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*The Counseling Psychologist* 2011 39: 527

DOI: 10.1177/0011000010389827

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# Warrior Spirit: Soul Wound and Coping Among American Indians in Law Enforcement

The Counseling Psychologist

39(4) 527–569

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DOI: 10.1177/0011000010389827

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## Abstract

This qualitative, exploratory study examined the role vocation played for American Indian non-Tribal law enforcement officers in adaptively coping with historical trauma, or *Soul Wound*. Participants' views of career in relationship to its perceived congruence with their Nations' warrior societies and how this vocation may facilitate or constrain the management of Soul Wound or historical trauma issues was examined. For this study, 12 participants were interviewed and data were analyzed utilizing extended case method. Results indicated 11 of the 12 participants believed their vocation was congruent with their Nations' traditional warrior roles, particularly related to the role's value of mentorship and modeling well-living for the community. Participants' interests and satisfaction, as well as facilitating and constraining factors of their roles, are discussed. The authors elaborate on existing theoretical understandings of Soul Wound and coping using the results. Limitations, implications, and future directions are described.

## Keywords

social justice, qualitative, methodology, vocational psychology, race/ethnicity, dimensions of diversity, religion/spirituality

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## Introduction

Research on counseling American Indians remains scant and largely emerges from a deficit orientation (Duran & Duran, 1995; Trimble, 2000). Particular attention has been paid to cataloguing issues such as alcohol and other drug abuse, domestic violence, and suicide. To some extent, this emphasis has been warranted. Medical and mental health disparity statistics for American Indians in the United States are indeed alarming (Freeman, Iron Cloud-Two Dogs, Novins, & LeMaster, 2004). Current statistics indicate levels of psychopathology—particularly depression and alcoholism—in greater percentages than the U.S. population as a whole, with suicide and homicide being the second and third causes of death, respectively (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009), and unemployment rates significantly higher than those of the general population (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2004). It is especially disturbing then that current literature also indicates that American Indians experience significant barriers to culturally competent mental health and vocational counseling, resulting in an underutilization of psychological services seated within a Western mainstream context (Byars & McCubbin, 2001; Johnson, Swartz, & Martin, 1995; Center for Mental Health Services [CMHS], 2001).

Recently however, literature is emerging to examine such issues from a perspective entrenched less in Western mainstream models and more from an Indigenous conceptualization (for examples see Duran & Ivey, 2006; Gone, 2004, 2008, 2010; Gone & Alcántara, 2007). Duran's (1990) publication was the first to address the staggering statistics facing American Indians from an Indigenous perspective. He reported that traditional knowledge keepers in Indian Country shared with him their perspectives that American Indians were manifesting symptoms of a sort of soul *wounding* resulting from the effects of living under colonization. Duran articulated the Indigenous conceptualization of these health disparities for American Indians as the *Soul Wound*—an individual and collective injury inflicted upon American Indians as a result of colonization and oppression that manifests multi-, intra-, and intergenerationally. Historically bound events identified by Duran and Duran (1995) as central to the etiology of the Soul Wound include eras of cultural and psychological shock, warfare and genocide, systemic oppression and subjugation, forced relocation to reservations, boarding schools, urban areas during termination, and systematic racism, prejudice, and stereotyping. From an American Indian traditional perspective, Duran indicated the course of treatment for Soul Wound injury (*wounding*) included a collective (e.g., community or Tribal)

recognition of the injury and individual and communal participation in treatment (i.e., ceremony). Duran and Duran utilized the posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) paradigm to articulate an Indigenous perspective on the etiology of Soul Wound and also its healing. This led to publications delineating a more complex construction of the Soul Wound that integrated intergenerational historical grief and trauma models and built upon the extant literature addressing the Jewish Holocaust experience (e.g., Duran, Duran, Yellow Horse Brave Heart, & Yellow Horse-Davis, 1998; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen 2004; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1998a, 1999a, 1999b). Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998), for example, constructed the Soul Wound as the accumulation of unresolved historical grief experienced by American Indian peoples, manifesting in PTSD symptoms (anxiety, intrusive images, depression, grief, withdrawal and antisocial behavior, guilt feelings), as well as some more unique manifestations also found with survivors of the Jewish Holocaust and their descendents: (a) elevated mortality rates, including by violent death; (b) perceived obligation to share in ancestral trauma and identification with the deceased; (c) fantasies of compensation and retribution; and (d) complicated grief. They argued that core to this healing process is the spiritual empowerment of the client and “extended kin networks which support identity formation, a sense of belonging, recognition of a shared history and survival of the group” (p. 66).

Though the Soul Wound and intergenerational historical trauma perspectives do provide a framework for theorizing about much of the deficit literature on American Indians, it has not yet well articulated a context for healthier adaptive coping with such postcolonization pressures. In response, several researchers have made the case for moving the field’s understanding past the PTSD framework and further toward a more Indigenized conceptualization of the wounding and healing processes (e.g., Walters & Simoni, 2002), one that espouses a dynamic relational perspective on wellness and healing wherein one assumes his or her position in the healing process by assuming a particular role, or *taking one’s place* (Deloria, 2001; Gone, 2008). It is asserted herein that one possibly adaptive method of taking one’s place and of managing Soul Wound—or contextual microaggressions an individual may experience as a result of his or her American Indian identity, history, culture, or worldview—is via vocation and career path. Given the federal policies the United States has utilized to deal with American Indians (e.g., boarding schools, Federal Urban Indian Relocation Program), it is possible that some American Indian people may have chosen a specific career as a means of adaptively coping with the aftermath of colonization while adaptively retaining and realizing some traditional values and roles within vocation. There is evidence, for example,

that the U.S. federal policy of treaty-making is correlated with American Indian overrepresentation in all branches of the military, due to American Indian worldview perspectives on relationship, covenant, and duty as related to the treaty outcomes of the U.S.–Indian War era (Beals, 2000).

### *Vocation as Vehicle for Coping*

Research on the interaction of Soul Wound or historical trauma and vocational issues has emphasized an Indigenous framework for understanding career as one possible avenue of managing postcolonial stressors faced by many American Indians (e.g., Beals, 2000; Holm, 1996). A strong argument has been made indicating differing and often divergent values between traditional American Indian and Western mainstream conceptualizations of healing and its relationship to vocation, with the latter predominantly valuing the will of the individual in career choice and satisfaction (Cashin, 2001; Juntunen et al., 2001; McCormik, Amundson, & McLean, 1997) and the former emphasizing the role of the individual in respect to community needs and well-being. Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b), for example, in studies with American Indian service personnel, has articulated the importance of individual healing of wounding via traditional American Indian constructs to maximize vocational satisfaction and work effectiveness on behalf of the collective/community.

Research on American Indians in the military has provided particularly fertile ground for exploring the interactions between healing historical trauma and vocation. Both Holm (1994, 1996) and Beals (2000) have examined the persistence of the role of the traditional American Indian warrior as manifest in U.S. military service among the American Indian population, which has the highest per capita service rate of all ethnicities (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.). They noted that while the military career offered some of the elements of the traditional American Indian warrior role (e.g., preservation of order and the protection of the community, the taking of positions of danger and leadership during warfare) and appeared at the point of career choice for participants in those studies to be a *vehicle* of healing and cultural reparations, it lacked other essential components. Participants in Holm's and Beals's studies found the military vocation to be more reflective of a Western mainstream stereotypical understanding of *the warrior* and to be lacking many other traditional American Indian elements of the role (e.g., administration of discipline, ministering to communities through social role modeling, the serving of an intermediary role in government by acting as a temporary dispenser of

authority, and the recognizing and honoring of appropriate communal living by other members of society; Beals, 2000; Holm, 1996).

Despite the shortcomings of the military vocation in fully accommodating the traditional American Indian role of warrior, these studies with American Indian veterans have made a case for vocational choice as being a perceived vehicle for culturally congruent coping in managing the pressures characterized by Duran's (1990) *Soul Wound*. Data from both Holm (1996) and Beals's (2000) work indicated different career pathways into the military from other ethnic populations in the United States—American Indians choosing their careers not to achieve recognition or respect from dominant culture, or for solely monetary reasons, but to honor and fulfill family and tribal cultural and spiritual traditions. Once in the military career however, the research indicates that American Indians often face systemic discrimination, racism, and stereotyping due to both negative (e.g., hostile Indian) and positive (e.g., innately martial race of trackers and fighters) stereotypes, which often result in their being overrepresented in more dangerous and demanding roles, and thus also demonstrating elevated rates of distinguished service due to their high-risk assignments (for an example see Holm, 1996).

Both Holm's and Beals's research on American Indian veterans also indicates core conflicts between participants' traditional American Indian values and those of their Western mainstream military career. Most interestingly, these data indicated participants relied on American Indian cultural ways of managing vocational impact and trauma, both historical and war related. The central finding of Beal's (2000) study focused on healing as it is manifest in the reconciliation of living with two sets of vocational/role expectations as a warrior, those bound within the traditional American Indian role and those of the Western mainstream vocation of soldier. To adjust for the shortcomings of a military vocation in relationship to the role of the traditional American Indian warrior, participants made meaning of their vocation through their tribes' warrior traditions and teachings and found meaning in their military experiences (e.g., war-related trauma) via their American Indian spiritual worldviews, including participation in both individually and community-based healing ceremonies.

### *Warriors, Role, and Vocation*

Pan-culturally and in a holistic sense, for those Nations who possess such, American Indian warrior societies provide many services to their communities, several of which are consistent with a law enforcement vocational role

(Barker, 1998). The role is one responsible for many duties that fall outside the realm of a military vocation, including counseling, mentoring, and peace-making within the community (Barker, 1998; Beals, 2000; Holm, 1996). Knowledge structures related to American Indian warrior societies have their beginnings in origin stories and include the instructions for the social and spiritual importance that warriors hold within their respective communities. While much of the vocational literature examining the interactions between historical and ongoing trauma and vocation has focused on American Indians in the military, the traditional warrior role appears to be much more congruent with the mainstream vocation of law enforcement officer (Barker, 1998). This seems particularly true for those working in off reservation agencies that do not have a history originating in U.S. governmental Indian policy (e.g., Indian Wars era and treaty negotiations), such as that of a Tribal police department. The vocation thus presents an opportunity to act as a peacetime warrior immersed within the community one serves (Barker, 1998).

The present study therefore sought to explore how American Indian law enforcement officers view their vocation in relationship to its congruence with their Nations' warrior societies, community/family, and how this worldview may facilitate or constrain the management of Soul Wound or historical trauma issues encountered. A secondary goal of this investigation was to enhance the understanding of the role American Indian worldview plays in relationship to career choice and satisfaction for American Indian police officers. Thus, the primary focus of this study was to explore how participants viewed themselves in relationship to the traditional American Indian (warrior) and Western mainstream (law enforcement) conceptualizations of their two roles and how this may have either facilitated or constrained the management of wounding issues encountered, including those that emerge within career. Core to this endeavor was the examination of how participants viewed their law enforcement role to differ from that of the military soldier's career in relationship to both the Pan-American Indian and Western mainstream perceptions of the warrior.

## **Method**

We are faced . . . from the first word of this [endeavor] to the last, with the fundamental dilemma of the translator. In this instance, our predicament entails transitioning between one reality that targets the consistent composition and behavior of solids within solids and a second reality that emphasizes the flux dynamics of massive fluidity. Our only hope is the reminder that these two dimensions share a common space. Whether

we can construct an effective passage between these realms is not the question that should be evoked, for certainly we cannot. Instead, our aim is to convincingly relay merely the existence of another intellectual tradition, one that could very well be of some relevance in contemporary discussions of such important concerns. (Bear & Head, 2004, p. 1)

From the linguist's perspective, Bear and Head (2004) illuminate the ominous task of one who travels the bridge between a traditional American Indian worldview and that of the Western mainstream. In respect to cultural competency in *practice* with American Indians, Gone (2010) has asserted that "almost no substantive description and explication of specific forms of traditional healing and associated therapeutic paradigms have been published in high-impact venues that might actually reach and influence many multicultural advocates (and their critics) within the discipline" (p. 226). The authors have found this to be exceedingly true as well for the existence of ethical research with American Indians from a decolonized perspective, in translating between a traditional American Indian worldview of information gathering and that of Western mainstream science. Gone and Duran and Duran (1995) have made the case for a decolonization perspective in such endeavors and this study was undertaken in that vein. Core to this understanding is a deep knowledge that when one compares *worldviews*, he or she is remiss if not cognizant of the languages and processes possessed by the populations at hand and their resonance or lack thereof with a Western empirical model. Indeed, Yeh and Inman (2007) have made the argument that such understanding is critical to unfolding qualitative research with populations who may possess a first language other than English, in which most counseling psychology research is published.

In the previous quote, Bear and Head (2004) comment on working in the margins between Blackfoot language and English, two worldviews so substantially distinct. Knowledge and understanding are embedded in language. Bear and Head struggle in translating to English a language that does not distinguish on the basis of gender, but, more accurately in such binary terms, focuses on categories of things/beings *choosing* to animate or not (as opposed to being alive or dead in the Western mainstream construct; for more information see the interview with Darrell Kipp in Briggeman, 2007). Categorization in the terms necessary for the qualitative researcher aiming for some resonance with an Indigenous knowledge-gathering orientation is problematic in the least. Blackfoot linguist Darrell Kipp (Briggeman, 2007) further articulates some of the language-bound cultural differences, reminding that the Blackfoot



speaker can move rapidly through the counting process employing just a mere shift of suffix, with the primary numerical benchmark being not the *number one*, but what is best translated to “*no-particular-number-at-all*.” Furthermore, the Blackfoot language cannot express the Western mainstream perspective of *good* or *bad*, but consists primarily of “timeless verbs” having no tense that are used to express relationships unfolding in space—the Western mainstream concept of time being nonexistent in a Blackfoot perspective (Bear & Head, 2004; Briggeman, 2007). To provide the reader with an example of what one faces in translating context from a traditional American Indian perspective to that of the Western mainstream researcher, we offer the following examples for consideration: (a) The English noun *moose* in Blackfoot would be best translated as *darkness moving into the brush* (Briggeman, 2007), and (b) the English sentence “Please give me a chair” would be best translated to Blackfoot as the phrase “Wishing-given-there, chair-ness” (Bear & Head, 2004). There is significant divergence in perspective regarding designation (naming) and compartmentalization (categorizing), time orientation, and relational thinking. These differences leave the researcher struggling to find points of convergence wherein bridges can be forged, maintained, and eventually improved to further the interest of cultural competency in the field.

The extended case method (ECM) was selected for this study due to its congruence with traditional American Indian information-gathering and meaning-making processes set forth by the most prolific writer on American Indian issues, Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999). Deloria specified several criteria essential to an Indigenous perspective in research, including the exploration of all sources of available information (historical and contemporary), the evaluation of all data regardless of their frequency of appearance, the inevitable immersion and participation of the observer/researcher in the process as co-creator of *fact*, and the utilization of both the tangible (often compartmentalized in a Western mainstream conceptualization as quantitative data) and the less material and more contextual (often compartmentalized as qualitative data in Western mainstream traditions). From a Western empirical perspective, a case analysis approach is most appropriate when exploring situations in which phenomena (e.g., coping with or symptoms of colonization effects) and context (e.g., career) are difficult to disentangle from one another (Morrow, 2005; Yin, 1989). The topic at hand does not benefit from a well-established body of research and empirically validated constructs for exploration or testing. The ECM offers data collection options that extend beyond the sole use of case studies, and this flexibility was essential in addressing the topic at hand, one that is innately seated in a sociopolitical, cultural, and historical context.

## Core Tenets of the Extended Case Method

The extended case method emerged from the field of social anthropology (Van Velsen, 1967) and was further articulated by Burawoy (1991, 1998) to accommodate exploration and analysis at both the micro (individual case) and the macro (entire ecology of the participant) levels. It has been characterized as a hybrid method drawing from both the social constructivist and critical theories of research and has seen increased use to explore complex sociological and multicultural issues (for some examples see Eliasoph & Lichterman, 1999; Hines, Merdinger, & Wyatt, 2005; Miranda, 2004). The ECM's theoretical perspective moves beyond the inductive emphasis of micro case analysis and the generation of new explanations or theories (e.g., grounded theory method) to the multiple layers of the individual's full ecological context seated at the historical, sociopolitical macro level. This process prioritizes the reconstruction and further articulation of existing theory, allowing the deductive perspective to unfold naturally as need within a study, rather than being imposed rigidly at its onset. Instead of aiming to extract the essential number of core features of a particular case for generalization to other cases, the ECM endeavors to identify the macro foundations of a micro context, given its ultimate goal of theory extension and/or reconstruction and not theory generation alone. In fact, Burawoy encourages researchers to seek the data that either converge toward or diverge from components of existing theories in order to gain a fuller understanding of issues, rather than aiming to reinvent the wheel with new theory construction (Burawoy, 1991).

The researcher from the ECM standpoint is positioned as an insider-participant-expert, acknowledging and continually and actively processing his or her role as a participant-observer who also brings a perspective (e.g., academic) and training (e.g., empirical) often not possessed by participants. Rather than viewing the researcher as either completely immersed or objective, the ECM conceptualizes him or her as a collaborator in the data collection and knowledge construction process. Historically, the researcher-participant interaction has been viewed as either distanced in an effort to control bias or as overly enmeshed in an effort by the researcher to "go native" (see Kanuha, 2000; Miranda, 2004). Alternatively, ECM proposes researchers do not speak for unheard voices or describe observations of the *other*, but actively share and process insights (e.g., findings) resulting from interactions *with* participants. Essential to this endeavor is an emphasis on anomalous cases (outliers in a quantitative perspective) and reflexivity (rigor of reliability and validity in a quantitative perspective) in data analysis. The ECM's emphasis is on cases

and case details that appear incongruent with existing explanations (theories) related to a phenomenon to explore ecological structural contexts. This approach is in contrast again to qualitative methods such as grounded theory, which seek to locate commonalities among cases. Tantamount to the identification and analysis of anomalous cases is the reflexive process. Reflexive science requires of the researcher an ongoing and deep engagement in the self-reflective process, delving into reflections of self-in-relation to all elements of the research process. It requires significant intra- and interpersonal process and *checking* (trustworthiness) at all layers of the research process.

Reflective science embraces an orientation of active and creative engagement with the phenomenon under question. It advocates a productive dialogue and intersubjectivity between researcher and informants and even encourages interventions on the part of the researcher in order to elucidate the “secrets of the participant’s world.” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 14)

Essential in the reflexive analysis process is an understanding on the part of the researcher, of the ecological structures affecting his or her own and the participant’s world.

### *Participants and Sample Characteristics*

In this study, 12 American Indian and/or Alaska Native participants were interviewed. Inclusion criteria were: self-identification as being older than 21 years of age, of being of American Indian or Alaska Native heritage, and having an established career in law enforcement (which included retirees). All participants were recruited from non-Tribal agencies due to the history of federal imposition of law enforcement on Tribal groups and its subsequent role in colonization. Of participants, 7 were male and 5 were female. Participant age ranged from 25 to 72 years, with length of career in law enforcement from 3.5 to 39 years. In addition, 10 participants were actively employed in law enforcement, while 2 had recently retired. Also, 2 served in law enforcement agencies in the Southwest, 9 in the Midwest, and 1 in a federal agency with national jurisdiction in the United States and its protectorates. Rank designations of participants included: 8 police officers, 1 federal special agent, 2 detectives, and 1 deputy sheriff.

The participants represented the following culture/language family areas of the North American Indians: the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Arctic. Participants self-identified as: Oneida, Stockbridge-Munsee, Alabama Coushatta, Hopi, Laguna Pueblo, Navajo, Chippewa/Ojibwe, Northern Plains

Chippewa/Okanese, Ho-Chunk, and Eskimo. Given the tendency for American Indians in the United States to language *home* as their People's traditional homelands, which may or may not be benefited with a state or federally recognized reservation area—a factor of Duran's (1990) Soul Wound, participants were not asked specifically if they grew up on a reservation, pueblo, corporation, or other such treaty-designated area. Of the participants, 3 did share a primary upbringing of an on-reservation experience; 8 reported viewing their Nations' federal land holdings as home, while being primarily raised off federally designated homelands; and 1 reported being removed from a Tribal or reservation experience due to a cross-cultural adoption.

In the authors' experience, most law enforcement agencies have not collected racial/ethnic data on American Indian and Alaska Native employees. Thus, most employees of such heritage are relegated to checking the "Other" box on official forms. As such, accessing national data on American Indian law enforcement officers is nearly impossible. However, it is noteworthy that these American Indian officers' self-reports appear to parallel data found in current research on American Indian military veterans in relationship to overrepresentation in following high risk or high service in career areas. The participants had unanimous anecdotal agreement on this perspective of being overrepresented, and the primary investigator's 19 years of work with law enforcement agencies supported that perspective. Their respective career experiences bolstered this observation as 6 participants held high-risk assignments (e.g., SWAT), 8 had significant high-risk training (e.g., bomb squad), 7 had significant membership in multiple fraternal orders (e.g., law enforcement, military), 6 held office in these orders, 8 had significant records of community volunteerism, and 4 had sustained serious injuries on duty requiring hospitalization.

Regarding Soul Wound issues (gathered via the Comprehensive History Questionnaire detailed next), the following was noted: 3 participants had been placed in foster care; 1 was adopted out of his American Indian heritage; 8 had parents or grandparents who attended boarding schools; 2 had close relatives who were murdered; 4 had close relatives who completed suicide, 1 of these had more than one relative who completed suicide; and 10 participants indicated that they and their families had endured significant discrimination due to their American Indian heritage. In addition, 3 participants indicated that they had previously worked in careers that were consistent with some of the roles of the traditional warrior; 1 worked as a lay counselor, and 2 had served time voluntarily in the armed forces. All 3 of those participants indicated their law enforcement positions were more consistent with the full breadth of the traditional American Indian warrior role and their previous military

vocations did not afford the same depth of community service, mentoring, and role modeling in the warrior tradition.

### *Instruments*

Two instruments were utilized for this study in an effort to gather both historical and contemporaneous data for each participant case. The instruments included a Comprehensive History Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

*Comprehensive History Questionnaire (CHQ).* The CHQ was adapted from a questionnaire used in a study of intergenerational trauma and coping with the grandchildren of survivors of Stalin's purge in Russia (Baker & Gippenreiter, 1998). Data were gathered on specific symptoms of Soul Wound found in the health disparity literature aforementioned (e.g., family history of boarding school experience; victimization/assault, including those racially motivated; suicide; physical and mental health issues) and career in law enforcement (e.g., history of assignments held in career). Data were also gathered on career interest and satisfaction specifically. The data gathered from the CHQ served as a catalyst for revealing important family history and stories that further informed the interview session.

*Interview protocol.* The interview instrument was a semi-structured protocol developed after an extensive review of the literature on American Indians across the fields of psychology, public health, anthropology, history, and American Indian studies. Eight open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to express themselves with minimal influence by the interviewer. The interview questions addressed two aims:

- a. What role does connection and duty to community/family play in vocational choice and satisfaction, and how does this affect integration of intergenerational historical trauma (Soul Wound) if present?
- b. What role does traditional American Indian spirituality play in vocational choice and satisfaction, and how does this affect integration of intergenerational historical trauma (Soul Wound) if present?

The interview questions appear in Table 1, along with the study aims addressed by each.

Data from the CHQ were used to inform probes to the interview questions as they arose. The interview questions targeted the following areas: (a) career choice, (b) ethnic identity in relationship to career, (c) community in relationship to career, and (d) meaning/spirituality in relationship to career. These areas were chosen for their appearance in the research literature on American

**Table 1.** Research Questions and Associated Aims

Research Questions/Probes	Aim 1	Aim 2
1. What factors figured into your choice to become a law enforcement officer?	X	X
2. How do you see your American Indian (AI) culture/heritage as helping or hindering your career in law enforcement?	X	X
3. What meaning does your law enforcement career have in your life?	X	X
4. How does the non-American Indian community see you as an American Indian officer?	X	
5. How does the American Indian community see you as an AI officer?	X	
6. What would you tell an American Indian youth who was interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement?	X	X
7. As an American Indian officer, how do you want to be seen by the AI community? The non-AI community?	X	
8. What role does spirituality play in your life? How does this figure into your career?	X	X

Indians in military careers, the next closest relative vocationally to a career in law enforcement in the United States.

### *Research Team and Consultant General Characteristics*

The research team consisted of one tenured faculty member (counseling psychologist), the primary investigator on the project who was a doctoral dissertator in counseling psychology, and four doctoral students, three of whom were enrolled in a doctoral program in counseling psychology and one of whom was a dissertator in social work with an area of expertise in ECM. The faculty member was male and the remaining five team members were female. Ethnic identities of the team members included the faculty member who identified as African American, the dissertator in counseling psychology who identified as biracial Métis, two doctoral student members who identified as American Indian only, one who identified as biracial Native Hawaiian-White, and the dissertator in social work who identified as biracial African American-White.

A team of consultants individually provided input throughout the design development and analysis processes. The team of consultants included a White female clinical psychologist specializing in treating dually diagnosed veterans (PTSD and alcohol and other drug abuse [AODA]), a male psychiatric

nurse of East Asian descent specializing in treating a dually diagnosed (PTSD/AODA) veteran population, a White male psychologist treating stress and traumatic disorders in children and adults in a forensic setting, two male American Indian PhD professors in history, a White male law enforcement officer with a master's degree in educational psychology who also acted as the research assistant for analysis, and an insider consultant (male American Indian law enforcement officer). The team provided insight via the reflexive process of ECM, aided in the construction of the CHQ, and served to debrief and aid the primary investigator in reflection on the study as it developed.

*Research team individual and group perspectives.* Elliot, Fischer, and Rennie (1999) have presented recommendations for researchers in publishing qualitative work, indicating that *owning one's perspective* of the constructs, data collection, and analysis process is especially vital. Morrow (2005) refers to owning one's perspective as "disclosing one's personal, theoretical, and methodological orientations, values, and assumptions that could affect the research" (p. 257). The research team as a group met routinely to participate in the reflexive process to explore each individual member's perspective, as well as the group perspective resulting from the synergy of individuals. This process is known in other methodological traditions as *bracketing*. Additionally, the faculty member met regularly to process personal perspectives with the primary investigator as the project developed.

In a personal respect, the primary investigator brings with her an individual, familial, and ethnic group experience of Soul Wound constructs as a person of biracial, Métis heritage. Additionally, she has worked in law enforcement for more than 6 years with both state and municipal agencies as an officer and has worked in other capacities in such settings for an additional 13 years. Empirically, through the lens of ECM, she framed her research perspective as that of an insider-researcher-expert, having spent 6 years examining the issue of Soul Wound and completing both the personal (e.g., traditional healing work) and professional (e.g., theoretical, empirical training) preparation for the execution of this study. Regarding the qualitative perspective specifically, the primary investigator spent 3 years training in qualitative approaches and ECM as a tool of exploration with diverse populations and sociological issues.

All members of the research team explored their personal ethnic identities and member-groups' historical and sociological experiences through the lens of an intergenerational trauma coping model perspective (e.g., Danieli, 1994, 1998). The nonprimary investigator team members who identified as American Indian and Native Hawaiian expressed resonance with the Soul Wound theory. The team members who identified as African American felt personal ethnic resonance with Soul Wound theory, but expressed an historical group

perspective more situated in the African Diaspora literature. Apart from the primary investigator, qualitative methods were the primary empirical lens for the dissertator in social work, with an emphasis in ECM. The faculty team member worked primarily with quantitative methods, was trained by an American Indian mentor in counseling psychology, and has published in the identity literature for several populations of color. Two of the doctoral student members focused primarily on quantitative methods, and the third doctoral student member considered herself a novice researcher with training in quantitative methods and a developing competency in qualitative research.

### *Primary Investigator/Authors' Biases and Trustworthiness*

The idea of researcher bias has been well positioned by several (see Fetterman, 1998; Funder, 2005; Massey, 1998), who suggest the qualitative researcher “enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1). To aid in ferreting out the preconceived ideas and notions that fill the head of the researcher beyond the general characteristics treated earlier, Funder (2005) recommends an exploration of the following: (a) the ontologies operating within the study and through which the field of study is constructed—particularly those arranged around dichotomous, categorical thinking; (b) the Western science biases we assume that may not be indigenous to the population participants and/or context; (c) the academic biases we operationalize that may distance us from accessing and grasping the practical implications of our research process; and (d) the interplay between intimacy (productive and quality relationships with study participants) and power (innate imbalance in the favor of the researcher in the relationship).

Two primary ontologies were espoused by the primary investigator regarding the historical experience of the American Indian population and coping. The Western ontology of historical stress- and trauma-related experiences as having multi- and intergenerational impact was utilized to conceptualize the manifestations of such if/when present. This literature is based heavily upon research addressing Jewish Holocaust survivors and their children and possesses a strong congruence with the medical model in psychology (i.e., PTSD; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The second perspective utilized a pan-American Indian traditional understanding of the impact of such experiences and, given the literature published at the time of the study's unfolding, was most congruent with Duran's (1990) concept of Soul Wound. However, the primary investigator perceived the Soul Wound perspective to be lacking in the articulation of the role of coping and protective factors in detail (aside from the role of the group in the recognition of trauma and its healing).



The primary investigator perceived this to be largely a result of the perspective being constructed for consumption by a Western academic and practitioner audience, and therefore vulnerable to incongruence with pan-American Indian traditional worldview due to a need to compartmentalize and define in Western terms the process of injury, healing, and growth. Thus, the primary investigator felt constrained within the Western science bias in examining these issues with the participants and viewed the worldviews (pan-American Indian traditional and Western mainstream psychological) as relatively incongruent. She journaled on this issue and explicitly acknowledged this perspective to the faculty member, the research team, and participants. She believed this need to compartmentalize was most apparent in the tools selected for the study, which made tally of *symptoms* (e.g., the CHQ), and was less apparent in the actual interviews, which allowed for a process interaction.

The academic biases of the primary investigator (and four members of the team) were housed in the academic element of counseling psychology. Some of the innate biases relevant in this area of the field include a focus on assets and strengths, person-environment interactions, educational and career development, and a focus on intact personalities (Gelso & Fretz, 2000). Additionally, the academic element of this area of the field still favors quantitative methods of research and remains dominated by qualitative methods of exploration that operationalize non-American Indian traditional values such as categorization and compartmentalization. Alternatively, however, the primary investigator viewed herself as strongly situated in the practice element of counseling psychology, having 18 years experience in working with trauma and stress in counseling diverse populations, including American Indians and law enforcement officers. This practical orientation is considered an asset utilized toward trustworthiness in counterbalancing academic biases (Funder, 2005).

The primary investigator expected intimacy to be facilitated by her insider status as both an individual of American Indian descent and as a former law enforcement officer. Though she anticipated experiencing interethnic differences within the population around interpersonal interactions and the sharing of information, she believed that having worked as an officer for a large urban law enforcement agency would be an asset in gaining legitimacy with participants. Issues of power and control were anticipated by the primary investigator, given the perceived incongruence of the divergent worldviews of traditional pan-American Indian conceptualization and information-gathering techniques and those of the mainstream profession of counseling psychology. The ECM framework allowed for adjustments to be made throughout the research process. Participants thus were able to more overtly exercise what Kothari (2001) refers to as hidden domination, or the opportunity for participants to exercise

license in the research design and data gathering and analysis process as it unfolds. The reflexive process was used extensively throughout the study and provided an avenue for participants to engage the primary investigator in her perceptions of her biases and interpretations of data and process.

## Procedure

Previous authors on this topic (e.g., Holm, 1996) have made the case for pan-cultural similarities among tribes regarding the warrior role, thus no specific effort was made to recruit participants from any particular Tribal Nation or geographic region. Primary recruitment targeted large departments in the Midwest, Rocky Mountains, and Southwestern United States regions. Three large police departments in three separate states forwarded recruitment flyers to their employees. The flyers indicated the study was looking for American Indian law enforcement officers working for non-Tribal agencies who were willing to share their stories of policing/peacekeeping in a modern society. The flyer did not utilize the terms *warrior*, *Soul Wound*, *traditional*, or *spiritual*. In a fourth state, flyers were forwarded to potential participants with assistance from a large police officers association. Through such efforts, 7 participants were recruited. The flyer was also placed on law enforcement–related web sites and secure law enforcement blogs, including that of the National Native American Law Enforcement Association. Via such electronic resources, 2 participants were recruited. Finally, nomination, snowball sampling, and informal contacts played a role in the recruitment of the remaining 3 participants via personal referral from other participants. The study received a total of 27 inquiries, all of whom received study information and consent forms upon request. The 15 who did not complete the participation process before the close of the study reported strong interest in participating but nonparticipation due to constraining career (e.g., excessively demanding schedule or work assignment) or family obligations (e.g., ill relative).

Upon inquiry, participants received a packet via the U.S. Postal Service, including a consent form, the CHQ, and a copy of the interview questions. Participants were given the choice to begin completing the CHQ on their own or to complete it entirely with the researcher at the time of the interview. All participants chose to complete the CHQ on their own prior to the interview. All CHQs were reviewed with participants during the interview session. All interviews were conducted by the study's primary investigator alone. The interviews ranged from 1.5 to 2 hours in length and were conducted at a location chosen by the participant that provided comfort and confidentiality. The interviewer made notes during the interview to provide further context for

interpreting both the interview data and the CHQ during analysis. Of participants, 10 completed their interview face to face and were video- and audio-taped, 1 participant completed the interview face to face and requested to be audiotaped only, and 1 individual working in a sensitive assignment completed the interview via e-mail and by phone. Participants received \$50 for their participation and 11 independently chose to donate their gift to a scholarship fund aimed at supporting American Indian college students.

Audio- and videotapes were transcribed and audited for coding accuracy twice. Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was utilized, as each participant received a copy of his or her transcript to provide feedback on its accuracy and in an effort to solicit additional data the participant may have desired to share. Participant transcripts of the interview protocol portion of the in-person meeting ranged in length from four to nine pages single spaced, with seven pages being the more common length. Phone calls were made to participants to follow up on the aforementioned member checking procedure, and while no participants made edits to their transcripts, 3 did provide additional sources of data not solicited by the study that were given to the team at a second in-person meeting. In addition, 1 provided a documentary videotape of the participant volunteering at ground zero in New York City, 1 provided historical documentation of relatives working in Tribal policing, and another provided a typewritten resume. Each additional data source provided by participants was also coded, as were researchers' reflexive notes and the primary investigator's journal.

*Procedural reflexivity and trustworthiness.* Funder (2005) has suggested that qualitative researchers unfolding the reflexive process are at risk of practicing narcissistic self-reflection over true research rigor. He identified two avenues for managing this risk: (a) attention to researcher role and power relations in respect to the worldviews and epistemologies formed via the interaction between the researcher's own ecology and that of the participants and (b) establishing dedicated efforts to solicit and incorporate others' perceptions of the researcher's biases and perceptions. The present study incorporated ECM's deep reflexive process in conjunction with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendations for trustworthiness and utilized these criteria throughout the procedure.

Reflexivity was benchmarked at every layer of the study. The primary investigator consulted with the faculty member, research team, research assistant, and consultants, respectively, to select the study's theoretical perspective (Soul Wound), the methodological framework (ECM), the deductive domains of analysis as driven by Soul Wound theory and existing literature, the development and use of the CHQ, the development of the interview questions, and

data analysis (discussed in detail the following section). She also kept a journal reflecting on the study's methodological framework, participant and peer interactions, and the analytical process. Reflective notes were kept by the primary investigator and the analysts (see next section). Peer debriefing was performed three times for the primary investigator by two of the consultants (the clinical psychologist and the psychiatric nurse), once during the study's conceptualization, once during data collection, and once during analysis. Reflexivity in negative case analysis (highlighted in ECM), member checking, and triangulation were also emphasized in the procedure and are discussed in more detail in the following section.

While the primary investigator was herself an insider to the study population, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were bolstered by peer debriefing with the insider consultant member as well as attendance at several gatherings geared toward the population's profession. Examples of gatherings attended include the National Native American Law Enforcement Association (NNALEA) Conference, meetings of a Midwestern American Indian law enforcement group, and an informational consultation with the past president of NNALEA utilized as a peer debriefing. It was via this deep immersion and ongoing reflexive process that power was more evenly distributed between researcher and participants and reciprocity was more wholly realized. One clear demonstration of reciprocity and power exercised by the participants can be seen in the fact that 11 of the 12 participants asked to donate their \$50 study incentive to a college fund for American Indian college students studying in the field of criminal justice as a result of the member checking process detailed in the Analysis section and consultation with the insider team member.

## *Analysis*

The primary investigator, research assistant, and social work dissertator team member each independently read and coded each case individually, then across cases. Data were categorized first by abstracting four large domains identified deductively in the study's conceptualization: (a) career interest, (b) career satisfaction, (c) facilitating factors, and (d) constraining factors. The career interest and career satisfaction domains were selected because of their importance in the literature on American Indian military veterans and career and the unique opportunity of this study to contribute to the career literature on American Indians who have established careers in a particular field. The facilitating and constraining factors domains were selected as a means of bridging the divergent pan-traditional American Indian and Western mainstream

perspectives regarding compartmentalization and minimizing compartmentalization. Additionally, a precedent has been set for this minimal compartmentalization by Gina Miranda (2004) in her exploration of race, kinship, and identity among biracial adoptees via ECM. Once the data were analyzed for the four domains, an indicative analysis was conducted on the data and found no additional large domains. The career interest and career satisfaction domains were analyzed independently of Soul Wound data and then merged with all data. The rationale for this two-layer analysis of the interest and satisfaction data was to explore any possibility of providing a contribution to the field for this population given the scant body of literature on American Indians with established careers. Domains were further rendered to categories and subcategories utilizing an inductive analysis process and thus were not imposed by the researchers but emerged from the data. All participant data were analyzed in both a within- and cross-case manner. Individual participant member checking was utilized during analysis, and participants were individually offered an opportunity to provide feedback on the data. Rather than resulting in participants providing challenges to the researchers perspectives, their responses were to endorse the codes and data and to provide additional sources of data as aforementioned. Additionally, a focus group of actual participants was used as a final check on analysis decisions. In all, 6 study participants were able to attend the 2-hour focus group session that was held regionally, resulting in the group attendance of those logistically able to attend. The focus group of 6 of the 12 participants was provided the domains, categories, and subcategories that emerged in the entire data set and asked to provide insight on items that could not be substantiated with national or regional statistics or standards in the profession of law enforcement (e.g., roles within law enforcement considered high-risk positions). The 6 participants who were not able to attend the participant focus group provided feedback by phone and/or e-mail. Only 1 participant chose to utilize the e-mail option, due to the individual's restrictive work assignment and inability to communicate by phone at that time.

The final phase of analysis involved auditing checks by the remaining members of the research team, under the guidance of the social work dissertator who had expertise in ECM and the primary investigator. The team gave particular attention to categories and subcategories that appeared during the initial phase of analysis, under both the facilitating and constraining domains (e.g., American Indian ethnic membership/identity). Discussion among the team and consultants determined that such categories manifested differently under each domain, and in keeping with ECMs value on divergent or what would be categorized as *outlier* data in a quantitative study, the categories

and subcategories would be retained under each domain and articulated accordingly. While ECM offers the researcher the opportunity to remain the expert scientist and take a position on data analysis based on theory that may be contrary to that of the analysis team, there was no divergence between the primary investigator, the social work dissertator, the research assistant, and the analysis team in this study in rendering domains, categories, and subcategories. Thus, though this study did not use a consensus model, consensus was present throughout the analysis process, achieved after a deep process of circularity.

## Results

Table 2 displays the domains, categories, and relevant subcategories, indicating whether general (applying to all cases), typical (applying to 5 to 11 cases), or nontypical (applying to less than 5 cases; adapted from the recommended standards of Miles & Huberman, 1994, and Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). All data that applied to less than 5 cases were included as is consistent with Deloria's American Indian information-gathering practices and ECM design. A summary of the domains, categories, and subcategories follows.

### *Career Interest*

The career interest domain was defined as the primary factors that figured into the participants seriously considering a law enforcement career. Participants reported developing an interest in a law enforcement career through three categories: (a) value on service/duty to community, (b) spiritual meaning of the career, and (c) influence of a mentor. All 12 participants reported data in this domain.

The first category of value on service/duty to community was defined as a strong belief in the individual taking his or her place in respect to the well-being of the collective. This was the most commonly cited category under the career interest domain, with all 12 participants reporting that it was a significant influence on their law enforcement career interest and choice. There was unanimous recognition of community service through a career in law enforcement as an honor.

We're protectors of the community, and that's the way it was presented to me, that I would be part of a warrior society that was protecting the . . . community in general. I think that in itself was one of the deciding factors for me actually applying for the department.

**Table 2.** Domains, Categories, and Subcategories, Number of Cases, and Classification

Domain	Category	Subcategory	N	Classification
Career interest	Service/duty to community		12	General
		Spiritual meaning	10	Typical
	Mentor/family influence		12	Typical
Career satisfaction	Spiritual meaning	Family influence	5	Typical
			9	Typical
	American Indian (AI) cultural values		6	Typical
	Family support		5	Typical
Facilitating factors	American Indian cultural values	Family emotional support	3	Nontypical
			12	General
	Mentoring/role modeling	Service/duty to community	11	Typical
		Family	8	Typical
		Children	12	General
		American Indian humor	11	Typical
		Relational orientation	11	Typical
			12	General
		Being mentored	11	Typical
	Mentoring others	12	General	
	American Indian ethnic membership/identity		12	General
Effective with AI community		11	Typical	
Effective with others of color		11	Typical	
Managing spirit of alcohol		9	Typical	
		12	General	
Constraining factors	American Indian ethnic membership/identity		12	General

(continued)

Table 2. (conitnued)

Domain	Category	Subcategory	N	Classification
		African American coworkers	11	Typical
		American Indian community	2	Nontypical
		Latino coworkers/ community	4	Nontypical
	Negative manifestation of colonization impact		12	General
		Spirit of Alcohol	3	Nontypical
		Family	4	Nontypical
		Land ties	5	Typical
	American Indian ethnic ambiguity/ invisibility		11	Typical
	Stereotyping		11	Typical
		AI learning/ communication styles	3	Nontypical
		AI culturally prohibited behaviors	4	Nontypical

Spiritual meaning of the law enforcement career was defined as a belief system held by the participants that their career roles held important implications for the well-being of others in a metaphysical or meaning-making way and that he or she was part of a greater whole in ensuring the wellness of others. This category was cited by 10 of the participants (“So I guess that that’s the blending of the two [cultural worldviews] that’s, as far as culturally, it is a high honor to be of service [assume a spiritually bound role] and a protector of your community.”).

The mentoring category was reported by all 12 participants and was defined as the individual attention, education, and tutoring a participant received from one particular role model in his or her life related to the law enforcement career.

Well, I was 22 and living on the reservation . . . and there was a lieutenant out there from Oklahoma that I played sports with and he’s like, “You know what, you need to do something, what are you doing with



your life?” And then he kept talking to me . . . and . . . “You know you need to get out of here and you need to come back and help. . . . You need to go to school though.” . . . So I came down here to the junior college because of the program there . . . so I ended up taking classes at the junior college and I think my last semester, halfway through I had two teachers they were police officers . . . and they kept talking to me. . . . They’re like, “The test is coming up and you can do this and you need to do that.” They told me what the requirements were. . . . So I went down there and I ended up passing the test and taking everything and I . . . passed. . . . It was fast, really fast and they got me through. It was like go here, go there, go here, go there. . . . So I ended up going to the academy down here just like, “O.K!”

The family influences subcategory emerged from the 5 participants who identified specific family members who served as law enforcement career interest mentors while themselves working in the field (“[Name] is from [participant’s reservation] and my dad and him are good friends [relatives in the Tribal sense] and he talked to me and [participant’s relative] about coming on the job.”).

### *Career Satisfaction*

The career satisfaction domain was defined as including the elements that participants reported as essential to their sense of fulfillment in their law enforcement careers. Of the participants, 9 reported data within this domain, with three categories emerging: (a) spiritual meaning, (b) American Indian cultural values, and (c) family support. The spiritual meaning category was defined as the sense of purpose participants reported in their law enforcement career as related to the wellness of others and/or the community. In all, 9 participants reported that their career having a spiritual meaning was for them key to career satisfaction. These reports were framed according to participant’s American Indian worldview orientations around spirituality.

In order to survive in the two worlds, it is my belief the two aforementioned concepts [giving back to the community, a traditional doctrine, and to flourish and grow as a person, somewhat contemporary ideology] must co-exist amongst each other harmoniously, therefore I have achieved a great level of overall satisfaction in law enforcement, as my law enforcement experiences have been bountiful and fruitful. . . . In entering the field of law enforcement, I have been more concerned about earning

the respect of tribal peoples and upholding the values and beliefs significant to tribal people. I have not necessarily concerned myself with the respect of non-Indian people, as I believe this would be an eventuality practicing tribal ways in a nontraditional environment.

American Indian cultural values were defined as behaviors and/or ideas participants conceptualized as related to ethnically specific teachings they had received. A total of 6 participants considered American Indian values to be absolutely essential for achieving career satisfaction, with the goal of serving community being more important than financial reasons (“If you’re Native you don’t think of money. . . . The first thing you think about is your people and that’s just because that’s how we’re raised.”).

Family support was defined as nonfinancial aid American Indian participants received from family members throughout their challenging law enforcement careers. In all, 5 participants reported data within this category. Of these, 3 participants indicated that family members helped emotionally support the participants during the career’s most demanding times (e.g., recruit training, long hours, difficult assignments) and made it possible for them to achieve preferred work assignments. These reports were contextualized by participants in an orientation they viewed as related to American Indian spiritual worldview.

[My dad always said] being a man is what it takes. He used to tell me that ever since I was a little kid and I always remember that. Every time any hardship comes up or anything that I think it might be impossible or is overwhelming, I always think about him saying that.

### *Facilitating Factors*

Facilitating factors were defined as those elements of American Indian experience (e.g., identity, culture) that participants believed were helpful or served moderating roles while establishing and working in a law enforcement career. The facilitating factors indicated by participants included the following categories: (a) American Indian cultural values, (b) mentoring/role modeling, (c) American Indian ethnic membership/identity, and (d) managing the spirit of alcohol.

American Indian cultural values were defined again as behaviors and/or ideas participants conceptualized as related to ethnically specific teachings they had received. All 12 participants identified American Indian values as important factors in helping to establish their careers. Five subcategories (specific value sets) were identified: (a) service/duty to community, (b) family,

(c) children, (d) American Indian humor, and (e) relational orientation. The service/duty to community subcategory was again defined as a strong belief in the individual taking his or her place in respect to the well-being of the collective. Of participants, 11 reported that they felt that the American Indian value on community or collective well-being and responsibility was an important facilitating factor in their law enforcement careers.

Question: So, the community service aspect of it [law enforcement career] is important to you?

Reply: That's the only important [thing] to it.

And from another participant:

The police department was presented to me as a warrior society. . . . We're protectors of the community, and that's the way it was presented to me, that I would be part of a warrior society. . . . I think that in itself was one of the deciding factors for me actually applying for the department. . . . Culturally, it is a high honor to be of service and a protector of your community.

For the participant who was adopted out of the American Indian culture, proximity to first-degree Soul Wound issues as conceptualized by Duran (1990) impacted cultural orientation and meaning making toward the law enforcement career and its potential as a vehicle of reparations. Though the participant recognized there was a congruence between a law enforcement career and a traditional role of the warrior, it was equated more with the martial duties represented in well-recognized media stereotypes, or those of the soldier. The participant referred to this as "acting like a crazy Indian," one that no one would bother. American Indian cultural-self was not connected to career for this participant as reported by the other participants, and the participant thus did not make meaning of career in the same manner. This participant was also the only one to indicate that recognition by the non-American Indian community was more important to him than that of the American Indian community. This individual did, however, strongly endorse the importance of a mentor in career interest—one of the following facilitating factor categories.

The family subcategory was defined in relationship to each participant's Tribal understandings of relatedness, minimally including the Western mainstream idea of the nuclear family and domestic partners, extended blood and legal family, and Tribal clan and band members. Of the participants, 8 cited

the American Indian value of family as including a broad relational pattern that prescribes mandates of responsibility was important in facilitating their law enforcement careers.

The subcategory of children was defined as the American Indian value placed pan-culturally on children and the seven generations to come after each participant in decision making and impact of behaviors. All 12 participants felt that their values related to making good decisions and behaving well for future generations helped them within their law enforcement careers (“I’ve talked to Native American students at [Indian schools]. . . . I’ve done that a couple times and I’ve actually had some of those students contact me so that’s been real nice . . . I’m very proud of who I am and what I do.”)

The American Indian humor subcategory was defined as the use of dry, sarcastic wit as a coping strategy for dealing with challenging issues. Of the participants, 11 reported the use of what they conceptualized as American Indian humor to deal with the stress and trauma of their jobs.

You know, one of the things that, you have to have a thick skin in law enforcement. You have to be able to take a lot of ah, kidding and a lot of, ah, um, jabs at, a lot of different parts of your life and yourself, in particular your ethnicity and um, your culture, um and Native Americans are not only people who are subjugated to that type of harassment or kidding or whatever you want to call it. And they have to have a thick skin. A lot of that is generated to, to promote some type of levity, because the type of job that we do, um requires us to kind of look at things, ah, and laugh at them. Things that would make other people cry and certainly would make us cry if we put down our guard.

This was the participant’s perspective on “teasing” endured from officers about his American Indian heritage, such as being referred to as “Chief” by coworkers. Of the participants, 2 wondered to the researcher if American Indian humor had always been so or if it was related to the history of oppression referred to herein as Soul Wound and was thus possibly a widespread, pan-cultural coping strategy.

Relational orientation as a subcategory under the American Indian cultural values category was defined as the behaviors that were derived from a belief that everything has a relationship to everything else and the totality of those relationships makes up the world, as conceptualized in the common American Indian phrase “We are all related” (Deloria, 1999). These relationally oriented behaviors were related as practices that emerged from participants’ American Indian spiritual value sets. Of the participants, 11 discussed

this subcategory with comparison of the “police family,” to the participant’s own family (in whatever form it took tribally), to the community as family, and to all creation as family. This was seen by participants as a major difference between how they as American Indian officers interacted with the public and how officers of other worldview orientations did so.

I get sent to a drunk or a domestic violence call and that could be my family. That’s how I look at it, like that could be my mother, or my brother, or my uncle and I treat them like my family. That could be my house I’m responding to.

The mentoring/role modeling category was again defined as the individual attention, education, and tutoring a participant received from one particular role model in his or her life. All 12 participants reported the importance of mentoring and/or role modeling in their careers. In addition, 11 participants reported the importance of having mentors in their career development. All 12 participants indicated they believed it was extremely important to mentor others and act as a role model to society and individual persons with whom they interacted during their careers. Traditionally, warriors play a primary role as mentors and role models of right living for all the community. Participants articulated mentoring and role modeling for their communities, particularly their American Indian communities, as the ultimate honor and responsibility of their warrior status/careers. It is noteworthy that in this area, participants saw the greatest opportunity for healing the ills of American Indian peoples, or the negative aftermath of colonization.

Others are going to be looking up to you and you might have an opportunity to show somebody else that there’s a good way of life, rather than standing on a street corner with a brown bag in your hand getting loaded like a lot of people thought American Indians do, or did. (What the participant would tell an American Indian youth interested in a career in law enforcement)

The American Indian ethnic membership/identity category was defined as those factors the participants reported as facilitating their careers simply as a result of what others ascribed to participants in being an American Indian—beliefs about their American Indian status and values and behaviors ascribed to participants simply based upon their ethnic identification. This category was reported by all 12 participants. Of the 12 participants, 11 reported the effective with American Indian community subcategory, which was defined as an access

and outcomes facilitated by the participants' American Indian ethnic status. Participants reported they believed the American Indian community in their nonreservation work environments recognized them as warriors, mentors, and role models and acknowledged participants with respect and honor.

Any kind of calls, they're always impressed and they're happy. I mean you can arrest them and they're more cooperative with me than they are with the other officers.

You know . . . it's gone very well, they're happy to see me when I do arrive and they listen, and they're my buddies, so I don't have a problem with them.

The effective with others of color subcategory was defined as participants being allowed access and outcomes within and among other communities and coworkers of color as a result of those others ascribing beliefs, expected behaviors, and so on to the participants. In all, 11 participants reported their American Indian heritage was often an asset when working with other populations of color, as they were either able to gain access due to not being White or African American (the two largest racial/ethnic categories of officers in departments reported by those in the study) or that their unique ethnic membership provoked interest and/or curiosity for all populations encountered and the participant was thus received favorably in the framework of *positive* stereotyping (e.g., "We're interesting to them. They think Natives are cool. We're safe.").

A final category under the facilitating factors domain was that of managing the spirit of alcohol, which was defined as one's ability to minimize or completely negate the potential negative impact(s) of alcohol use or abuse in one's life. In all, 9 participants reported this category, with 3 indicating that they had, during the course of their careers, overindulged and recognized that this was a danger due to the high alcoholism rates in both the law enforcement and the American Indian communities, as well as due to the pan-traditional American Indian conceptualization of alcohol as spirit. Of the 9 participants, 6 indicated that they practiced absolute sobriety and thought this was a major factor in their career success and their ability to serve the American Indian community.

### **Constraining Factors**

Constraining factors were defined as those elements of the American Indian experience (e.g., identity, culture) that the participant believed hindered the

participant's effort to establish or work in a law enforcement career. Three categories of constraining factors were indicated by participants as issues that needed to be managed and or mastered in establishing or working in their law enforcement careers: (a) American Indian ethnic membership/identity—the double-edged sword, (b) negative manifestation of colonization impact, and (c) stereotyping of American Indian cultural norms/practices. Each category had additional subcategories that are delineated in the following.

The American Indian ethnic membership/identity category was defined as those factors the participants reported as hindering their careers simply as a result of what others ascribed to participants in being an American Indian—beliefs about their American Indian status and values and behaviors ascribed to participants simply based upon their ethnic identification. All 12 participants reported this category as relevant in their careers as American Indian law enforcement officers. The category had three subcategories: (a) African American coworkers, (b) American Indian community, and (c) Latino coworkers/community.

The African American coworkers subcategory was defined as factors indicating conflict on the job for participants when interacting with their African American colleagues. In all, 11 participants reported their American Indian ethnic identity was often seen as a source of conflict when interacting with African American officers. A general sense of constant, low-level tension between the two minority officer populations was reported. Participants indicated being disturbed to find that their African American counterparts often held dominant society perceptions of American Indian culture and subsequently, American Indian officers. Participants reported a sense of frustration and disappointment expressed over having to endure, ignore, or confront ignorance with another marginalized officer population. Participants' stories of conflict with African American officers often dealt with African American officers relating their own stories of disenfranchisement ("I've worked amongst . . . African American[s] . . . just a very small percentage, they [would] go on about how they deserve this and how they should get that and as soon as I said, 'I'm American Indian.' They'll shut up and walk away."). Interestingly, 1 participant also mentioned that in addition to the aforementioned constraint, she also experienced African American female officers as her closest friends while on the job, with women in general having to support each other's careers. Participants indicated they did not experience this same constraint with African Americans in the community to whom they were delivering services.

The American Indian community subcategory was defined as factors indicating conflict or difficulty experienced by participants when working in

American Indian communities. In this category, 2 participants reported, 1 indicating he had some trouble early in his career establishing authority in the American Indian community due to the cultural perspective of his young age and taking a leadership role:

I was the youngest police officer in the training academy, and then I was the youngest officer on the street . . . it was like that for . . . like six months or a year. So . . . as far as a hindrance, I do take ah, a lot of teasing [from] some . . . Native Americans on the street and they're not real happy that ah, they have to take orders or direction from me. I try to overlook it and move on.

The second participant, who was also adopted out of his American Indian heritage, reported holding some stereotypes of American Indians that made it difficult for him to work with them in the community when encountering those who were under the influence of alcohol ("Getting sent to a drunk guy Indian. He sees me and wants a break. I'm thinking 'God, why's it got to be Indian?' because I know everyone's [peers] looking at this and I'm going to hear it later."). This participant also reported being the only American Indian officer in the two agencies he worked for and indicated that encountering other American Indians in the community was extremely rare.

The Latino coworkers/community subcategory was defined as factors constituting conflict or difficulty experienced by participants when mistaken for Hispanic or Latinos by those coworkers or communities. In all, 4 participants reported this category and having difficulty navigating Latino officers and civilians, who frequently mistook American Indian officers for Latinos and prodded them to speak Spanish:

[A] lot of people thought I was Hispanic, so I really didn't correct them.

Yeah, they think we're Hispanic then so they'll ask you, "Hey, why aren't you speaking Spanish?" And you're like, "I'm not Spanish." And . . . I'll come back, "Do you speak [Tribal language]?" And I'll go, "Indio, Indio!"

The second category of constraining factors was that of negative manifestation of colonization impact, which was defined as factors identified by participants as being directly related to colonization affects. Four subcategories were identified: (a) spirit of alcohol, (b) family, (c) land ties, and (d) American Indian ethnic ambiguity/invisibility.



The spirit of alcohol subcategory was defined as factors that were alcohol related and presented challenges to participants in their careers but were not related to the participants' own alcohol use or abstinence proper. Alcohol use was identified by 3 participants as a constant factor to manage throughout a law enforcement career and often within one's own family or tribal Nation ("I wanted to help . . . Indian people because we have . . . alcoholism and all that stuff, . . . family fights. When you're down here you know your community and know what's going on.").

Very related to the spirit of alcohol subcategory was the family subcategory, which was defined as factors reported to create difficulty for participants in pursuit of their careers and emerging from participants' nuclear family or domestic partners, extended blood and legal family, and Tribal clan and band members. In all, 4 participants reported that family could be a burden and must be negotiated in relationship to all Soul Wound issues, particularly alcohol use and violence ("You have to kind of cut your family away a little bit initially. It's gonna be difficult on them at first.").

The subcategory of land ties was defined as the cultural and spiritual value strain experienced by participants when separated from Tribal and/or sacred lands. In all, 5 participants reported this subcategory was a constraint particularly if the officer was leaving a reservation home to work for a non-Tribal agency. Salient in the data was the report of nonaccess to healing resources land had to offer in coping with a career in law enforcement and all the traumas it can bring ("It's hard to be away from everything, especially the ceremonies.").

The final subcategory of negative manifestation of colonization impact issues was American Indian ethnic ambiguity/invisibility, which was defined as the factors that created difficulty for participants in experiencing the propensity for Western American Indian mainstream stereotypes of American Indians regarding culture, phenotype, history, and so on. Of the participants, 11 saw the dominant society perception of American Indian peoples as a dead race belonging to a previous era in human history as a constant constraint ("Usually it's, 'Huh! You're an Indian? You're not an Indian.' . . . That type of thing, . . . apparently I don't have enough of the look."). The 11 participants told of having to convince people of their American Indian heritage, that American Indian peoples did indeed still exist, and of often being left out of racial tracking within law enforcement, having to endorse the "other" category both when coming in to the application process and when filing reports on community interactions.

The last category of constraining factors, stereotyping/misappropriations, was defined as factors reported as the incongruence between Western mainstream

expectations of American Indian culture and behavior and participants' actual cultural norms, behaviors, and practices. In all, 11 participants reported data in this category. The category had two subcategories: (a) American Indian learning/communication styles and (b) American Indian culturally prohibited behaviors. Of the participants, 3 reported American Indian learning/communication styles subcategory data, indicating their quiet, thoughtful learning style as arousing suspicion in other officers or being interpreted as aloofness, ignorance, or arrogance. For example, in response to clarifying one's style of interacting with coworkers, 1 participant shared the following statement related to the American Indian cultural value and practice of honoring elders and one of their roles in community as knowledge-keepers:

Most of the time elders explain everything, "this is why we do it and this is why that's done" . . . and most of the time they explain so you don't like go, "O.K. I understand everything." Then once you get out here you start . . . the same thing that you were taught, and you sit back and you watch and you learn. Well, they [colleagues] don't understand that you're learning the same way [they are], it's just that you're not, you know asking stupid questions.

In all, 4 participants reported Tribal, culturally ascribed values and accepted behaviors under the subcategory of American Indian culturally prohibited behaviors. They reported challenges that had to be negotiated and at times at odds with the duties required of law enforcement officers.

Of course there's always a lot of issues you know, like does your traditions or your beliefs affect your work. . . . In our beliefs, touching a dead person is like prohibited, it's not a thing to do . . . the elders they frown on it.

Yeah, . . . one of our ways is never to look in a window. I was always told never to look into a window, in anyone's window, and now when I go on jobs and I have to look in the window and I'm like, "Gasp, I'm looking in the window!"

## Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to explore how participants viewed themselves in relationship to their traditional American Indian (warrior) and Western mainstream (law enforcement) conceptualizations of their vocational roles

and how this may have either constrained or facilitated the management of wounding issues encountered, whether historically or contemporaneously. A secondary aim was to explore career interest and satisfaction for the participants in this career field. Both aims were examined within the Soul Wound construct exploring for points of convergence and divergence with the perspective, utilizing a method (ECM) requiring minimal deductive structure upon the data categorization and compartmentalization process (facilitating and constraining factors, career interest and satisfaction). Participants indicated that being a warrior in respect to the traditional American Indian conceptualization of being of service and ministering to or mentoring the people and role modeling was important in healing both collectively and individually. American Indian identity and culture were expressed largely by participants as an asset in working in a law enforcement career, and participants related they were able to affect the healing of American Indian communities in their role as law enforcement officers. This stands in contrast to elements of the more stereotypical version of the warrior as military soldier/fighter and reveals a fuller scope of this traditional role manifest in a Western mainstream profession than has been demonstrated in extant research with American Indian veterans (e.g., Beals, 2000; Holm, 1996). The role of warrior through a traditional American Indian lens was seen as essential to maintaining a healthy perspective in the career, and participants reported seeking balance via cultural and spiritual orientations toward their vocations in managing micro-aggressions (e.g., stereotyping at work) and the pitfalls of living as an American Indian officer (e.g., the presence and availability of alcohol). However, in this sample the process appears to have been constrained somewhat by the proximity of significant colonization influences that were historically bound (e.g., being removed from cultural influences and values training). This finding may lend some support to the Soul Wound conceptualization of wounding and delayed healing due to lack of access to American Indian culturally contextualized healing options; individual within community via a communally recognized *treatment*—or ceremony-in-relationship in the traditional American Indian orientation.

Though the element of the warrior role most focused on in the Western mainstream perspective (the protector/police officer/soldier role) was seen as essential for unfolding the position requirements of the career, it was not identified as prominent in relationship to helping manage Soul Wound issues or in career choice and satisfaction. For these participants, the prominent elements of the American Indian traditional role of the warrior (e.g., mentor, role model) were seen as the essential for a successful career and also in creating congruence between the vocational role and the traditional warrior's

role (vs. that of the military career). This finding resonates with Juntunen et al.'s (2001) finding with postsecondarily educated participants in their study of the career journey with American Indians. Their data revealed that it was typical for participants to articulate their career journey in terms of *living in two worlds* and that those with more advanced educational experiences tended to recognize the process as one of *creating an holistic third world*. Those participants articulated that they found utility in utilizing both worldviews' conceptual roles of the warrior but reported that their vocational role was more congruent with their traditional American Indian role.

The data also indicate that through mentors and family, officers became interested in their occupations and that their American Indian values gave meaning to the vocation, which was seen as a community-promoting opportunity that was viewed as an honor. This allowed participants to fulfill core spiritual values and to move toward a sense of balance, both for themselves and for the people. This was reported to be achieved through a cyclical process of balancing facilitating and constraining factors related to American Indian worldview, within which Soul Wound issues manifest, as is the process of negotiating dominant worldview and culture. While this relational element to the career-wellness process does support the treatment element as structured in Duran's (1990) Soul Wound orientation, the data provided by these participants seem to lend a more detailed context to what treatment or ceremony might constitute, one that researchers are only recently beginning to articulate across worldviews (see Gone, 2010). Participants also reported that alcohol was a primary issue to manage throughout career, and that doing so via a career in law enforcement was extremely powerful for the individual and the community—both American Indian and law enforcement. Other Soul Wound symptoms reported as needing to be managed for career included dealing with troubling family issues and negotiating distance from American Indian community and ceremonial lands. Interestingly, the findings of this study appear significantly congruent with those of Juntunen et al.'s (2001), with the data from that study overlapping thematically with the data mentioned herein (e.g., management of alcohol, support of family).

Participants recognized their American Indian identity as positioning them within a career in law enforcement, with unique advantages and roadblocks due to ethnic identity and worldview. They overwhelmingly indicated that they believed they gained access to community across racial/ethnic boundaries due to their American Indian ethnic membership. These participants reported being embraced and honored by the American Indian community when policing and reported being a source of interest and intrigue for other racial and ethnic populations, reporting this often afforded opportunities for connection

and effectiveness in the jobs they viewed others not to be afforded by ethnic origin. When considering their coworkers, however, an American Indian identity was also reported to be something to negotiate, in that participants frequently found themselves dodging discrimination and both positive and negative stereotyping. This experience included managing the misunderstanding of their cultural norms, learning styles, and other work-related behaviors. The findings shed light on the ongoing (rather than solely historical) nature of wounding and may shed light on the microaggressions American Indians may be required to manage on a routine basis in non-Tribal workplace settings. These ongoing stressors are not presently well articulated in the Soul Wound theory, though they surely find their origins in the historical factors identified by Duran and Duran (1995).

The results provide more clarity to how this segment of the American Indian population might be utilizing career as a means of negotiating and adaptively coping with wounding. The participants' responses indicate that striving to remain balanced individually while remaining connected to American Indian values and community helps to negotiate past living in the two worlds, toward a third option that integrates both worlds within career. Building a bridge between the two worlds, these warriors are able to act as mentors and intermediaries between both, becoming vehicles of adaptive coping as warriors. Such an understanding of healing around Soul Wound issues goes beyond the PTSD framework in shedding some light on adaptive roles and healing via career journey. Furthermore, this manner of coping lends more clarity to the intergenerational historical patterns that individuals negotiate when learning to balance both worlds for healing. Most participants retained core American Indian worldview values and see their perpetuation as critical to individual communal well-being. Mentoring the next generations and healing for past generations were recognized as essential in this endeavor, a piece of the intergenerational historical trauma framework that had yet to be articulated, and one congruent with the present conceptualization of colonization injuries transcending time within the Soul Wound framework.

The fact that participants saw their ministering, modeling, and mentoring roles as primary and their enforcing, policing/protecting, and soldiering roles as secondary is significant. For 11 of the 12 participants, this vocation provides an opportunity to assume the role of the warrior in its broadest sense—outside of its original American Indian context, something that American Indian military veterans have difficulty achieving due to the heavy emphasis on the soldiering/war aspect of the warrior role (Beals, 2000; Holm, 1996). The vocation allowed the participants to act in a capacity most approximating that of the traditional warrior, which permitted them to seek individual balance

via their cultural and spiritual journey of service to community. The ultimate vehicle of healing then is the individual officer himself or herself.

### *Limitations*

This qualitative study is an initial step in understanding the complex interplay between American Indian worldview (culture, colonization history, spirituality) and career as it relates to an individual's traditional Tribal warrior role in one of its modern incarnation, that of the law enforcement officer. Caution must be taken when making conclusions around these results. Self-selection may have skewed the results, in that only those who were interested in sharing their stories and already saw their American Indian identity as relevant to their careers, or only those who were faring well and satisfied in their careers, may have responded to the study.

Though the study does represent a wide range of tribal Nations, many cultural/language areas were not represented in the sample. We cannot thus assume that these results apply to all American Indian/Alaska Native peoples, given the immense diversity within the population. Finally, there was no specific attempt to assess for level (quantity) of wounding with each case family and the implications this might have had on how each participant negotiated their career and the two worlds. Some participants chose to pass on certain questions (particularly those addressing physical and sexual abuse), and it is difficult to extrapolate which resiliencies are due to American Indian culture and which are related to individual characteristics or resiliencies developed as a means of coping with such first-degree traumas or within the law enforcement career—though these too could be conceptualized as Soul Wound symptoms.

### *Implications and Future Directions*

This study attempted to answer the call of several in the field of counseling psychology (e.g., Byars & McCubbin, 2001; Fouad & Kantamneni, 2008) for more attention to the contextual and emic issues in research on career development and vocational psychology for traditionally marginalized populations. The results indicate needs in the area of vocational counseling that are much more intricate than identifying skills and interests. Like McCormick et al.'s (1997) model addressing vocational psychology issues with American Indians, the results of this study found that American Indian values were important in career interest, choice, development, success, and satisfaction. The needs participants attempted to have met were both individual and communal, and

the role of the warrior acted as a bridge between the two. Like the Juntunen et al. (2001) model, these results found that career is a lifelong endeavor used to promote traditional ways through helping others. This was enacted through the negotiation of both facilitating and constraining factors. Also like the Juntunen et al. study, this endeavor found that participants recognized that Soul Wound issues needed to be managed, particularly American Indian values in opposition to dominant cultural values, oppression, and sobriety. Future studies with American Indians around vocational and career issues should take into consideration the influence of traditional values, particularly those placed on community and mentoring, and must consider the nature of how future American Indian participants experience and negotiate living in two worlds and the ongoing nature of what have been contextualized as historical stressors. The participants clearly indicated that their individual sense of actualization was connected to their community orientation and both should be considered when working with American Indian counselees. Finally, the results of this study were quite congruent with those of Juntunen et al.'s. Counseling psychology would be benefitted by bridging the vocational literature on American Indians in secondary education with more study of those with established careers.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors are deeply grateful to Dr. Hardin Coleman and Dr. Gina Miranda Samuels, who mentored the authors on this study, Mr. James Warren (White Earth Chippewa), Administrator of the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation (former), who mentored Leah Arndt during her law enforcement career and served as an insider-consultant for this study, and most especially to the participants who were so gracious as to share their stories for the benefit of future generations.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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## Bios

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