated regarding the lack of college opportunities in their communities and how there was no single contributing factor to this but rather several aspects of interconnection. Rodriguez-Rabin (2003) indicates that American Indian youth must develop confidence in their academic abilities and the responsibility begins at home. The participants backed up the findings by Rodriguez-Rabin (2003) by expressing their belief that MBAIM should have envisioned college as not a possibility, but a mandate, throughout their educational experiences. This mentality that college is accessible is the optimal outlook to establish the belief that MBAIM can enroll in a four-year university after high school.

The participants suggested that the process of college enrollment needs to begin at the earliest point in a child’s life. as suggested by Gruenzel and Stuwe (2019) who argue that needs greater numbers of American Indian college students are needed for them to not feel alienated.
American Indians need to be conditioned to believe they are going to a four-year university otherwise they falter or while reaching college constantly question their place at the university and cope with depression and anxiety that interferes in their studies (Gruenzel & Stuwe (2019). MBAIM parents need to provide leadership and direction and improve their parenting skills to ensure that their children will have a better future than previous generations of MBAIM. Family members of MBAIM must insist that their child is capable of enrolling in any university, not just SJSU.

Therefore, the curriculum changes that incorporate more of an American Indian representation and identity are welcomed, but the participants indicated that true change begins at home with family members and communities who must understand how pivotal higher education is to the success of MBAIM. Opportunities for MBAIM can abound but they are null and void if they are not taken advantage of by this community who struggle with both psychological and academic issues related to higher education (Gruenzel and Stuwe, 2019).

**Implications**

The implications of this study are that if the school districts in the Santa Clara Valley do not provide an adequate education for mixed-blood American Indians, they will lose another generation of youth who do not believe they can excel in schooling from primary grades on through higher education. Though some members of the mixed-blood American Indian group do not need an overhaul to curriculum and school experience, they would all benefit from receiving an education that is representative of their voices as well in the U.S. This study shows that these improvements to MBAIM education are not a case for tribal elders to be sought when there is no recognized tribe in the area to begin with. And no medicine men and women are needed to lead a rain dance to create change for MBAIM and their families and entertain European American
suitors in the process.

On the contrary, the implications for this study are that Santa Clara Valley semirural society can finally witness a study that presented MBAIM in a light that is reality-based and not fictional, mythical, or non-existent. The school system can heed the warning of what the lack of a solid and inclusive education has resulted in for MBAIM of the last generation. The school system in the area can understand what this study entails and make the necessary changes for Generation Z so they may have more opportunities and resources that the participants in this study wished they had. The information in this study can be used by leaders in the community who assume that all “Brown-skinned people” are Mexicans who just arrived in town as many educators tend to generalize and never get exposed for this lapse in judgment. Further implications of this study might be that MBAIM may understand that the researcher grew up no different than them. If he can survive higher education enrollment from undergraduate to graduate studies with students, professors, and administrators who were in some ways more racist and ignorant than any European Americans he encountered in rural areas of the deep south, then they can do the same.

The population of the South Bay extending to the semirural areas of the Santa Clara Valley will continue to change with each passing decade. The area is not the same place it was 10, or especially 20, years ago. Mixed-blood Indians continue to interbreed and intermarry with people who have no American Indian blood. Families have become more distant and do not know each other as they did in the 1990’s and before. The local implications for this study are that it stands as a written document and time capsule of what once existed for mixed-blood American Indian and what could be improved for future generations of their people.

However, mixed-blood American Indians must be in control of their own destiny and not
put the responsibility in the hands of non-Native people to steer them in the right direction no matter how good their intentions. Mixed-blood Indians can hopefully be inspired from this study to improve their preparation for higher enrollment and understand that the difficulties, challenges, and struggles will only just have begun as they will encounter more hurdles to overcome, especially in terms of visibility of their people on college campuses.

The study highlights the educational experiences of MBAIM in the Santa Clara Valley during the 1990’s and 2000’s and the issues related to access to higher education. The barriers to college exist because of issues related to race, gender, identity, and economic privilege. The participants, however, express thankfulness for overcoming challenges in their lives and believe they have a second change, so to speak, with their children who they hope to enroll in college and learn more about their ethnic identity along the way. The participants believed that “everything happens for a reason” and everything they dealt with can be taken with a grain of salt and it was a learning experience that any young people go through. The participants expressed no resentment or strong feelings of acrimony, although they continue to live with regret and wondering how enrollment in college and understanding more about their real identity at a young age could have impacted them in positive ways.

This study is unique in that it deals with the lived experiences with the MBAIM community in the Santa Clara Valley and focuses on the specifically the male gender and their struggles with accessing college. The study points out the difficulties with identity and how complex it can be for “biracial” people who do not consider themselves that way because the intermixing of European and American Indian people happened so long ago that it has become “normalized”. The intermixture is the most likely combination of biracial individuals in the western hemisphere and has been that way since 1492 (with the arrival of Columbus). The study
puts a lens on the American Indian community and the problems with prejudice, racism, discrimination, and lack of inclusion that persists and results in individuals like the participants questioning their identities instead of feeling empowered by it. The same issues of racism that European Americans spread through North America have been internalized by American Indian people and disassociated members of this community who opt for other racial categorizations to escape dialogue on the topic of their identity.

The study used Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling as method for data gathering. This approach is not widely used and gained responses from the interviewees who felt comfortable and at ease with the researcher. Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling can be a tool for doing research in the American Indian and mixed-blood community as it allows for the participants to be themselves and engage in dialogue in an informal manner. Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling helps to gain the trust of the participant by creating an atmosphere where the participant and researcher are having what seems to be a casual conversation more than a restrained and academic-based interview session.

Moreover, Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling was the ideal tool to use for the data gathering process of this study. It was culturally exclusive to American Indian people and resonated with them more than any other data-gathering technique commonly used with both the Red community and others. Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling aided the study through its informality. The participants seemed to view it as no more than a casual conversation with one of their childhood friends who was interested in telling their stories and valued their experiences in a way that most people during their educational experiences had not. The participants also evidenced their comfort level by talking much longer than expected and providing extensive useful information that went beyond the bounds of this study. It appeared
that a huge weight was lifted from the participants when they could engage with me in the same way that they were familiar with talking to someone they grew up with, rather than an outsider academic with no knowledge of the community. I had never conducted qualitative research in this manner and intend to use the same methodology when the opportunity arises. I understand the methodology may not be advisable because it is a non-academic approach, but for the purpose of this study and its allowance for flexibility, Red People’s Oral Traditional Storytelling was the most optimal way of researching Red people who are most comfortable telling their stories in a way that Red people have for many moons.

Among the literature used in this study, Brayboy (1999, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021) authored the more influential studies I found. His studies attest to the need for culturally responsive schooling, a concept which has historically been used to understand the unique needs of the American Indian community. Brayboy and Castagno (2008) note that scholars and tribal communities and leaders vouch for its importance in U.S. schools. After hearing the interviewees discuss the importance of knowing about their culture and ethnicity while growing up and during their educational experiences, it is apparent that culturally responsive schooling could have made a difference in their lives. The interviewees even mentioned how a similar approach would have inspired them to want to learn and attend class from primary to tertiary schooling. Although it requires a “shift in teaching methods, curricular materials, teacher dispositions, and school-community relations” (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008, p. 942), if educational systems were truly interested in looking out for the betterment of their American Indian population, this overhaul would have to take place.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The participants in this study confided in me with their stories of heartache, depression,
uncertainty, incarceration, drug abuse, failures, distrust, and disappointment but also optimism, appreciation, acceptance, and success. Their agreement to divulge information about their backgrounds is rooted in their hope that others can learn from their experiences and create change in Santa Clara Valley community and beyond. The research study aims to fill the gap in existing literature on mixed blood Indians, but more investigations into this unique group and their struggled with identity, gaining federal recognition, and accessing college is still needed.

While the participants in this study are considered successes by their families and friends who see their material wealth and envy this, more untold narratives exist that need to reach the surface of public imagination. This is for society to come to the aid of the mixed blood community as they do for other communities of color when their causes are trending on social media and protests follow in their honor.

**Partnerships between universities and MBAIM communities**

The first recommendation originates in an underlying theme that continued to appear in the participants’ recommendations. Participants described how their enrollment in community college was almost forced on them, and Gavilan College was unprepared as to how to support the unique needs of MBAIM people. The participants were never viewed by the school as a uniquely separate group from the other students but rather as Mexican youth who were in the same situation as others with bilingual abilities and a need to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, Día De Los Muertos and Mariachi music during the lunch hour with vendors selling Mexican food. More collaboration needs to exist between the staff and faculty at local colleges in the Santa Clara Valley and Central Coast that supports the culture of MBAIM students. More training and staff members who are MBAIM themselves and know this community intimately need to be emphasized in hiring practices. Also needed in higher education is an increased understanding of
MBAIM as different from Latinos; MBAIM may have no interest in Latin American cultural celebrations or identify with Mexican food availability being regarded as an act of good faith by the college administration.

**Emphasizing visibility on campus**

It is necessary for MBAIM to see others who look like them as part of the student body and in the hiring practices of colleges and universities. It is not enough to say that American Indian people are valued members of the campus; there needs to be visual evidence of this as well. The attempts made on college campus to honor the contributions to the U.S. made by other racial groups needs to be extended to the American Indian population. This is not an unwarranted demand to be recognized by universities considering the innumerable ways that American Indians have impacted the lives of all ethnic groups in the U.S. even if some are unaware of it. College campuses need to take more representative actions that show the attempts being made to cull American Indian students and employees to have a voice and presence there as well.

**Conclusion**

It was a duty of mine as an MBAIM to complete a study on the community from which I come. I did not need to go outside of my community for research, invent a topic based on what academia or social media told me to consider, or rely on something that was irrelevant to the way I grew up and had no bearing on the way my family members and friends came up in this world as well. The issue of MBAIM accessing college resonated because it was based on experiences I had and what I witnessed throughout my life. MBAIM not accessing college opportunities spoke volumes about the ways we were raised in the Santa Clara Valley to not consider a four-year university as a realistic possibility. It was that interconnection that prompted me to wonder why we as a people never questioned our circumstances and settled for excuses used to this day.
Like everything else in my life that I have chosen to do that no one back home ever imagined, I had no guidance from anyone of my background in academia. Nor could I relate to the students I sat beside in classes who had no clue about a community just an hour away from where they sat and got educated at. The Santa Clara Valley continues to need the same assistance from those students who boasted about their contributions to the rest of the world as academic missionaries and the ways they apparently improved and uplifted underprivileged communities.

I never saw myself as an academic or even a “real” college student through my late teens and 20’s at San Francisco State University then my 30’s at the University of San Francisco because I did not fit in with the students at these schools, I was unable to immerse myself in the college environment, and I always dealt with non-academic interests and distractions that plague young Red and Brown men. But I always considered myself a student of life and representative of the Santa Clara Valley MBAIM community and an unheralded ethnographer who wallowed in the realities of U.S. cities, suburbs, and rural towns that no university or book could teach me about. I came across academics who prided themselves on their book smarts and scholarly and empirical research, but I felt they had no idea about the real world-far removed from the safety that academia provided them.

Therefore, I wanted to bring the real world to academia and academia to the real world. This study is a testament to that notion. Enrollment in college was a tool of change for me in that sense, and it was certainly a vehicle to guide me through American society where a college degree is valued and leads to greater opportunities for individual growth and career success. For all the criticisms I have of higher education, especially in the city of San Francisco, NOTHING has ever been more important to me. Take out the career incentive of gaining a doctoral degree and I would still be up studying till 5 AM on campus on a quest for knowledge and the truth.
This journey from an undergraduate student to a doctoral student has allowed me the chance to merge academic research with my own MBAIM community. I consider this dissertation to be the best of both worlds.

This study stands as a testament of who I am as a *barrio scholar* from the Villa Hermosa neighborhood on the west side of Hollister, California, and looks at the MBAIM community that struggles with both accessing higher education and understanding our own ethnic identity. Ours is a two-edged problem to define who we are and how to obtain college opportunities. I only hope that my community and others who stand in solidarity with us can realize that this study and the sacrifices made in its duration adds to the literature on American Indian issues with college enrollment, and somehow gets the ball rolling for more dialogue on the need to recognize the mixed blood Indian community in the U.S. in the same way that the Canadian government has done with the Métis.
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Appendix A

Questions used in study:

1) WHEN YOU THINK BACK ON YOUR EDUCATION IN HOLLISTER WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THOSE EXPERIENCES REGARDING YOUR NATIVE AMERICAN BACKGROUND?

2) WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU ENCOUNTER DURING YOUR SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES?

3) WHAT EFFECT DID THE PORTRAYAL OF RED PEOPLE IN THE CURRICULUM HAVE ON YOUR SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES?

4) WHAT WOULD HAVE INSPIRED YOU TO DO BETTER IN SCHOOL AND TO HAVE HAD A STRONGER UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR NATIVE BACKGROUND?

5) WHAT DO YOU FEEL CAN LEAD TO BETTER SCHOOLING PERFORMANCE FOR NATIVE AMERICANS IN HOLLISTER?