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## "What's in a name?": Heteroglossia and History in Native Alaskan Names

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“WHAT’S IN A NAME?”: HETEROGLOSSIA AND HISTORY  
IN NATIVE ALASKAN NAMES

By

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Bachelor of Arts  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Native Alaskan personal names and naming practices and how these names are being used to index cultural identity in Anchorage, Alaska. In order to do this, I follow Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia (1981), which states all words are populated with meaning from all of the contexts in which they have been used in the past. Native Alaskan personal names should be considered heteroglossic based on the Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq beliefs that personal names are a type of soul that carries with it the characteristics of a person who uses it. When that person dies, the name-soul detaches from their body, taking with it the individual's personality characteristics to be passed on to the next person who will carry the name. Native Alaskan personal names are, therefore, imbued with the history of all their previous uses and contexts. Because my use of heteroglossia depends on the historical uses of names, the colonial history of the Native Alaskan groups must also be taken into consideration. In addition to illustrating how Native Alaskans use their personal names to index cultural identity, the results and discussion will also show how these names reflect different boundaries Native Alaskans face while living in an urban area: between life and death; between past and present; between young and old; and between native and non-native ways of life.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Hi, my name is Shannon.”

“I’m female. I’m American. I’m a graduate student. I’m a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter, and a niece.”

All of the above are ways in which I can choose to identify myself. But when I am meeting someone for the first time, the first thing I say to them is my name: “Hi, I’m Shannon,” not “Hi, I’m female.”

Personal names are just one of the many ways people identify themselves. As I outlined above, there are a variety of other ways people can identify themselves, some of which include (but are not limited to) gender, age, nationality, kinship, religion, race, region, economic and social status. However, we often begin verbal introductions with names (Erwin, 1993): “Hi, I’m Mary,” or “Hello, I’m Mr. Wells.” We do not start off an introduction with “Hi, I’m American,” or “Hello, I’m female,” even when we do identify with those labels. Names come first. In fact, names, both given names and surnames, may be among the first information we receive about people before even meeting them (Erwin, 1993), before we know anything about a person’s gender, race, nationality, or religion. Names are ubiquitous, and they are essentially a formulaic part of the speech event that is an introduction between interlocutors (Johnstone, 1991). This simple fact gives the study of names (henceforth referred to as onomastics) a multitude of implications across a variety of disciplines, such as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and philosophy.

Early studies in names focused on the psychological, such as which names were

favored over others (Allen, Brown, Dickinson, & Pratt, 1941) and their impact on self esteem (Boshier, 1968). Saul Kripke, a philosopher, argued that proper names are rigid designators because they pick out one and only one object based upon an original “baptismal event” that fixes the object (in the case of personal names, a person) as the referent of the name. This “baptismal event” simply refers to how an individual received their name, either through a ceremony during which a name is bestowed upon an individual or simply naming a child right after birth, as is the custom in many societies.

Names and naming practices also have cultural implications. The actual act of naming inserts an individual into a social matrix (Layne, 2006; vom Bruck & Bodenhorn, 2006). Pierre Bourdieu mentioned something similar in *Language and Symbolic Power* when he made the claim that names are a means of expressing cultural identity and establishing personhood (Bourdieu, 1991). According to Bourdieu, the baptism, the actual “imposition of a name,” institutes an individual’s identity and informs the individual “what he is and how he should conduct himself” (1991: 120). These ideas argue that the act of naming an individual is what begins the social construction of personhood within a social matrix; as Layne puts it, names turn newborns into “somebodies” (2006: 34).

### Problem Statement

This thesis focuses on the names and naming practices of two indigenous groups in Alaska, the Yup’ik/Cup’ik<sup>1</sup> and the Inupiaq. More specifically, this thesis will look at

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<sup>1</sup> The only significant difference between these two groups is a dialectal variation of the language.

the ways in which Native Alaskans<sup>2</sup> use their names to index<sup>3</sup> cultural identity and history while living in Anchorage, Alaska. Names, by their very nature, are indexical. They are referentially indexical by “pointing to” a specific person in the world. When I say the name “Barack Obama,” that name directly refers to the current president of the United States. Names can also be non-referential in that they can “point to” ideas we have about them. For example, we can have presuppositions based on how a name sounds. This is especially true when talking about gender and names. For example, when we hear the name “Michael,” we probably automatically assume Michael is a man. But when we hear the name “Alex,” we could guess that Alex is either male or female; “Alex” could be a shortened version of either “Alexander” or “Alexandra.” “Alex” is therefore a gender neutral name, whereas “Alexander” and “Alexandra” are both gendered as masculine and feminine, respectively.

The idea that names can be gender neutral contributes to the idea that names can also be used as a vehicle for crossing boundaries and categories. For example, androgynous names have become more common in recent years, especially when discussing giving a masculine name to a female child (Liebersohn, 2000). Native Alaskan names are all gender neutral, and it is a common practice to give a newborn a name previously used by a member of the opposite gender. We will see some examples of this in Chapter 5.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this thesis, ‘Native Alaskan’ is used to refer to Yup’ik/Cup’ik and Inupiaq groups, as well as their respective names and naming practices.

<sup>3</sup> I use Anderson’s (2008) definitions of referential and non-referential indexicality. Referential indexicality is the idea that specific linguistic phenomena (such as names) can directly refer to something in the world (here, current and previous owners of the name), whereas non-referential indexicality references a value that is associated with the word (such as cultural identity and history).

Native Alaskan names can cross other types of boundaries as well. Because names carry with them the characteristics of all their previous owners (more detail on this phenomenon in Chapter 2), Ann Fienup-Riordan (1983) claims that Native Alaskan names represent a collapsing of generations, in which the dead never truly die but continue to live in the present generation through the use of their name. Here, the boundaries being crossed are the boundary between life and death, as well as the boundary between the past and present. These boundaries will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

I ground my analysis of Native Alaskan names in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia (1981) based on idea that Native Alaskan names are intergenerational (Fienup-Riordan, 1983; Heinrich, 1969; Krupik & Vakhtin, 1997; Nuttall, 1994; Schweitzer, 1997; Turner, 1994; Williamson, 1985). According to Bakhtin, all words are imbued with context in the present based on how they have been used in the past. I will argue that Native Alaskan names can be considered heteroglossic based not only on the fact that they are intergenerational (they have been used by previous owners and carry traits of that owner with them when given to a newborn), but also because how Native Alaskans are using names in the present is a reflection on how names were used (or not used) in the past during colonization. Missionaries often renamed Native Alaskans with Christian names. That part of their cultural history has dictated how Native Alaskan names have been used (or not used) in the past, and may be part of how and why native names are being used in a cultural reclamation in the present.

The use (or non-use) of Native Alaskan names by Native Alaskans living in Anchorage, Alaska has implications for cultural identity and history. Using a native name

in an urban area such as Anchorage may serve to index a Native Alaskan cultural identity, a reclamation of culture based on their cultural history, which includes renaming at the hands of missionaries during colonization (Jolles, 1989). On the other hand, choosing to use an English name instead may be indicative of assimilation. Based on these ideas, I will address three issues regarding Native Alaskan names and use Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia as a framework for approaching these questions. The first question concerns the general beliefs Native Alaskans living in Anchorage, Alaska have regarding their native names and naming practices. Second, I will attempt to uncover how Native Alaskans are using (or not using) their native names in an urban area like Anchorage as part of an identity formation/negotiation process. And finally, I will outline whether or not the same general beliefs regarding Native Alaskan names and naming practices still hold in an urban area (compared to in the villages), and discuss the implications of that.

### Summary of Thesis Content

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will provide an introduction to onomastics and the studies of Native Alaskan names, as well as provide more information regarding Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia. Chapter 3 will provide more background on the cultural history of Native Alaskans in Alaska, including their interactions with missionaries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Chapter 4 will outline the methodology behind my research, as well as provide a brief introduction to each of my six participants. Chapter 5 will include an analysis of my findings using quotes and vignettes based on the in-depth interviews and participant observation I conducted during

the summers of 2011 and 2012. Chapter 6 will discuss the conclusions of the research. Chapter 7 will conclude the paper with a discussion on the implications of this research and provide potential avenues for future research on the topic of Native Alaskan names. Finally, the interview guides, and paired comparison charts I used during the study will be included in the appendices.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a brief overview of the academic literature I followed throughout the course of my research. Since my research focuses on Native Alaskans, I will first outline the presence of Native Alaskans in the literature. This will be followed by the literature on onomastics and naming practices, with a focus on how names can be used to reflect historical events within a culture. More information will also be provided on Native Alaskan names and naming practices. The chapter will conclude with an in-depth summary of Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, which is the foundation of my analysis.

### Native Alaskans in the Literature

Recent studies of Native Alaskans have mostly looked at them in one of two ways: either in terms of health or in terms of education. Those that have focused on health have looked at factors ranging from diet (Bersamin, Luick, Ruppert, Stern, & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2006; Goropashnaya et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 1995) and diabetes (Acton et al., 2002) to substance abuse (Angstman et al., 2007; Benowitz et al., 2012; Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004) and suicide behaviors (Wexler & Goodwin, 2006; Wexler, Hill, Bertone-Johnson, & Fenaughty, 2008). The most prevalent theme in education studies on Native Alaskans is the educational aspirations among youth and the "aspiration-achievement gap" (Kao & Tienda, 1998) that appears to be a widespread phenomenon among Native Alaskan youth. This gap deals with an apparent trend that Native Alaskan youth appear to have high educational aspirations that are never fulfilled

(McDiarmid & Kleinfeld, 1981; Seyfrit & Hamilton, 1993, 1997; Seyfrit, Hamilton, Duncan, & Grimes, 1998).

While recent studies on Native Alaskans are not necessarily lacking, most tend to overlook language. Additionally, those that do consider language only do so within studies on education where it is used as a variable for measuring educational competence (Seyfrit, et al., 1998) or discussed as a reason for building village schools in order to teach native language and culture (Marlow & Siekmann, 2013; Seyfrit & Hamilton, 1997). Sometimes, language was only briefly mentioned, if at all (McDiarmid & Kleinfeld, 1981; Seyfrit & Hamilton, 1993). Because of the lack of recent studies done on Native Alaskans and language (particularly regarding names and naming practices), this thesis will help fill a gap in the literature by looking specifically at the ways in which Native Alaskans are using (or not using) a distinct piece of language, particularly Native Alaskan names, as a means of identity negotiation. This research also looks at how Native Alaskan names are used in a particular cultural context, specifically the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage, which differs from the ways in which Native Alaskans and Native Alaskan names have been previously studied.

### Onomastics

Onomastics, or the study of names, is a popular field of study across many disciplines, including anthropology. Clifford Geertz (1973) and Claude Levi-Strauss (1962), for example, looked at how naming practices reflected social organization, personal identity and cultural beliefs (Moore, 2007). More recent studies on naming practices cross-culturally have also focused on naming as a social practice that reflects

social and political systems (Bailey & Lie, 2013; Chelliar, 2005; Hvoslef, 2001; Jayaraman, 2005; Moore, 2007; Rymes, 1996), cultural beliefs (Doyle, 2008; Edwards & Caballero, 2008; Finch, 2008; Fleming, 2011; Schottman, 2000; Zheng & Macdonald, 2010), and historical events (Arno, 1994; Gebre, 2010; Hvoslef, 2001). Expressing and maintaining a cultural identity is a prominent theme in these studies on personal names. Anthropological linguists have looked at naming practices as well, focusing more on the linguistic elements such as the phonological (Hough, 2000), as well as morphological and syntactic (Onukawa, 1999). Since this thesis argues that Native Alaskan names should be considered heteroglossic, I draw heavily on the works of Arno (1994), Gebre (2010), and Hvoslef (2001) based on their ideas that personal names can reflect historical events within a culture.

It is important to note, as Jayaraman does, that “naming customs are not static, but respond to changes in the social, cultural, and political life of the nation” (2005: 489). Naming customs can also be influenced by the historical events of a nation. I argue that because names can have ties to the past and historical events they can be considered heteroglossic. Because of the cultural history of Native Alaskan groups, which I will cover more in depth in the next chapter, this makes studies on the impact of historical processes on naming the most relevant for the purposes of this thesis.

Yntiso Gebre’s (2010) work among the Aari of Ethiopia is an example of historical events impacting naming practices among a group. Gebre discusses historical events (the cultural contact with the Gama, a group of migrants from central and northern Ethiopia) and how the contact and subsequent domination of the Aari led to changes in the Aari’s naming system. In order to understand the changes that occurred (names went

from expressing the Aari history and environment to characterizing the struggle against the dominant Gama), one needs to grasp the history behind the contact between the two groups and the hegemonic power structure that resulted, a theme that will become important in my analysis of Native Alaskan names based on the colonial history of the group.

Personal names among the Lauans of Fiji are considered to be narratives and linked to history (Arno, 1994). As a type of narrative, names not only reference an individual but also interact with the history of the community and reflect community events and relationships (1994: 32). Arno points out that the narratives embedded in personal names refer to the person one is named after. For example, Arno notes that one boy's name included the Lauan word for 'chief,' because his paternal grandfather had been the island's head chief (1994: 32).

Kinship is also a social system to which naming is related, and is relevant to my research. Janet Finch (2008) discusses the ways in which personal names are often used as not only a marker of individual identity, but also as a way to identify familial relations. A naming system in which kinship plays a key role is teknonymy, which identifies an individual in terms of their relationship to someone else. As Patrick Moore points out, this is a common practice among the Dene Tha community in northern Canada (2007). An example of teknonymy would be calling a woman "the mother of so-and-so" in place of her given name, where "so-and-so" is the name of her child. In instances of teknonymy, "the mother of so-and-so" becomes her new name. The work on kinship and its relation to personal names is relevant to my research because the giving of Native Alaskan names is based on kinship ties to a recently deceased individual. The idea that

familial ties can also be traced through Native Alaskan names is a topic that will also be discussed later on.

The two studies on historical aspects of naming systems (Arno, 1994; Gebre, 2010) relate most closely to the naming system among Native Alaskans since both discuss the importance of understanding historical events with regard to a group's naming practices. Janet Finch's (2008) and Patrick Moore's (2007) work with kinship and naming will also play a role in my analysis of Native Alaskan names in Chapter 5. These relationships will become clearer after a further discussion on Native Alaskan names and naming practices.

Naming practices can also reflect political changes within a group, which often relates to power relations. Political onomastics attempts to explain the politics involved in naming, specifically the power relations behind naming. In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), Pierre Bourdieu claimed that naming is an act of power. He says, "There is no social agent who does not aspire...to have the power to name and to create the world through naming" (1991:105). As mentioned previously, the act of naming inserts an individual into a social matrix (vom Bruck and Bodenhorn, 2006), informs an individual of his/her identity (Bourdieu, 1991), and turns an infant into an actual person (Layne, 2006). Therefore the person doing the naming has the power to potentially select the social matrix into which the person being named will be placed, as well as help shape the identity of the individual.

This idea becomes particularly important when we take the cultural history of Native Alaskans into consideration (more on this in Chapter 3). When missionaries re-baptized Native Alaskans with English, Christian names, the missionaries were

essentially forcing the Native Alaskans to join a new social matrix. As Valerie Alia puts it:

“...any substantial regime change or change of dominance and power is inevitably accompanied by changes to personal and place names. Taking control of naming is an important component of the process of assuming political power and is a fundamental part of social and political change. This kind of renaming can indicate either subjugation or liberation” (2007: 10).

Alia goes on to further claim that “The right to bestow names is a right which signifies that the namer has power” (2007: 10). This idea, that the namer (here, the missionaries) has power, is further perpetuated by the future overlooking native names in favor of English names, a result of the suppression of Native Alaskan languages. If we follow vom Bruck and Bodenhorn’s idea that the act of naming does in fact insert an individual into a social matrix, it could be argued that by renaming Native Alaskans with English names, the missionaries (who had the power to rename individuals) were essentially introducing the Native Alaskans into a new social matrix, one that acknowledged Christian, English names as the ideal. The missionaries overlooked the traditional Native Alaskan naming systems and imposed a naming system they were more familiar with.

#### Native Alaskan Names: Yup’ik and Inupiaq

Antonia Mills discusses name-souls as being “the hallmark” of Inuit reincarnation beliefs (1994: 21). Heinrich (1969), however, discusses the Bering Strait Eskimo in particular and their naming practices. According to Heinrich, personal names are not only used to rigidly designate an individual, as Kripke (2008) claimed. Instead of referring to

only one person, Eskimo names represent a social ordering of their world in which relations between individuals and their namesakes are key.

As discussed previously, Bering Strait Eskimo believe names represent souls of their holders. In this sense, names therefore maintain personal attributes of their previous holders. According to Heinrich, this allows characteristics of an individual to remain in the society after their death (1969). Heinrich also highlights how a name-soul, termed *atiq* (1969), belongs in the social world of humans and that Eskimo groups have methods of ensuring a name-soul finds its way back to the world of the living after its holder dies. He points out that when a person dies, their name cannot be uttered by anyone until it is reincorporated into the society by being given to a new member. In order to reincorporate the name, it is given to the next newborn born into the group. Once given to a newborn, the taboo on uttering the name is removed and the name-soul is once again recognized as a member of the society.

This notion of a name-soul is discussed by other authors as well, and appears to be prevalent among Arctic and Subarctic groups. In her book *The Nelson Island Eskimo*, Fienup-Riordan (1983) argues that a “spiritual essence” (pg. 149) is connected to the name itself and is passed on to the newborn. Oswalt (1990) also discussed names in relation to souls. He pointed out, however, that the social status of the deceased was directly related to how many infants would receive the name at birth. The more important the individual was, the greater the number of infants that were named after him/her. Furthermore, while Fienup-Riordan argued that Eskimo names were not *always* gender-linked, Oswalt argues that part of the ease of naming after a dead relative is because Eskimo names have no gender. He further discusses what Fienup-Riordan drew upon,

that this cycling of names ensures a connection between the dead and the living, that the dead never really leave the world of the living; rather, they are reborn into it.

As Native Alaskan names are tied to previous uses of the name through reincarnation beliefs (Birket-Smith, 1953; Fienup-Riordan, 1983; Guemple, 1994; Heinrich, 1969; Nuttall, 1994; Turner, 1994), I argue that they are historically-based, that is their selection and use emerge out of all of the contexts in which the name was previously used. This argument is further supported based on the cultural history surrounding Native Alaskans and their names and naming practice. As studies in Native Alaskan names and naming practices are not recent, this thesis seeks to provide a new theoretical perspective for studying names by looking at the historical factors involved in Native Alaskan naming and reinterpreting them in the framework of Bakhtin's heteroglossia based on the analysis of my research from the fieldwork I conducted during the summers of 2011 and 2012.

### Heteroglossia

In his work on speech genres, Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) argues that speech is multi-vocalic since every individual utterance responds to previous utterances (1986: 91). This is also reflected in his notion of heteroglossia. Discourse, he claims, lives on a boundary between its current context and other "alien" contexts (1981: 284). It is populated with meaning based on all of its previous uses in these alien contexts. Because words are imbued with meaning in this way, Bakhtin asserts that there are no neutral words, that all words have been "taken over, shot through with intentions and accents" (1981: 293). More importantly, Bakhtinian heteroglossia argues that words are full of all of the

contexts in which they have ever been used. As such, words never truly belong to a speaker until they are populated with the speaker's own intentions. Until this happens, the word "exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts" (1981: 293-294). It is important to note that when a speaker populates a word with their own intentions, this does not erase the intentions imbued by the previous owner. The new speaker is only taking the work and reinterpreting it in their own context. The previous intentions and meanings remain.

Bakhtin's essay *Discourse in the Novel* (1981) analyzes several works of fiction and poetry through a heteroglossic lens. By looking at novels such as Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Bakhtin maintains the speeches of the characters are populated with the intentions of the author and are thus instances of heteroglossia (1981: 315). He also notes that a novelist takes words full of the intentions of others and re-appropriates them with his own intentions so that they "serve a second master" (1981: 299-300).

While recent studies in heteroglossia look at the link between languages and the history of a group (Bailey, 2007; Evaldsson & Cekaite, 2010; Frekko, 2011; Garcia-Sanchez, 2010; Kyratzis, 2010; Kyratzis, Reynolds, & Evaldsson, 2010; Minks, 2010; Reynolds, 2010), few (if any) have addressed links between one aspect of a language (e.g. names) and the history of a group. This thesis will therefore address this absence by looking at Native Alaskan names as heteroglossic. As Bakhtin claims of discourse, these names live on a boundary between their past usage and their current one. Bodenhorn and vom Bruck also state (2006), "[names] may also provide the vehicle for crossing boundaries...between life and death, past and future, humans and non-humans" (2006: 4).

Moreover, I would argue that the Native Alaskans who are using these names may relate to the novelist Bakhtin mentions in that they are taking these words and the intentions they already possess and repopulating them with their own intentions and contexts. In a sense, Native Alaskans are taking the names and compelling them to serve a second master (Bakhtin 1981). Until they do this, the names exist only in the context and intentions of their previous owners. Based on this portrayal of names, specifically names as a method of crossing boundaries between life and death and the past and future, looking at names as a form of heteroglossia seems to be the next step in the literature. By looking at Native Alaskan names as heteroglossic we will be able to see the importance of history, personal as well as cultural, to Native Alaskans.

### Chapter 3: The Cultural History of Native Alaskans

This thesis argues that Native Alaskan names are heteroglossic. Heteroglossia depends on history, therefore it is important to look at the cultural history of Native Alaskan names. As Jayaraman also put it, “naming customs are not static, but respond to changes in the social, cultural, and political life of the nation” (2005: 485).

#### The American Period: 1867-1960

The United States purchased the territory of Alaska from the Russians in 1867 and the years from 1867 to 1960 are referred to as the American Period (Krauss, 1980). The first 20 years of this period saw very little interference with the native cultures in Alaska. Starting in 1887, American church missions and schools were introduced in the region and continued to arrive until 1910 (Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore, 1999; Krauss, 1980; Lincoln, 2003). Roman Catholic and Protestant Moravian churches began arriving in the Central Yup'ik territory in the late 1880s. These missions and churches were not opposed to Native languages and cultures, and even attempted to use the native language in the liturgy (Krauss, 1980).

In the late 1800s, the United States government took responsibility for the education of Native Americans (Dinero, 2004). In 1885, when a Presbyterian missionary named Sheldon Jackson became the first Commissioner for Education in Alaska, the use of native languages in education and religion became problematic (Barnhardt, 2001; Burch Jr, 1994; Jolles, 1989; Krauss, 1980; Lincoln, 2003). Jackson believed that various nationalities and ethnicities in the United States had to assimilate to the Anglo-Saxon

Protestant ideal. Natives were therefore supposed to convert to “the white man’s religion, assimilate to his culture, and...abandon his native language” (Krauss 1980: 22). Boarding schools were therefore used as a method of separating children from their traditional environments and cultures (Dinero, 2004).

Sheldon Jackson was not alone in his beliefs. In his autobiography, S. Hall Young claimed Native Alaskan languages were not adequate for expressing Christian thought (1927). He also argued that “the task of making an English-speaking race of these natives was much easier than the task of making a civilized and Christian language out of the Thlingit” (pg. 259-260). It was because of beliefs of people like Sheldon Jackson and S. Hall Young that missionaries would re-baptize Native Alaskan infants with Christian names and overlook their native names (Jolles, 1989).

During the years between 1910 and 1960, the American schools and mission schools in the region completely prohibited the use of native languages and suppressed the expression of native culture (Churchill, 1994; Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore, 1999; Krauss, 1980). Children were physically punished if they were caught using their native language while in school. Missionaries also discouraged traditional ceremonial practices such as singing and dancing. However, in many places Native Alaskans continued their traditional practices in spite of the “cultural genocide” the missionaries were committing (Churchill, 1994).

#### Cultural Reclamation: 1960-Present

The ten years between 1960 and 1970 saw a renewed interest in Native Alaskan languages (Barnhardt, 2001; Dinero, 2004). A Federal Bilingual Education Act was

passed in 1967, which allowed instruction of languages other than English in public schools for the first time. In 1968, Krauss and his colleagues proposed to the Alaska Education Commissioner that native languages be used in schools where the children spoke Central Yup'ik. The proposal was rejected because the commissioner believed it would undermine the non-native teachers (Krauss, 1980: 28).

The 1970s saw further strides in the recognition of native cultures and languages in Alaska. In 1970, the Bureau of Indian Affairs worked with the state-operated school system and started to experiment with bilingual education in four Central Yup'ik schools. In 1972, Alaska became one of the first states to require children to be introduced to education in their native language. This was only required in schools with 15 or more students whose primary language was something other than English. The teacher was also required to be fluent in the same language (Krauss 1980: 29-30). The Alaska Bilingual Education Bill also passed in 1972. This established the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska. This institution still exists today and is responsible for the scientific study and documentation of all native languages in Alaska.

In recent years, native reclamations of identity have come to the forefront in Alaska. Cultural museums such as the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage is one example of the ways in which Native Alaskans are helping make non-native populations aware of the cultural diversity in Alaska. Other methods include regional elder conferences, language classes, carving and boat building workshops, tribal museums, native tours, and model villages open to the public for visitors to walk through (Clifford, 2004). Clifford refers to these options as “heritage work.” Other examples of heritage work are oral-historical research; cultural explanations through the use of

exhibits, festivals, publications, films; community-based archaeology; and language description. All of these heritage projects serve to inform the public that Native Alaskans take pride in their past and present. They act as “sites of mobilization and pride, sources of intergenerational inspiration and education, ways to reconnect with the past and say to others: ‘We exist,’ ‘We have roots here,’ ‘We are different’” (Clifford 2004: 8).

### Reclaiming Native Names

As mentioned previously, Native Alaskan languages were heavily suppressed by both the government and churches during the American Period. The power relations at play during this period resulted in the suppression of native languages, which would have also included the silencing of native names. Native names were considered foreign and difficult to say; therefore Native Alaskans were given Christian names that were used in place of their native one. Today, it is more common to see Native Alaskan names on birth certificates and used in more public contexts. Native names might therefore be considered a heritage project; they are being used to connect the present with the past and indicate reclamation of native identity that was suppressed by the colonialism from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This idea will be discussed in more detail later on.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

This thesis research was conducted over the course of two summers, from June 2011 to September 2011, and June 2012 to October 2012. The location of the study was Anchorage, Alaska, specifically at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in northeast Anchorage. This chapter will present the methodology used throughout the course of the study, as well as providing background information on the location and the participants.

### Locating the Study

According to the United States Census Bureau's 2012 estimate, Anchorage had a population of roughly 298,610, nearly 41 percent of the entire population of Alaska. Of that number, 8.1 percent classified themselves as American Indian or Native Alaskan alone (US Census Bureau, 2013). The percentage of people claiming American Indian or Native Alaskan descent in the entire state of Alaska was 14.8 percent in 2012. Based on those numbers, over half of the population who claim Native Alaskan ancestry live in the Anchorage municipality.

This study focused specifically on one location in Anchorage, the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The Heritage Center opened in 1999 and occupies 26 acres of land in northeast Anchorage. It was the brainchild of the Alaskan Federation of Natives in response to the need for a community cultural center for all native groups. It opens every summer on Mother's Day and remains open to the public until Labor Day (Alaska Native Heritage Center, 2013). During normal operating hours, visitors can get a taste of Native Alaskan cultures by observing native dances and native games demonstrations, receiving

historical background information on the different cultures, listening to native stories, and walking through models of different native homes, such as a Yup'ik *qasgiq*, a traditional men's house. Visitors also have the chance to see native jewelry and art sold by local artists at tables throughout the Center. There are also frequent instances of guest artists who spend weeks at the Center demonstrating their skills for visitors. One such instance occurred in 2010, when the Center played host to a variety of totem pole carvers, whose works are still on display at the Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian village site.

The Heritage Center is staffed by Native Alaskans from all of the different cultures within the state. They also provide classes throughout the winter months that teach Native Alaskan youth different Native Alaskan traditions such as dance and games. Their purpose is to share, perpetuate, and preserve Native Alaskan cultural traditions (Alaska Native Heritage Center, 2013), not only with the visitors to the Center in the summer, but also with Native Alaskans who may have never had contact with other cultures in the state because of the size of Alaska and the limited access to many villages. Based on this background and purpose, the Heritage Center was an ideal place for this study to take place.

### The Population

This study focused on Native Alaskan individuals between the ages of 25 and 65, specifically on those of Yup'ik and/or Inupiaq heritage. Because of the small population size of workers at the Center, all participants were recruited from the Heritage Center using snowball sampling, or basic word-of-mouth. I started by talking with one

individual, and then asked for suggestions of other people to talk to who would also fit the criteria. This continued until I had the six participants I required for the research.

### The Participants

I was able to recruit six participants for this study, three males and three females, from various parts of Alaska, but all were of Yup'ik/Cup'ik and/or Inupiaq heritage. In this section, I will offer a brief introduction and background information on each of the six participants. It is important to note that to protect the identities of the participants, all English names that appear are pseudonyms. I chose to use English names for two reasons. The first is that I gave all participants the option of choosing their own pseudonyms. Only three chose their own, and the names they chose were English names. The second reason I chose English names for the remaining three participants was mostly for the sake of uniformity, but also because I did not feel comfortable making up a native name as a pseudonym when the participants themselves did not select one on their own.

#### Alice

“It always creeped me out that we were named after dead people. My English name actually follows the Yup'ik tradition more than my actual Yup'ik name does. There was a little girl in my village and her family called her Alice. She died very young so when I got my English name, they named me after her. Her family became my second family. I called her father ‘Dad’ and her mother ‘Mom,’ and her siblings became my siblings.”

Alice is a 45-year old Yup'ik woman from St. Mary's, Alaska. She has worked at the Heritage Center for a couple years, primarily as a culture bearer in the Yup'ik *qasgiq*. She greets visitors who walk into the house and gives them general background knowledge about Yup'ik ways of life. She was named after her father's grandmother. Her

English name was also given in the same tradition; she was named after a little girl who had died in the village. She gave her son and grandchildren native names as well, but they were not named after a deceased relative.

#### John

“When someone asks me, like an older individual asks me who am I and I say in English they'd be like, ‘What is your Yupik name?’ And I would say, ‘Oh, my name is (Yup’ik name)’ and they'd go, ‘Ah ha, I know where you're from.’ They'd be like, ‘Ok you're from Chefnak, I know who your great-grandparents were, I know who your grandparents are, I know who your parents [are].’ So they use the family tree. So elderly individuals in our area can understand where you're coming from, who your parents, great-grandparents and so on are.”

John is a 33-year-old Yup’ik/Inupiaq man from the village of Chefnak. He has worked at the Heritage Center for four summers as a Yup’ik and Cup’ik culture bearer. He works in the *qasgiq*, as Alice does, but also serves as an MC on the stage giving historical information on Alaska and native cultures. He also guides visitor tours from time to time. His job at the Heritage Center is only seasonal, so when he is not in Anchorage, he attends college in the Lower 48. He was named after his great-grandfather, his grandmother’s father, so when she addresses John she uses the Yup’ik term for ‘father.’

#### Charlie

“I guess living here in Anchorage made me realize the importance of everything back home. So uh when someone calls me (Cup’ik name)...I get a sense of pride. I know that's something I shouldn't feel but uh it makes me realize how lucky I am to have a strong grip on my culture. After seeing the lack of culture here in Anchorage with kids growing up here, the lack of culture and me not really appreciating it when I was younger, you know it made me think it's something important. Something that definitely needs to be practiced.”

Charlie is a 25-year-old Cup'ik man from Chevak, Alaska. He starting working at the Heritage Center about three years ago and now is the year-round native games instructor. His work involves coaching youth in native games and leading demonstrations of the games throughout the day in front of visitors. He continues the coaching throughout the winter at local schools. He has three Cup'ik names that have been given to him over the course of his life. His grandmother gave him the first name, and it came from a cousin who had passed away decades before Charlie was even born. He also has a young son, who was named after Charlie's mother, who passed away after his son was born.

Tom

“And in the Yup'ik culture when you get named after someone it doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl you can get named after a man or a woman. There's no gender difference. And it's very very loose. I mean you could have ten kids named after an elder they respected. And then when you get to from where my son's mom comes from [St. Lawrence Island], it's very specific. You have to get permission to get named after somebody.”

Tom is a 41-year-old Native Alaskan who “grew up Inupiaq but [is] biologically Yup'ik.” His father is biologically Yup'ik, but was raised by his Inupiaq grandmother from a young age. He learned mostly Inupiaq traditions, which he then passed on to Tom. Tom spent his younger years in both Shaktoolik and Savoonga, and moved to Anchorage 20 years ago for college. He works at the Heritage Center primarily as an administrator, but his duties also include travelling to local schools to discuss native cultures and inform students of the Heritage Center. He has two names, an Inupiaq name and a St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik name, and neither came from another person. He has two children, a son and a daughter. Both have native names, but were named based on characteristics he saw in them rather than a deceased relative.

## Diane

“In fact my grandson is also named after a great-uncle and so the wife of that great-uncle calls him ‘uma’ which means ‘my sweetheart.’ And in fact, when she was here in town and they were at an event I let my grandson, as her sweetheart, buy her a couple gifts and he brought them to her on her birthday.”

Diane is a 65-year-old Yup’ik and Inupiaq woman from Nome. She moved to St. Michael at five, and then attended a boarding school for nine years at St. Mary’s when she was 10. She has been at the Heritage Center since it opened in 1999. She does a little bit of everything; she is a tour guide, a culture bearer (not just for her own cultures, but the others as well), a seamstress who teaches others how to make native garments like a Yup’ik *kuspak*, a storyteller, and she even does school tours and cultural awareness workshops in the winter. She has two names, a Yup’ik one she got from her grandmother and an Inupiaq one she got from an aunt. Her Yup’ik name was her grandmother’s, who died before Diane was born.

## Nancy

“Or it’s a passed on name from generation to generation and they just keep that name in their family. My grandma said her name was passed on from generation to generation. ‘That’s their name too’, she said. When a child is [given someone’s name], they explain what that name means. And when people share the same name, one name is one way and the other is another way.”

Nancy is a 54-year-old Yup’ik woman from Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island. She used to teach native songs and dances at the Center, but now she is involved in the Heritage Center mostly as a participant in cultural events, such as dancing. She has two Siberian Yup’ik names, and uses both every time she introduces herself. When I first met her, she gave me her English name quickly followed by the Yup’ik ones and she was the

only participant to introduce herself with her native name upon meeting me. She is not sure if she was named after anyone, but her son was named after her father and carries all three of her father's names.

### Interviews and Participant Observation

This study relied heavily on semi-structured interviews and participant observation with each of the participants. After reading and signing the informed consent form and agreeing to participate in the study, each participant filled out a questionnaire, which asked brief questions about themselves, such as their age, gender, group affiliation, et cetera. After the questionnaire was completed, we established a meeting time for the first interview.

The first interview focused primarily on family history. In this interview I asked them questions regarding Native Alaskan names and naming practices. At the conclusion of the interview, I asked them to respond to a brief survey in the form of a paired comparison. When asked the question "Where are you more likely to use your native name?" the participant had to select which place in each pair provided best answers the question from their experiences.

After completing the first interview with a participant, I began conducting participant observation with the individual. I spent time separately with each participant while they worked at the Heritage Center. I observed Alice and John in the *qasgiq*, teaching visitors about Yup'ik daily village life and was even able to give the presentation myself by the end of the summer. I watched Diane tell stories on the stage and Nancy dance. I learned about native games from Charlie and watched the

demonstrations on stage. Every time I was with them, I noted when they decided to use their native name and when they favored their English one.

The second interview happened later, often after the participant observation was completed. This interview focused more specifically on places where the individual uses their name and reasons for using the native name versus the English one in those places. I also asked more specific questions about their work at the Heritage Center.

These two interviews followed a semi-structured format using an interview guide. The guide included general topics that I wanted each participant to talk freely about, as well as follow-up questions in case something specific was not addressed. Topics in the interview included family, Native Alaskan heritage and identity, and Native Alaskan naming practices, as well as beliefs about those practices, places where native names are used, reasons for using names, and work at the Heritage Center. Both interviews were audio recorded. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed using Inqscribe for analysis. Data from my fieldnotes, and participant observation sessions were also analyzed and will be discussed further in the next two chapters.

## Chapter 5: Analysis

This chapter will analyze the ways in which Native Alaskan names might be considered heteroglossic. Throughout the course of the study and later analysis of the interviews and participant observation, it became clear that Native Alaskan names are rife with boundaries. I have mentioned previously vom Bruck and Bodenhorn's claim that names can be used as a vehicle for crossing boundaries. It is therefore important to note the boundaries I present are between dualistic categories, and the line between them is fluid. I follow Borgerson and Rehn (2004), who claim that "'Fluidity' suggests an easing of borders through which human characteristics and gestures—usually seen as related to specific fixed categories—refer and defer to subjectivities without predetermined lines of attachment" (pg. 462). There is no clear line separating each of these categories; like gender, the boundary can shift based on a variety of factors, which include (but are not necessarily limited to) usage, context, the subjectivity of the participants, et cetera.

In this chapter, I will present the four different boundaries I found in Native Alaskan names, and how they relate to my argument that Native Alaskan names should be considered heteroglossic. The first two sections, life versus death and past versus present, are important because they reflect Native Alaskan beliefs about names and naming practices and will serve to strengthen my argument that Native Alaskan names should be considered heteroglossic. The third section, young versus old, does not serve to argue for the heteroglossic nature of Native Alaskan names, but it is still important in its own right because it illustrates the ways in which Native Alaskan names are culturally important in an urban area like Anchorage. The final section, on the boundary between

native and non-native, is particularly important given the colonial history of Native Alaskans that was outlined in Chapter 3. The cultural history aspect also plays a part in the argument that Native Alaskan names are heteroglossic. Evidence for each of these boundaries will be provided in the form of quotes and vignettes obtained in the semi-structured interviews and participant observation, and will be discussed in further detail regarding its relation to heteroglossia in Chapter 6.

### Life versus Death

As mentioned previously, Native Alaskan naming traditions follow the belief that the personal name is a type of soul an individual possesses. This name-soul detaches from the body when the person dies and is passed on by giving the name to a newborn. In this way, an individual can be reincarnated into the body of a newborn, since the name carries with it personality traits of its original bearer and all the bearers before him/her. This is what Ann Fienup-Riordan referred to as the collapsing of generations (Fienup-Riordan, 1983). The life and memory of an individual is able to continue beyond death through the continued use of his/her name in subsequent generations.

The idea that Native Alaskan names represent a type of reincarnation came up several times during the study. According to John:

“...when an individual passes away a newborn will be named after the deceased just to keep the spirit alive.”

Tom said something very similar regarding names and keeping a person's memory alive. When discussing Inupiaq naming customs, he said this:

“...in Inupiaq it's pretty loose. We don't, we'll just kinda casually name someone after something or someone. So a grandma or a grandparent on

their deathbed so to speak can, if they found out that there are certain traits in their granddaughter or grandson that they liked, they can tell them, 'When you have your first child, name them after me.' So that way, the memory of that person goes on."

Diane also briefly touched on the idea that Yup'ik and Inupiaq names represent a generational continuance of family memory. When asked about what having a native name means to her, she responded:

"[Having a native name] signifies a continuance of all these names. Continuing family ancestry. [P]eople recognize these names as former persons with the name who are most likely related. So it keeps the ancestral connection going."

Charlie, who named his son after his mother, pointed out that giving the name of a recently deceased relative to a newborn is a way of showing respect to the deceased. He is aware of the belief that giving a name to a newborn is a way of reincarnating the dead into the world of the living.

"I know in my culture we believe that after someone passes away they're reborn. And the person who holds that name they're reborn through that person. And uh, it's not only a part of our culture, it's just out of respect for the person who passed away."

The boundary between life and death is even obvious in Alice's story about receiving her English name. Her English name came from a young girl who had recently died in the village. Even though it is not her native name, the naming custom remains the same and comes from Yup'ik beliefs. While the notion of the young girl being reborn in Alice is not overt, the fact that the girl's family began to treat Alice as their own daughter, and that Alice actually began referring to them as 'father' and 'mother,' suggests maybe the idea the girl was 'reborn' in Alice was present in everyone involved.

## Past versus Present

The argument that Native Alaskan names should be considered heteroglossic comes from the idea that these names get their meaning from all of their previous uses. This makes the boundary between past and present particularly important in this analysis. Names not only gather meaning from their past uses, but are also imbued with meaning based on present uses.

Tom touched up the links between past and present uses of the name when we were discussing names and rebirth. He mentioned the presence of certain characteristics present in a child and how others might relate that to the previous owner of the name.

“As the child is growing up, the...parents will pick out certain things like if the child was named after their deceased [grandmother], they’ll say, “Oh look, my child is banging the pots and pans like grandma did. She was always trying to look for something and she’d bang the pots and pans together.” They would find similarities in the child’s behavior and they’d relate that to their grandmother.”

Diane mentioned the sharing of personality traits between individuals when she talked about her grandson. The grandson was named after his great-uncle and she decided to give her grandson his great-uncle’s name after she noticed they shared similar qualities.

“My grandson has a tendency to be silly and make silly faces and entertain, just like his great-uncle. So I gave him his great-uncle’s name.

The idea that an individual gains personality traits from whoever they got their name from extends even into kinship ties. As Diane said: “If you share a name with someone, you’re called ‘*atiq*,’ which means ‘namesake.’” When an individual inherits a name, they also inherit past kinship ties. This is seen, once again, in Alice’s story about

her English name and the way the young girl's family became a second family to Alice.

Diane, Charlie, John, and Nancy also discussed this phenomenon.

“In fact my grandson is also named after a great-uncle and so the wife of that great-uncle calls him ‘*uma*’ which means "my sweetheart." And in fact, when she was here in town and they were at an event I let my grandson as her sweetheart buy her a couple gifts and he brought them to her on her birthday.” –Diane

“My name was given to me, I think, by my grandmother and it came from actually uh someone who passed away back in the 40s or 50s. The guy that passed away he was a cousin of mine and uh his sister she calls me ‘brother’ all the time. She's an elder in Chevak and every time she sees me, because I'm named after her brother she looks at me as her brother.” –Charlie

“I was named after my great-grandfather. My grandmother's father. And my grandma, she would call me ‘father’ in Yup'ik.” –John

“There was a male person in totally different clan and he was a young boy and he had the same name as my grandmother. And I wondered why does he have the same name. When I asked my grandma she said from generation to generation her name is passed on. That's their name too that's been passed on exactly same way. So if I were to meet him I'd call him my grandma.” –Nancy

This notion that not only are personal characteristics passed on through names but also kinship ties also reinforces the claim that Native Alaskan names are heteroglossic. I will discuss this more in the next chapter.

### Young versus Old

Another boundary that became obvious during the course of this study is the one that exists between the younger generation and the older generation when discussing native names. This became particularly clear when each participant would talk about the

people who would use their name when talking with them. Younger participants like John and Charlie both mentioned how it is the elders and the older people in their families that refer to them using their native names, but their siblings and other people their own age will refer to each using their respective English names.

“Back in the village, some of the kids call me mostly by English name...all the older folks, the elders, they call me by my Yup’ik name and nicknames. They would call me that all the time.” –John

“[The] younger generation uses my English name. All my family and all the elders out there [in the village] call me by my Cup’ik name. And that’s just because of who they are.” –Charlie

Nancy also made a similar comment when talking about who knows and uses her native names.

“Everybody in my village knows my native name, the ones that are older. Everybody except for the younger ones.”

It is important to note that when John, Charlie, and Nancy talked about the kids and the younger generation using their English names when talking with them, they were referring to Native Alaskan kids, and the younger generation of Native Alaskans. Most non-native people only use the participants’ English names when talking to or about them. While this was not addressed with anyone other than the participants, the reason for this is probably due only to the fact that non-native speakers cannot pronounce native names. Yup’ik, Cup’ik, and Inupiaq have phonemes and syllable combinations not used in the English language that makes it difficult for native English speakers to pronounce many of the words found in each language. This idea will be talked about in the next section.

## Native versus Non-Native

The final boundary found among the use of Native Alaskan names I will address seems to be the most obvious: the difference between native and non-native ways of life. This reflects the contexts in which the participants choose to use their native names. It is therefore an important aspect of identity negotiation since it encompasses the differences between village life and life in an urban area like Anchorage. It is among these differences where we see many of the negotiations each of the participants has to make regarding the use of his/her native name in everyday life. Throughout the study there were several mentions of how the participants use their native names frequently while visiting the village, but while in Anchorage they only use their native names during cultural events and gatherings.

According to Charlie:

“Well I don’t really decide where I get to use my name, it just depends on the people. You know, compared to school and work, someone would most likely use my name at work, so it doesn’t depend on me, it depends on whoever’s around.... You know here [at school], no one really knows me personally enough to use my Cup’ik name. Working here at the Heritage Center, one of the things that we do is we recognize who has a native name and we use it every now and then. It isn’t an everyday thing. And at home [in the village] it’s something everybody’s used to. Probably 90 percent of the people in Chevak know everybody’s more mostly everybody’s Cup’ik name.”

John said something similar:

“Well, if I see, many Alaskan natives recognize one another and I would introduce myself, if I introduce myself to another native I would [use my native name]. And then English would be with non-natives. I’d present myself in English for other people, or other guests.”

Diane uses her native name mostly at the Heritage Center as well. When asked about where she is mostly likely to use her native name, she said:

“Usually in events, like here at the Heritage Center when we have special events, like I'm going to be the storyteller or something, then I use both my American name and my Inupiaq name. And my Yup'ik name. And it's a good way of introducing myself with my Yup'ik and Inupiaq people in case there are Inupiaq and Yup'ik people in the audience, so it makes a connection to them. So I'm saying my Yup'ik name is so-and-so and my Inupiaq name is so-and-so so that they can go ‘Ah, she's Inupiaq, so am I’ or ‘Oh I'm Yup'ik, so is she.’”

Even though there are non-natives in the audience during the special events, and they probably outnumber any Native Alaskans (because according to Diane, not many Native Alaskans visit the Heritage Center), she uses her native name as a way of identifying with any Native Alaskans who might be in the audience. She uses her English name as well because there are non-natives in the audience. She generalizes that non-natives are not aware of native names, which is part of the reason she does not use her native name when interacting solely with non-natives.

“They're [non-natives] not aware of it. They're not aware of we having our native languages and the only thing they learn in their books in the elementary or junior high outside schools is that Alaskans have Eskimos and they live in igloos and that's it.” –Diane

Alice made a similar observation one day while working in the *qasgiq*, one that contradicts Diane's generalization about non-natives being ignorant about native names. When talking to visitors who had come into the *qasgiq*, one noticed she included her English name in her introduction and asked her about it. He seemed to think it strange that a Native Alaskan would have an English name.

“The other day, one guy asked me, he was like, ‘I heard you say your English name is Alice. How did you get an English name?’ I was kind of

surprised. I kind of wanted to say, ‘Because I was born in America.’ But I told them the story of the little girl in my village who died.”

Tom talked about places where native names are used mostly in relation to his daughter, since he himself is not involved much in the actual performances at the Heritage Center since his position is mostly administrative. According to him, his daughter, who has two native names, uses her names strictly at cultural events.

“When we have dances and stuff we’ll use her native name. She’s familiar with her native names. It’s mostly just during a potluck or gathering or dance performance. But everything else is pretty much English.”

Nancy, on the other hand, has no such reservations about when and where she uses her native names.

“When somebody asks me I tell them who I am. Anywhere I am I use my Siberian Yup’ik name. And then after I knew the meaning of my name in my language I started saying my full name. I say my full English and Siberian Yup’ik names. Everywhere. Because I like to use my full name.”

Native Alaskan names, therefore, appear to be used by the participants as a way of aligning themselves with other Native Alaskans, while English names are used more to align with non-natives. As mentioned previously, part of the reason why they do not use their native names with non-native people might have to do with the fact that Native Alaskan names are difficult to say. Whether that is a choice on the participant’s part or the non-native speaker’s part remains to be determined. According to Diane, however, it is a choice the non-natives make that she has to acknowledge.

“They [the non-natives] can’t spell our names or pronounce them, so they don’t use them.” –Diane

Regardless of who actually makes the choice, it is clear that the participants are aware of the need to negotiate with their interlocutors on whether to use their native or English name. Taking the cultural history of the relationship between Native Alaskans and non-natives into account becomes important here. There is an entire history of relations between these two groups that must be considered when discussing the negotiations Native Alaskans are doing while conversing with non-natives regarding the use of their native names. Again, this will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

### Beliefs About Native Names

The knowledge that the Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq groups in Alaska believed the name to be a type a soul, and it can be passed on after death by giving the name to an individual, seems to still be present among the participants. The analysis of the boundary between life and death is where this is most obvious. The only participant who did not mention the idea of rebirth and reincarnation by the giving of a name was Nancy.

Keeping a connection with the ancestral past is also one of the beliefs Native Alaskans still hold about their native names. This relates back to what Ann Fienup-Riordan called the “collapsing of generations” (1983). The use of Native Alaskan names keeps the deceased previous users alive in the present by the belief that the personality traits of the deceased are now present in the new carrier of the name. Instead of having clearly defined generational boundaries, giving a previously used native name brings the generations together beyond death. Some of the participants mentioned this idea of giving their children a native name so as to give them a connection to their past and to keep the ancestral connection alive (Diane, Tom, John). John had also mentioned how a native name can be used to trace someone's family tree.

Based on the data obtained in the interviews regarding the participants' beliefs about Native Alaskan names and the naming practice, Native Alaskan names, particularly Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq names, should be considered heteroglossic. As Bakhtin said of words and discourse, Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq names cross the boundary between past uses and present ones. The original carrier of the name imbued the name with

meaning in the form of personality traits, and these traits are brought forth into the present when the name is given to a new individual. The new carrier of the name will then give the name their own meanings, which will then be passed on to whoever receives the name next. Tom and Diane both discussed this during their interviews.

Names can also cross the boundary between life and death (Bodenhorn & vom Bruck, 2006). This idea is blatantly obvious when looking at Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq names. Again, the section on the boundary between life and death in the previous chapter is where this is most obvious. As mentioned previously, all of the participants except Nancy discussed Native Alaskan names as a vehicle for rebirth. Names do not have to come from a recently deceased individual though. For example, Charlie was named after someone who died in the 1940s. Names can therefore be pulled from further in the past and given new meaning in the present, another trademark of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia argues for a conflation between the past and present in which words (and names) fluctuate between past and present uses, which is exactly what the boundary between life and death shows. The idea that a deceased individual can be brought forth to continue living in the present based solely on the usage of a name illustrates how the boundary between life and death is fluid.

It appears the same general beliefs about names and naming practices exist among the Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq living in Anchorage. Granted, none of the participants were born in Anchorage; all were born and raised elsewhere in the state, particularly in small villages, and didn't move to Anchorage until later in life. Further research would need to be done among Native Alaskans who were born and raised in Anchorage to see if this is actually the case.

## Using Native Names in Anchorage

According to Joel Rosenthal, “names are deeply embedded in the identity and culture of individuals and small groups, such as nuclear families” (2005:62). There is a sense of pride, a feeling of being grounded in your culture when you have a Native Alaskan name. Charlie mentioned this in his discussion about having a native name. He ties having a native name to being more aware of cultural practices.

“When someone calls me by my native name, I get a sense of pride. It makes me realize how lucky I am to have a strong grip on my culture. After seeing the lack of culture here in Anchorage with kids growing up here not knowing their culture it made me think it [having a native name] is something important. Something that definitely needs to be practiced.”

The continued use of Native Alaskan names in Anchorage could be attributed to the cultural reclamation I outlined in Chapter 3, and even reclamation of power in regards to naming. When missionaries gave Native Alaskans English names, the Native Alaskans lost their power to name themselves. As Charlie mentioned, there is a sense of cultural pride among those individual who have a native name. Among the participants who have children (Alice, Tom, Charlie, Nancy, and Diane), all gave their children, and in some instances their grandchildren, native names. It is possibly the case, however, that the practice of naming a child after a deceased individual is not as common as it once was. Some of the participants mentioned how they had named their children after specific traits they either saw in the child or wished for them to have (Alice, Tom, Nancy). Some even have their own names that represent certain traits and did not come from a deceased individual (Tom, Charlie, John).

While the practice of giving a native name to newborn is obviously still practiced in Anchorage, the reasons behind the naming might be shifting. Alice, Tom, and Nancy

gave their children native names, but not a name of a deceased individual. The idea that native names tie a person to their culture and their past still exists, though. Simply possessing a native name gives a person ties to their culture and its past. There is an entire cultural history in the Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq languages that is carried on in their names. Therefore the use of a native name indexes a cultural identity and past that are being reclaimed in the present use of the name.

Because of the ways native names are currently being used in Anchorage and at the Heritage Center, the idea that Native Alaskans are heteroglossic still holds. Before the cultural reclamation of native identity began, the missionaries and government gave the use of native languages (and names) negative meaning. Tom tells a story of how his father was punished for speaking Inupiaq while school:

“I just saw a picture of a school that, a boarding school and stuff, ‘cause during my dad's generation his mouth was washed out with soap every time that he spoke a native word. I had wondered why, growing up, why he wasn't really adamant on teaching me my Inupiaq language. And mom told me quietly at one point, she pulled me off to the side and she said, 'Well he was one of the ones, his mouth was washed out with soap every time he spoke Inupiaq.' Or the other things that they did in some of the private schools is when the kids would speak Inupiaq or Yup'ik the nuns or the priests at times would either slap them in the face or they'd hit the tops of their hands with rulers. And so you hear about these types of treatments and you think about how it is today and you think man, how can that be? But it's a real part of history. And it's something that really happened.”

Since Native Alaskans have started to reclaim their culture and language, they have reappropriated their names, given them new cultural meaning, and reclaimed the power to give names. Native names now represent a source of cultural pride and acknowledgment of cultural past.

## Identity Negotiations

Native Alaskan names have inherent ties to the past, both in the way they are passed on through the generations, and also based on the colonial history of Native Alaskans in general. The act of naming inserts an individual into a social matrix, and Native Alaskans have to negotiate their way through different matrices: the one in which they can use their native name and the one in which they must use an English name. This is why, as Rosenthal suggests, names are a label that are just as important to identity negotiations as gender is (2005).

Both Native Alaskan and English names also serve to index specific cultural relationships. The participants in this study frequently used their Native Alaskan names to index a Native Alaskan identity. This was usually done in the context of a cultural event at the Heritage Center. All of the participants except Nancy talked about how they only use their native name in Anchorage while at the Heritage Center. English names, on the other hand, are used as a way of aligning with non-native speakers. According to Diane, the reason for this is because non-native speakers cannot spell or say native names. This makes sense, since as I mentioned previously, the Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq languages have odd spellings and use strange syllable structure a non-native speaker would find difficult. They also use phonemes we do not use in English, such as lateral, velar and uvular fricatives<sup>4</sup>.

It could be argued though that the reason why Native Alaskans use their English names in identity negotiations with non-native speakers is because of the cultural history that the two groups share and the power relations that were established during the

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<sup>4</sup>[ɣ], [x], [ʁ] [χ<sup>w</sup>] are a few examples of lateral, velar and uvular fricatives not used in English. They appear in written Yup'ik as g, gg, ll, and w, respectively (Ager, 2013).

American Period in Alaska. I have mentioned before how up until the 1960s, when the federal government passed legislation regarding the use of native languages in schools, and the reclamation of native identity began, the use of native languages was heavily discouraged and the speaker was often punished. This was evidenced in Tom's story about his father. I would argue that this is not the case among these participants. With the exception of Diane, who attended the mission boarding school at St. Mary's and maybe Tom because of the story his mother told him, I believe that the remaining participants are far enough removed from the impact of the mission churches and the decisions of Sheldon Jackson that they no longer impact the decisions the participants make regarding the use of their native names. Their parents and grandparents no doubt had first-hand experience with missionaries, but, like Tom, the participants' experiences with the colonial history are limited to stories about their cultural history. All of the participants except Diane and Nancy were born in the era post-1960, when the renewed interest in native languages and culture began. Diane and Nancy would have experienced the changes brought about by the passing of the Federal Bilingual Education Act in 1967, being school-aged at that time.

Regardless of whether or not the participants actually experienced the effects of the colonial presence in the village, the cultural memory is still there. Like Tom, whose mother told him the story of his father, they are aware of the cultural history of their groups. Three of them remember when the Bilingual Education Act was passed. They have seen how far Native Alaskans have come in reclaiming their native identity and have heard stories from elders reaffirming that fact. Again, the simple fact that they can now use native names and languages in public (even if they choose not to) reasserts the

idea that native names are heteroglossic. They have taken control of the meaning of their names; where they were once punished for using names, they now use them as marker of cultural identity and pride.

Yup'ik/Cup'ik and Inupiaq names can also be used among Native Alaskans to index kinship relations. Here we see internal power relations with names and naming come into play. Again, naming is an act of power, so when a newborn is given the name of a deceased relative, other relatives will refer to the newborn based on their own relation to the deceased. The giver of the name has the power to adjust kinship relations between the newborn and its relatives. I presented examples of this in the discussion about Alice and her English name, as well as with Diane's grandson, John's grandmother, and Charlie's cousin. Diane went on later to say more about Native Alaskan names and kinship ties:

“In Point Hope naming makes everyone connected. And if someone doesn't have any blood relatives or relatives by marriage or in-laws they can have names of other families' passed away persons and so they're included in that family. It makes everybody connected and belonging. That's very important, so you don't feel alone or anything. You do have connections just by names.”

In Diane's talk about names connecting to people, it is clear that giving the name of a deceased relative to someone not in your family basically tells that person your family is adopting them. This is another instance of internal power relations regarding names. By giving someone a name from a family that is not their own, the giver exerts their naming power and alters kinship relations. Alice's discussion about her English name was evidence of this. After she was given the name of a girl who had recently died,

Alice became a part of that family. Alice referred to the people in the family as the girl who died would have.

Past uses of a name can therefore dictate kinship terms. We saw this when John discussed how his grandmother calls him by the term for “father,” since he was named after her father, instead of by the term for “grandson.” This would have been true of anyone who received her father’s name, regardless of whether or not she was related to them. The kinship term that is used for someone can depend on who used it in the past. Again we see an instance where past usage impacts present usage and another way in which Native Alaskan names can be considered heteroglossic. This also affects identity negotiations regarding kinship relations, particularly between family members. For example, while John’s grandmother refers to him as “father,” she called each of his brothers “grandson.” Whether or not this difference impacts relations between the brothers (perhaps the grandmother speaks to John with more respect since he is addressed as if he were an elder) was not addressed. Further research would be needed to determine if this is the case.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions

Names are an important label everyone possesses. Names are also an important label that many people share. They do not always pick out one single person. For example, if I were to say the name “Bill,” I could be referring to any one of quite possibly one million people with the name “Bill,” some of which would include Bill Clinton, Bill Cosby, Bill Maher, Bill Gates, etc. This could possibly also include everyone who has ever gone by the name “Bill,” living or dead.

I have mentioned before how names establish personhood and institute an individual’s identity (Bodenhorn & vom Bruck, 2006; Bourdieu, 1991). Not only can names identify a specific person, they can also identify a specific cultural identity and also a cultural history. Many authors have addressed the ways in which personal names can reflect different aspects of their culture, be it social/political systems and cultural beliefs (see Chapter 2 for examples). Names and their uses can also reflect historical events within a culture and power relations with another culture or group. The idea that cultural beliefs and historical events can impact names and naming practices was the basis of this study.

This thesis looked specifically at Native Alaskan names and the ways in which they are used (or not used) in Anchorage, Alaska. This study’s analysis of Native Alaskan names and how and why they are used in Anchorage suggests that Native Alaskan names are primarily used as a vehicle for expressing and indexing cultural identity. These names are also used as a method of crossing boundaries, particularly the boundaries between life and death and past and present (Bodenhorn & vom Bruck, 2006). It is based primarily on

the fact that Native Alaskan names cross these boundaries that I have argued that Native Alaskan names are heteroglossic in nature.

Since heteroglossia depends so much upon history, it was important to take the cultural history of Native Alaskans into consideration for the analysis. Chapter 3 outlined the interactions between Native Alaskans and non-natives in the time since Alaska was purchased from the Russians. For the better part of a century, Native Alaskans were discouraged from using their native language (which would have included their native names) for fear of punishment. It was not until the last few decades that they have been able to begin reclaiming their languages and cultural practices.

As we have seen, there are a variety of factors that determine why and how the participants used their native name or their English name. The most important one is the presence or absence of a non-native speaker. The participants understood their names are difficult to pronounce for non-native speakers. During each of the interviews, I had to have each of them repeat their name(s) multiple times in the hope that I, someone with training in linguistics and phonology, might have a chance at pronouncing the name. Another key factor is location. With the exception of one participant, the participants all pointed out that in Anchorage they were most likely to use their name at the Heritage Center.

The Heritage Center, therefore, is an important vehicle for expressing Native Alaskan identity in Anchorage. While there, Native Alaskans are able to express and preserve their cultural identity in an urban area. The Center also allows them to express and preserve that identity in an area where they are in the minority. Finally, Native

Alaskans have the opportunity to educate people (both natives and non-natives) about the many different cultures in Alaska.

The evidence suggests that names are still an important part of Native Alaskan culture, even in an urban area away from the villages and after being suppressed for so many years. The knowledge of naming practices is still passed on from elders to the current generation. All of the participants who have children continued the tradition of giving their children a native name. John, the only participant who does not have children yet, said when he has children they will get native names as well.

While I attempted to provide adequate explanations for the findings of my analysis in Chapter 6, it is important to note that this study only looked at six individuals in a city of almost 300,000. Furthermore, this research was focused on individuals who work at a cultural heritage museum. This was done to ease the recruitment process, but the number of participants and the location make it impossible to make any generalizations regarding Native Alaskan names and naming practices in Anchorage outside the scope of the findings. However, the Heritage Center was significant given the historical basis of the study. The Center focuses on informing the general public about the collective cultural history (past and present) of Native Alaskans. The Heritage Center is used to display these cultures, so conducting the same research in Anchorage outside of the Heritage Center, or in a smaller urban area such as Fairbanks, might reveal different patterns in how and why Native Alaskans are using native names.

This leaves the door open for future research on Native Alaskan names and naming practices, as well as for more research on the idea that names can be a type of heritage project. With more and more Native Alaskans leaving the village to live in the

“big city,” it is possible we will see more changes in the naming practices within another generation. As we have seen, some of the participants living in Anchorage have already stepped away from the practice of giving their children a deceased relative's name and have begun to favor naming after a characteristic they see in the child. I would suggest scholars continue to study Native Alaskan names as a vehicle for cultural history and identity. Future research could ask a multitude of questions. Are Native Alaskan youth living in Anchorage aware of naming practices? What impact does being born and raised in Anchorage have on the use or non-use of Native Alaskan names? How does inheriting kinship terminology associated with a name impact other kinship relationships? For example, when John's grandmother refers to him as ‘father,’ how does that impact his kinship terminology with his brothers? How do Native Alaskan individuals not associated with the Heritage Center view their culture's names and naming practices? How are Native Alaskans at the Heritage Center using their names as a form of heritage work?

The goal of this project was to contribute to the established discourse on naming and identity by introducing a new theoretical framework for looking at Native Alaskan names and naming practices. No one has looked at names as being heteroglossic, and given the cultural beliefs Native Alaskans have regarding their names and naming practices, in addition to the impact colonialism had on the use of native languages, this project seemed to be the perfect way to introduce a new way of looking at names. By exploring the beliefs Native Alaskans living in Anchorage have about their names I attempted to see how those beliefs might have changed based on the urban setting, compared to the original studies done on Native Alaskan names in the villages. Additionally, by taking the history of colonialism and Native Alaskans into account, the

ways in which Native Alaskans are using their native names as a marker of cultural identity and the reclamation of that identity become even clearer. By looking at the ways colonialism has impacted the use of Native Alaskan languages and names, we can gain a better understanding of how Native Alaskans living in Anchorage use both their native and their English names in identity negotiation.

## Appendix A: Interview Guide 1

### Interview Topic List and Questions: Interview 1

Note: The underlined text is the topic list. The bold questions are the open-ended questions. The questions underneath each bolded question are those I would like them to answer during their response, but will prompt them with if it does not come up in their initial response. The text in italics are instructions for the interviewer.

---

Pseudonym of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Basic information

##### **1. Tell me a little about yourself.**



Family

**3. Can you tell me a little about your parents?**

- a. Where were your parents born?
  
- b. Are your parents still alive?
  - i. *If no*, how old were you when they died?
  
- c. Are/were they both Native Alaskan? If no, which one is/was Native Alaskan?
  
- d. *If parents are still alive*, Do your parents currently live in Anchorage?
  - i. If no, where do they live now?



**4. Do you have any children? (If no, skip to 6) Can you tell me a little about them?**

a. Where were your children born?

b. How old are they?

c. Where are they living now?

d. Do any of your children have any connections to the native village?

i. If yes, what connections do they have?

e. Do any of your children speak a Native Alaskan language, even a little bit?

i. *If yes, which language?*

ii. *If yes, using this scale, how proficient would you say you are in the native language? (Show language proficiency Likert Scale)*

**5. Do you have any grandchildren? (If no, skip to 6)**

- a. Where were your grandchildren born?
  
- b. How old are they?
  
- c. Where do they live now?
  
- d. Do any of your grandchildren have any connections to the village?
  - i. If yes, what connections do they have?
  
  - ii. Have they ever been to the village?
  
- e. If they're old enough to speak, do any of your grandchildren speak a Native Alaskan language even a little?
  - i. *If yes, which language?*
  
  - ii. *If yes, using this scale, how proficient would you say you are in the native language? (Show language proficiency Likert Scale)*

Names and Naming Practices

**6. This next section of questions is going to cover Native Alaskan names and naming. Before we begin with the questions, could you take a couple of minutes and write down all of the places you can think of where you would use your native name? (*Give 3 minutes for free list*).**

a. Can you tell me a little about Native Alaskan names and naming practices?

b. Who taught you about naming practices and beliefs?

c. What is your native name?

d. What does it mean?

e. Were you named after anyone?

i. If so, who?

- f. Do you know of anyone else who has the same name as you? (*If yes, continue to i and ii below*)
- i. If so, who?
  - ii. Among Native Alaskans, what does sharing a native name with other people mean?
- g. What does having a native name mean to you?

7. Children and Names (*If they don't have children, skip to conclusion*)

- a. Do any of your children have a Native Alaskan name? (*If yes, continue. If no, skip to 7j*)
  
- b. Which children also have native names and what are their names?
  
- c. What do the names mean?
  
- d. Are any of your children with native names named after anyone?
  - i. *If yes, who are they named after?*
  
- e. Does anyone else have the same name as your children? (*If yes, continue to i and ii below*)
  - i. If so, who?
  
- f. Can you tell me whether any of your children use their native names?





- f. *(If the grandchildren do not have native names)* Why did your children decide not to give native names to their own children?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about names and naming practices that we didn't go over already?

**That concludes the first interview. Before we leave, however, I was wondering if you'd be willing to take two minutes to fill out this brief survey about places you use your native name. We'll go over your responses next time we meet for the second part of the interview.**

**Thank you again for your time and participation.**

### Appendix B: Paired Comparisons Activity

**\*\*Please look at the pairs below and CIRCLE the one that you feel best answers the question\*\***

Example: Which place are you more likely to spend a Friday night? Circle the best answer.

Home	Movie theater
------	---------------

If you have one, which place are you more likely to use your Native Alaskan name?

Native Village	School
Friends' House	Native Village
Heritage Center	School
Friends' House	Heritage Center
Home	Heritage Center
Native Village	Home
Work	Native Village
Home	Friends' House
Friends' House	School
School	Work
Work	Heritage Center
Work	Home
Friends' House	Work
School	Home
Native Village	Heritage Center

## Appendix C: Interview Guide 2

### Interview Topic List and Questions: Interview 2

Note: The underlined text is the topic list. The bold questions are the open-ended questions. The questions underneath each bolded question are those I would like them to answer during their response, but will prompt them with if it does not come up in their initial response. The text in italics are instructions for the interviewer.

---

Pseudonym of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Now I just have a few questions regarding places you choose to use your native name. Can you tell me a little bit about how you decide where you use your native name and where you use your non-native name?**

a. Do you use your name while working here at the Heritage Center? (*If yes, continue with i and ii. If no, skip to iii*)

i. Can you give me an example of how you use your name while working?

ii. Do you think it's important to use your name while working at the Heritage Center?

1. Why or why not?

iii. *If no*, why don't you use your name here at the Center?

**2. Next I'd like to ask you some questions regarding the brief survey you filled out last time we met. (*Have blanks filled in with appropriate answers from paired comparison before meeting for this interview*)**

a. I noticed in your responses that \_\_\_\_\_ is the place you most frequently use your name. Can you tell me why?

b. I also noticed that \_\_\_\_\_ is the place you're least likely to use your name. Why is that?

c. I noticed in your responses that \_\_\_\_\_ kind of sat in the middle of places most likely and least likely to use your Native name. Can you tell me a little more about that?

d. Is there a place not on the list where you're more likely to use your name than \_\_\_\_\_? (*fill in with their most frequently used place*)

i. *If yes, where?*

ii. Why are you more likely to use your name there?

e. Is there a place not on the list here where you are least likely to use your native name?

i. *If yes, where?*

ii. Why are you not likely to use your name at this place?

f. Are there places where you would never use your native name?

i. *If yes, where?*

ii. Why wouldn't you use your name there?

- g. Are there places where you would always use your native name?
  - i. *If yes*, where?
  - ii. Why would you choose to use your native name there?
  
- h. Is there anything else you want to tell me regarding where you use your native name?

**3. Now I'd just like to take a few minutes to ask you some questions regarding your experiences working here at the Heritage Center. These will be the last few questions and then we'll wrap up the interview.**

- a. How long have you worked here at the Center?

b. How did you get a job at the Center?

c. Why did you decide to work here?

d. What are some of the jobs/responsibilities you have?

e. How frequently do you work here?

f. Can you walk me through a typical day of work?

g. In your opinion, who does the Center benefit most?

i. Why?

h. In your opinion, what does the Center offer to people who visit it?

- i. What does working at the Center offer you and other Native Alaskans?

Concluding the Interview

4. **Thank you again for taking the time to do this interview with me today. Before we go, is there anything else you'd like to tell me regarding what we've talked about today?**

**Thank you again for participating.**

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Academic Background

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2004-2008 BA Anthropology, Linguistics  
Minor Teaching English as a Second Language  
University of Florida, Gainesville

Honors and Awards

2008 Graduated *cum laude*, University of Florida  
2008 Dean's Honor List: University of Florida  
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Grants and Scholarships

2011	University of Nevada, Las Vegas Graduate and Professional Student Association Emergency Grant	\$350
2011	University of Nevada, Las Vegas Access Grant	\$1000
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2004	Florida Bright Futures Scholarship	Full tuition +stipend

Scholarly Activities

2011 Conference on Endangered Languages and Cultures of Native America: "We must protect this delicate balance in nature": Modals, Social Power, and Assigning Obligation in a House Subcommittee Hearing; Salt Lake City, Utah

- 2011 Georgetown University Roundtable on Language and Linguistics: Texting the New Tibetan Woman: Participant Structures, Gender, and CTM; Washington, DC
- 2010 Conference on Language Interaction and Culture: Los Angeles, California
- 2010 Southwest Anthropological Association Conference: Veg or Non-Veg: Tibetan Exile Youth, Text Messages and Flouting Sexual Norms; Reno, Nevada
- 2008 Sunshine State TESOL Conference, Daytona Beach, Florida
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### Professional Experience

- 2010-2011 Graduate Assistant: UNLV Anthropology Department
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