

# NAME NARRATIVES: A TOOL FOR EXAMINING AND CULTIVATING IDENTITY

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*I realized my name Noé is the symbol of my parents' struggle to give my brothers and me a better life. My name is also an example of the struggle of many indigenous people who are still colonized by majoritarian stories that dictate them to assimilate to a different culture. Now I embrace my name because it represents these struggles.<sup>1</sup>*

*I tire quickly of people not simply accepting my name as they would were I named Jessica or Angela. At the same time, I also believe that my name has caused me to be much more critical of gender roles in our society and allowed me to grow up questioning our constructions and perceptions of gender. Had I been named something else, I'm not so sure I would be as invested in these aspects of society as I am. . . Though my legal name is Timothy I go by Timmie.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Noé López, *My Name is Noé López López*. A video of his Name Narrative can be found at this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziSM46jf5Eo>. A longer written version of his Name Narrative can be found in Appendix A, No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Timmie Escobedo, *What's in a Name?*. A video of her Name Narrative can be found at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBuMfOjHa3w> (Timmie's narrative begins at

*My son's name, Diondre Teal, was a collaboration between my husband and me. The creation of his name originated as a creative expression. After an in depth analysis of his name, it reveals different characteristics about how he identifies himself racially. It also sets the tone for who he will become in a world where race is still a major factor in determining how successful a person will be.<sup>3</sup>*

*I remember explaining to a friend why I had both Morris and Vasquez as last names. She replied that Mexican women who married white men were like Malinche, wanting to be accepted by a white world. I remember the stinging pain I felt hearing this remark. I realize now that had I known more about my mom and dad's lives and the histories of their communities, I would have felt less conflicted and less hurt by the variety of comments and questions I heard about my name and my mixed racial and ethnic background throughout my life.<sup>4</sup>*

From their inception, names are embedded with meaning and coded with identity, and over time, they become layered with nuance and memory. This was the first and last sentence in the reflection<sup>5</sup> I wrote in 2013 to mark the twenty years that had passed since I wrote the article, *Máscaras, Trenzas y Greñas: Un/Masking the Self While Un/Braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse*,<sup>6</sup> which was the focus of the symposium volume in which this essay now appears.

We, the collaborators in the ongoing Name Narrative projects that are described in this short article, are three Latinas and one Native

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2:17). The longer version of her Name Narrative can be found in Appendix A, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Irene Teal, *Diondre Teal*. A video of Irene's Name Narrative can be found at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBuMfOjHa3w> (Irene's narrative begins at 3:41). A longer written version of his Name Narrative can be found in Appendix A, No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Irene Vasquez, the full version of Irene's Name Narrative can be found in Appendix A, No. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret E. Montoya, *Máscaras y Trenzas: Reflexiones. Un Proyecto de Identidad y Análisis a Través de Veinte Años*, 36 HARV. J.L. & GENDER 469 (2013) (hereinafter Montoya, *Reflexiones*), concurrently published in 32 CHICANA/O-LATINA/O L.REV. (SYMPOSIUM ISSUE) 7 (2014).

<sup>6</sup> Margaret E. Montoya, *Máscaras, Trenzas y Greñas: Un/Masking the Self While Un/Braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse*, 17 HARV. WOMEN'S L.J. 185 (1994) (concurrently published in 15 CHICANO-LATINO L. REV. 1 (1994)).

woman: Irene found Name Narratives to be a salient pedagogical tool in her Introduction to Chicana/o Studies course in Fall 2013. Diana and her colleague, Jeannette Stahn, have used the Name Narrative tool with administrators, teachers and students.<sup>7</sup> Diana and I are a mother-daughter pair<sup>8</sup> who have worked side-by-side in different settings, more recently creating opportunities for storytelling about names and identities. The video of my Name Narrative with my two daughters, Alejandra and Diana (holding her daughter, my granddaughter Marisela) was first shown at the Chicana/o-Latina/o Law Review (hereinafter “CLLR”) symposium on my *Máscaras* article on April 5, 2013. The video can be found at this link: <http://vimeo.com/63294353>.

We divide this article into three sections, Part I is a brief overview of recent commentaries in newspapers and public radio related to names, particularly as they pertain to identity and specifically to Latinas/os. Part II is a description of how Professor Irene Vasquez has used Name Narratives in the undergraduate classroom to help students deepen their understanding of their cultural heritage and augment their mental toolbox, a metaphor illustrating the concept of cognitive diversity.<sup>9</sup> A video with selections from the Name Narratives from her students can be seen at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAAtaHm081Zk>. Part III examines how Diana and Jeannette have used the Name Narrative tool in the educational pipeline programs for the health professions. Name stories introduce elements of Cultural and Linguistic Competence, a set of communication and interpersonal tools that are taught to health professionals to address racial and ethnic health disparities and thereby improve health outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jeannette Stahn, B.A. (Diné). Jeannette is To’ahani (Near the Water clan) and born for Bilagaana (Anglo). She is from Gallup, New Mexico but has been living and working in Albuquerque, New Mexico for several years. Jeannette is a Program Lead Manager for the HSC Office for Diversity and designs, implements, and oversees the educational pipeline programs for the health professions. We thank Jeannette for embracing this work and contributing to the project.

<sup>8</sup> My younger daughter Alejandra has also been drawn into identity-conscious scholarship. See Montoya, *Reflexiones*, *supra* note 5, at fn. 82.

<sup>9</sup> For a longer discussion about cognitive diversity, see *id.* at fns. 42-50.

<sup>10</sup> See *What is Cultural Competency?*, U.S. DEPT HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE OF MINORITY HEALTH, <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlid=11> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014) (“Cultural competency is one the main ingredients in closing the disparities gap in health care. It’s the way patients and doctors can come together and talk about health concerns without cultural differences hindering the conversation, but enhancing it.”).

## PART I: CULTURALLY INFLECTED NAME STORIES

MARGARET E. MONTOYA

You have probably experienced the phenomenon where you learn a new word and then it seems to be everywhere.<sup>11</sup> Since I wrote the *Reflexiones* article, which concluded with a discussion of Name Narratives,<sup>12</sup> media reports about naming practices have been everywhere, or so it seems. I have found several commentaries that inform explorations of names and their significance, especially within the collective experiences of Latinas/os.<sup>13</sup>

In October 2013, Ruben Navarrette Jr., a syndicated columnist with a decidedly conservative bent, fashioned his own abbreviated history about Hispanics and new trends in naming:

*So Hispanics anglicized their names – Maria became “Mary,” etc. They stopped speaking Spanish. They moved into predominantly white neighborhoods where they were the only Hispanics on the block. All to be accepted in the mainstream [sic]. That is when you knew you had arrived, when people saw you as white.*<sup>14</sup>

Navarrette goes on to describe a study of children’s names done by a baby-naming website that found that white parents are trying to give children names with an ethnic flavor.<sup>15</sup> Some parents explained that they wanted their children to “fit in” and gain advantage with “future bosses [who] will be Hispanic.”<sup>16</sup> Navarrette ends by decrying the cynicism of

<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon of repeatedly encountering a formerly unfamiliar word or subject is called the Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon. See Alan Bellows, *The Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon*, DAMN INTERESTING, <http://www.damninteresting.com/the-baader-meinhof-phenomenon/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Montoya, *supra* note 5 at fns. 108-115. The video of my Name Narrative™ with my two daughters Alejandra and Diana holding my granddaughter Marisela was first shown at the UCLA symposium on my *Máscaras* article on April 5, 2013. The video can be found at this link: Margaret Elizabeth Montoya, *Máscaras, Trenzas y Greñas. Name Narrative*,™ VIMEO, (March 28, 2103), <http://vimeo.com/63294353> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> See Paul Gorski, *Exchanging Stories—Names*, CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL PAVILION, <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/name.html> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014) (a website with multicultural materials and exercises for teachers, including one helping teachers to engage students in an exploration of their names and their ethnic origins).

<sup>14</sup> Ruben Navarrette Jr., *James is Diego to Forward-Thinking (or Cynical) Parents*, ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL (Oct. 22, 2013) <http://www.abqjournal.com/285874/opinion/james-is-diego-to-forwardthinking-or-cynical-parents.html> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

some parents (presumably white) who give their children a Spanish name in order to gain an advantage in affirmative action programs.<sup>17</sup> He opines that such programs, while the result of hard-fought civil rights battles, may now be “a sad indicator of a racial and ethnic spoils system” that perhaps should be scrapped.<sup>18</sup>

I disagree with much of what Navarrette has written, here and elsewhere. In the histories that I know, admittedly some Latinos changed their names in order to assimilate, but often names, including those of my father and his brothers and sisters, were changed by teachers or other bureaucrats without their consent or that of their parents. Some of us were given names, such as Margaret, because our parents had experienced the discrimination that came with speaking Spanish and having other markers of cultural and racial difference. Navarrette's description of, and his apparent gullibility about, giving a child a Spanish name in the hopes that s/he will be favored by some Latina/o boss in some faraway future is mildly delusional. Suffice to say, that reading his commentary, when I was marinating in this Name Narrative project, reinforced the linkages between names and the racial and cultural signaling that is both consciously and unconsciously attached to them. Examining naming practices has value in exposing the negotiations that parents go through in naming their babies as well as the negotiations that those babies go through as they grow up with names suited or ill-suited for lives spent in a highly racialized society that attaches significant meaning to names.<sup>19</sup>

A name with significant cultural inflection is Jesus or Jesús, the Spanish variation. In December 2013, the NPR program *Latino USA* hosted by María Hinirosa broadcast a Christmas program that included a segment about “what it's like to grow up with the holiest name.”<sup>20</sup> Several men with the name Jesús tell stories about this name that is acceptable in Spanish-speaking cultures and decidedly unacceptable in

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> A prime example of the struggle to embrace one's own name and how that process is itself constitutive of personal identity can be found in Noé López López's video and his longer written Narrative. This Narrative describes how he eventually grew to embrace his name but it was not without tears and prolonged internal struggles. A video of his Name Narrative can be found at this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziSM46jf5Eo>. Note that this narrative was a classroom assignment by Associate Professor Tara Yosso, Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.

<sup>20</sup> See María Hinirosa, *Latino USA: Do They Know It's Mex-mas?* (National Public Radio broadcast Dec. 20, 2013) <http://latinousa.org/2013/12/20/1351-xmas/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014) (the segment with the Jesús story begins at 15.05).

English-speaking cultures that see the name Jesus as appropriate only for the Son of God (in Christian religions).<sup>21</sup> This aversion to the name Jesus is the backdrop to one story about the severe scolding one Jesús receives when he suggests that an English-speaking man call him Jesus.<sup>22</sup> The Jesuses admit that the name is weighty, and this accounts for one who admits he has grown to dislike the name in both languages. The segment closes with one Jesús saying that, until he participated in this interview, he did not know other Jesuses; until the *LatinoUSA* interview, he didn't have many "tocayos"—a Spanish term which refers to another person with the same name.<sup>23</sup> The weekly program ends with each of the production staff members telling two to three sentence name narratives: you hear stories about people named by their siblings, named after famous people (Caroline Kennedy, Stevie Nicks), named after film and literary figures (Marlon Brando, Hunter S. Thompson), named from name books, named for Nancy Reagan (to honor President Reagan's amnesty program), named with a string of surnames, and this is to mention just a few of the charming narratives.<sup>24</sup> Listen and be inspired. *Do They Know It's Mex-mas?* <http://latinousa.org/2013/12/20/1351-xmas/><sup>25</sup>

On February 23, 2014, as I was writing this piece, the *New York Times* published an op/ed piece entitled "Your Ancestors, Your Fate" that concludes that social mobility is much slower than most of us believe and that one's status is strongly tied to one's ancestors (up to 50 or 60% of variation in status is determined by lineage, according to the author).<sup>26</sup> This already controversial opinion piece was based on studies of surnames done in eight countries and looking at rare or distinctive surnames associated with elite families.<sup>27</sup> The article contains a graphic listing high, middle and low status surnames, the ethnic groups with which they are linked, and the number of doctors per 1,000 with the name.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* (Segment begins at 49.50).

<sup>25</sup> The segment with the *Jesús* story begins at 15.05 and the segment with name stories begins at 49.50.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory Clark, *Your Ancestors, Your Fate*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (FEB. 23, 2014) <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/your-fate-thank-your-ancestors/> (last accessed on Feb. 26, 2014) (according to the website, Clark is a professor of economics at the University of California at Davis and the author of *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

There is only one Latino name and it falls into the Low-Status category with only 1.2 doctors per 1000.<sup>29</sup>

This op/ed source is pertinent because of its recency, the importance of the *New York Times* as a modestly credible chronicle of trends and cultural evolution, and the recurrence of social mobility as a theme in my own Name Narrative as well as those we include in this article. Professor Clark uses measures of elite families that do not correspond to the measures of social mobility of the Latinas/os with whom we have interacted or whose Name Narratives we have collected. Specifically, Professor Clark has looked at such characteristics as the descendants of Ivy League alumni, the directories of physicians and registries of licensed attorneys.<sup>30</sup> Our narratives are often stories about social mobility and social inequality. Our ancestors have never been members of the elite—they did not attend Ivy League institutions and their names were not among old lists of lawyers and doctors. Moreover, there is something deeply disquieting about attaching so much importance to surnames, a patriarchal artifact. To draw conclusions about social mobility or social competence from surnames devalues the role of mothers and grandmothers, especially since within U.S. culture women give up their surnames and take their husband's. Think about it, out of four great-grandfathers, only one passed on his name to me—my father's father's father.

Without question, the stories gathered here are too few in number to suggest any patterns. Moreover, any one narrative is representative of a larger collective experience to the extent that it resonates with the lived experiences of others (and we take as a given that memory is notoriously unreliable). I have created the phrase “inter-subjectively verifiable”<sup>31</sup> to create a reference point for the veracity of a story, a sort of truth indicator that can be found in the stories of others who share certain lived experiences. For example, the “facts” of my childhood stories can be dis/proven by my sister and brother; the “facts” of what happened in the Harvard classrooms where I sat in the 1970s can be dis/proven by others who were there. One important value of Name Narratives is that they give voice to experiences that resonate in the lives of others, they

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> Sumi Cho, *Revelations: Commemorating the Theoretical, Methodological, and Political Contributions of Professor Montoya's Máscaras*, 32 *CHICANA/O-LATINA/O L. REV.* (SYMPOSIUM ISSUE) \_ (2014).

give voice to recognizable stories, such as those about social mobility; such narratives are more often than not inter-subjectively verifiable.

## **PART II: USING NAME NARRATIVES IN THE CLASSROOM**

IRENE VASQUEZ

As a Director of a Chicana and Chicano Studies program at a flagship university, I take seriously my commitment to student academic achievement. I have spent 15 years in Chicana and Chicano Studies classrooms at two and four-year colleges and universities, and I have observed and experienced the power of culturally relevant curricula. When Professor Margaret Montoya first presented me with the Name Narrative worksheet and essay prompt, I instantly understood the power of the tool and the process of excavating the stories of names. The Name Narrative exercise encourages students to engage in robust discussions and writing practices that disseminate knowledge in accessible and relevant ways. Students contribute and share their individual and collective forms of social and cultural capital to the classroom environment and, thus, reinforce and shape course content and disciplinary knowledge.

Having been trained as a social historian of Latin America, I have explored the impact of racialization, gender and sexuality hierarchies, and social class formation on Native American, African descent, and mixed race communities of the Americas. As an observer of human and civil rights movements, I have also studied the profound and empowering aspects of claiming rights, identity, and culture among ethnically and culturally diverse and gendered populations. For a good part of the colonial, independence and post-independence periods in Mexico and in the region known today as the Southwest, many people from “white” communities have understood the importance of self, identity, and community empowerment. I strive to encourage students of color to understand their histories, identities, and cultural expressions as individuals, members of families, and stakeholders in their larger society and in the world.

The Name Narrative assignment prompts students to consider the complex ways in which personal experience, as exemplified in carrying a name, is situated within social, political, and economic contexts. Students are asked to consider the reasons why they were given a name, the familial and cultural associations of the name, and the ways the name stamps their sense of identity and self in racialized and intersectional contexts.

Names are personal and densely contextualized within the layers of a family, its history and its cultural milieu.

I asked 80 students enrolled in an introductory Chicana and Chicano Studies class to explore the living histories of their names. They were given a prompt and a worksheet and a set of educational support materials.<sup>32</sup> Students were required to interview family members and use primary and secondary materials. The outcomes were phenomenal.

Most of the 80 students had never considered exploring or sharing the story of their names. Most reported that they learned information about their families they had never known. While the quality varied from essay to essay, a number of students felt inspired by the assignment and expressed that, as a result of the research, the assignment required they relate to their name and their family's history in new, meaningful, and empowering ways. Students learned first-hand that the dynamics of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality inform social and economic practices in the past and in the present. Most students learned that normative understandings of U.S. populations and cultural expressions downplay and disregard the diversity of individual experiences, histories, and cultures. Difference not sameness is appreciated when students learn about each other through the varied and multiple experiences of naming practices.

Social relations and the ways that they are reproduced through naming practices and other family/cultural activities represent a critical form of knowledge and practice of knowledge dissemination that should be utilized in the college classroom. When students explore their lives (names) in the college classroom environment, they draw connections between the importance of being a culturally well-rounded person, being successful in their educational pathway, and being successful in life generally. This circular process is one that reinforces the importance of their education and may serve to influence the retaining of students. When students explain to each other the stories of their names they learn about and experience the meaning of diversity. Sharing Name Narratives highlights this diversity within the context of an intimate and personal dialogue and represents a pedagogical approach where all voices and experiences are valued.

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix B.

**PART III. INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL HUMILITY:  
STRATEGIES & TOOLS FOR INTROSPECTION AND REFLECTION**

DIANA MARTÍNEZ

The educational pipeline programs run by the UNM HSC Office for Diversity<sup>33</sup> have adapted the Name Narrative as a tool for introspection and reflection as part of the expanding Cultural Competency/Cultural Humility<sup>34</sup> curricula. In doing so, we are building upon the work of Randall B. Lindsey and his co-authors, leading scholars on cultural proficiency, who state that the first step in the journey toward cultural proficiency is introspection.<sup>35</sup> As we describe below, we have successfully implemented the use of the Name Narrative with varying groups of administrators, educators, and students around New Mexico.<sup>36</sup>

Cultural competency/cultural humility is a life-long journey. No one can ever be sufficiently culturally competent in his/her own culture much less in other cultures. This life journey is not about becoming culturally competent, rather the crux is understanding that we can always be better learners, communicators, and responders, especially in diverse settings or with people who are different from us. Thus, like many journeys, cultural humility begins with a first step. As explained by Lindsey, et.al., the first step includes understanding the change that must take place is an inside-out process that moves back and forth from the individual and then to the institutional and finally to the systemic. We articulate this process to participants in the following way: 1) examine your own

<sup>33</sup> See HSC OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY, <http://hsc.unm.edu/programs/diversity/programs.shtml>, for a description of the HSC educational pipeline programs.

<sup>34</sup> A debate continues about the best term—Cultural Competency, Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Proficiency, Cultural Humility—to use for these communication and interpersonal tools. We in Office for Diversity are moving toward Cultural Humility as the most appropriate term and objective, especially when working with younger students. See *Are You Practicing Cultural Humility? The Key to Success in Cultural Competence*, CALIFORNIA HEALTH ADVOCATES (April 2007), <http://www.cahealthadvocates.org/news/disparities/2007/are-you.html> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> RANDALL B. LINDSEY, KIKANZA NURI ROBINS & RAYMOND D. TERRELL, *CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: A MANUAL FOR SCHOOL LEADERS* (2nd ed. 2003).

<sup>36</sup> These are some of the UNM educational pipeline programs and other groups that have participated in the Name Narrative™ exercise: Dream Makers Health Careers Program at the following schools: Dugan Turango Middle School, Lordsburg, NM; Pinehill High School, Pine Hill, NM; Pojoaque Middle School, Pojoaque, NM; Robertson High School, Las Vegas, NM; Health Career Academy - Summer 2013 Participants; Undergraduate Health Sciences Enrichment Program Summer, 2013 Participants; MCAT+ Summer Program, 2013 Participants; UNM Management Academy Alumni Planning Group, Southwest Indian Law Clinic, UNM School of Law, 2014 Students and the Mental and Behavioral Health Academy, 2014 Students.

values, assumptions, and behaviors; 2) work with your peers to examine institutional policies and procedures, and 3) be an integral part of the community you serve by learning with and from members of the community. This is not linear; it is, like storytelling, a recursive process; stories borrow from each other and return back to points already touched upon.

The journey toward cultural competency involves five tools or approaches: Introspection as a means to understand your own thoughts, feelings, and motives; reflection as a means to examine your actions and behaviors; examination as a means to study current institutional policies and practices; analysis as a means to understand the relationship of all parts of institutional processes, practices, and policies, and planning as a means to be intentional in providing for the differing social and academic needs and assets of differing demographic groups of people.<sup>37</sup>

The Name Narrative is one tool that uses the inside-out process, for teaching students, many of whom are highly assimilated, to explore their names and their linkages to their family's cultural and racial roots, thereby gaining facility in talking about race and culture and seeing their race and culture as assets rather than deficits. This assets-based approach communicates the idea that we are all experts in our own stories. We aim to show that Diversity<sup>38</sup> is an asset for the individual and the group and hope to have them experience this as they listen to one another's stories and gain insights into the layered meanings in names. A key aspect of cultural humility is learning to listen to other's stories with respect and full attention; this is a critical skill for effective cross-cultural communication for health providers and the Name Narrative exercise incorporates this lesson. A caveat: It is always incumbent upon the facilitator to keep in mind that many times exploring identity can be difficult and a person might not want to share or may get emotional when doing so. We say this at the beginning, we never push someone when they are not comfortable, and allow participants to remain quiet if they choose to do so. Our experience is that even reluctant students will decide to join in once they have heard others. Moreover, some of the most engaging and profound narratives have come from students or participants who describe themselves as shy or not good at telling stories.

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<sup>37</sup> LINDSEY ET AL., *supra* note 35.

<sup>38</sup> Diversity is capitalized to emphasize that it is a term of art used to refer to a set of politically controversial policies and practices used in higher education and some workplaces to increase the number of white women and people of color as well as members of other under-represented groups.

The process we use depends on the age group of the participants. For all groups, we arrange the space so everyone is in a circle. For younger students, we have everyone create name tents using card stock folded in half so that the names can be placed on their desks and written with markers so their names can read by those across the circle. We ask students to write their name however they choose – they can use first and last names, first only, nicknames, etc. We ask them to be creative; middle school girls often embellish their names with hearts, exclamations points, and multiple colors.

As facilitators, one of us will read this excerpt from Sandra Cisneros' classic book, *The House on Mango Street*:

*In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. . . . It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. . . . At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. . . I am always Esperanza. I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.<sup>39</sup>*

Then one of us, again in our role as facilitators, shares our Name Narrative to provide another example to the group. Then we ask the group to think about their names, to write a few notes, and then we go around the circle as the students share their stories, using such prompts as: Do you like your name? Does it fit you? Do you have a nickname? If you could change your name, would you? To what would you change it? Do you have a family name? Does your family have naming traditions, have you carried any on, or do you plan to do so?

With older students or adults we use a matrix that lists many identity clues or cues about meanings that are contained in our names.<sup>40</sup> The questions in the matrix allow students to consider the many cultural and racial dimensions that are embedded in names. The stories often disclose information about identity, especially race, which would be almost impossible to examine without this story-based approach. Stories about our names allow us to explore issues of color, accents, assimilation, mixed race families, immigration and its dislocations and relocations, connections and disconnections with tribal roots or traditions. Thus, stories

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<sup>39</sup> See SANDRA CISNEROS, *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* 12-13 (1st ed. 1984).

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix C.

about names allow us to engage identity at deep levels and to begin to debunk ethnic, gendered, and racial stereotypes. Such stories move us toward an understanding that our complex identities are aspects of our human capital, a priceless resource to be cultivated and given expression in our classrooms and workplaces.

Up to now the Name Narratives exercises we have devised primarily examine the individual and family aspects of identity. As we continue to work with Name Narratives, we are developing materials that will trace the forces of systemic and structural discrimination that are also embedded in our stories. One idea is to help students connect their Narratives with a mapping of overt discriminatory and intersectional practices and policies as well as with implicit micro-aggressions. This type of mapping could also capture the effects, such as silencing and self-devaluation, that are disclosed in Name Narratives. Those that are included illustrate this. For example, Timmie Escobedo's video and her essay adroitly explore the ways in which notions of femininity, these largely unexamined, and often biased, assumptions about female/Latina beauty, attach to names and can mute or sometimes silence our voices. Her Narrative is an impassioned rebuttal of such stereotypes. Irene Teal's video and her essay expound upon skin color within a mixed race family. Her Narrative alludes to the intersections between race, ethnicity, color, masculinity (for boys and men of color), and athleticism, and enacts the soothing caress of a mother's love expressed through her naming practices and her storytelling. Gil Gurule's narrative in the video connects his name with his affinity for the land. He recognizes that his ancestors joined the armed forces and defended the land and its various flags even though they had been conquered and subordinated. Noé López López's video, and his longer written Narrative, explores categories that we take for granted. His life and story are a testament that not all Mexicans speak Spanish as their native tongue; some retain and cultivate the Native languages, Native identities, and Native cultures that have survived despite the prejudices and racisms that propelled the colonizing and Christianizing projects of the Conquistadores that persist today on both sides of national borders.

### CONCLUSION

We conclude by retelling a story about Cultural Competency within the legal profession. Carolina Martin Ramos, a former student now practicing immigration law in Albuquerque, was invited to attend a class one

of us (Margaret) was teaching called “Thinking Like A Lawyer.” Carolina ended the class with this story:

*Carolina was approached by one of her clients, a Mexican immigrant, with a request to help her husband who was incarcerated for allegedly sexually abusing a child in California and he was being extradited. The California governor’s office had signed the necessary papers and the extradition was imminent. Carolina began making inquiries and advocating for his release. As the date for his removal approached, she secured an appointment with the Assistant District Attorney who was overseeing the extradition. He was an older white man with some twenty or so years of experience. As Carolina prevailed on him to re-check the Mexican man’s identity, the attorney, losing patience, thrust the file towards Carolina saying loudly and emphatically, “Look, they have the same name Guadalupe and the same birthday December 12, 19xx.” Carolina instantly exclaimed “and so do hundreds of other Mexican men. December 12th is the feast day of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and men and women born on that day are given the name of the saint of that day. Mexicans born on December 12th are, of course, named Guadalupe.” The attorney’s eyes revealed his surprise; he ended the interview, saying he wouldn’t be opposed to lowering the bond. Later that day, the District Attorney’s assistant called Carolina to tell her that indeed her client was not the wanted fugitive from California and to offer to assist in speaking with ICE so that this would not negatively affect his request for an immigration bond. Fingerprints and a photo of the man in custody did not match those of the fugitive.*

Carolina explained to the class that knowing the Spanish language is not sufficient for Cultural Competency (nor Cultural Humility). Cultural knowledge is often gained through lived experience. Her story is a Name Narrative; it’s also a story about legal skills and competencies. Gracias, Carolina.

**APPENDIX A. SELECTED NAME NARRATIVES™**

- No. 1. Noé López López
- No. 2. Timmie Escobedo.
- No. 3. Irene Teal.
- No. 4. Dr. Irene Vasquez

**NAME NARRATIVE™ NO. 1**

**MY NAME IS NOÉ LÓPEZ**

*I don't yearn for this narrative to be the generalization of the indigenous migrant experience nor do I want pity. I wish my experience would influence people to understand the products of colonialism and understand that love to the self is an act of resistance.*

My name is Noé López and I am an indigenous Mixtec from Oaxaca, Mexico. For many, my name does not reflect my indigenous identity. My name is not a stereotypical name for a native person such as “Warrior of the Clouds or “Son of the Rain.” In English my name is Noah and it is originally from the Hebrew language. It is important in the book of Genesis as the story of Noah’s Ark. My last name, López, is derived from the Latin word *Lupus* meaning wolf. Noé Lopez represents a religion and a language that are definitely not native to the Americas. My name reflects the colonization of the Mixtec people. No one in my family has an indigenous name but Noé was the simplest name my parents gave to one of their children. My brothers’ names are: Salvador, Arcenio, Everardo, Adalberto, and Romaldo. My name is just three simple letters: Noé. I asked my parents who gave me that name and both of them don’t remember or they just don’t want to tell me. You see, when I was a kid I hated my name. Despite being proud of my last name, as a child my name represented my weakness. When I immigrated to the United States, I realized my name represents my identity and the struggle of five hundreds years of colonization my people have endured.

I was proud of my last names. My town was divided into families: Morales, Martínez, López, Gómez. It is like “This is no Slum!” by Tara Yosso and David Garcia in which the Chavez Ravine was divided into

families who together contributed to the community.<sup>41</sup> There were two different Lopez families in the town but they had different familial capitals (cultural knowledge and values nurtured in the family). One of them is my dad's family and the other was my mom's family. My father's family was really conservative. I remember my paternal grandfather's expectations for his grandchildren were to get a degree, get married, and have kids. He still wants me to be governor of Oaxaca some day or maybe work with politicians. My father's family had a reputation of being focused in school and going to the big cities to study. A family's reputation in a small community is really important in shaping familial capital because it defines family's values. That is why my maternal grandmother tells me in mixtec "you are the grandson of your grandfather Nico" (Nico is the nickname of my paternal grandfather: Nicanor) because according to her, my future is to study like my paternal grandfather's family.

On the other hand, my maternal family has the reputation of being happy, outgoing, singing, dancing, and drinking. My maternal grandfather was known for having a guitar and singing to people. I never met him because he died years before I was born but his reputation is still alive. One day I recited a poem in school and one old man came to me and in Spanish he told me "you had to be the grandson of Delfino Lopez Ramirez! Chingaos!" I was proud of it because that meant I was still following my grandfather's legacy of being artistic. Now, when I say that my last name is Lopez I am not representing any European legacy but is a conjunction of the legacy of my two families: one who looks for an upward mobility (the idea to have a better economic and social standing) and one who still holds to our culture and artistic expression.

I remember I used to cry to my mother because of my name. I used to blame my name for my weakness. In school, my name did not sound strong enough. The other kids had names like Ruben, Rodolfo, and Alberto. I did not have muscles, I was short, I didn't know how to play basketball; I was weak just like my name. I was bullied by my classmates because they knew I felt weak. It was then that I developed a strong resistant capital (skills acquired by oppositional behavior). I resisted my classmates by challenging them with schoolwork. I also did some extra reading to challenge my teachers. I remember one of my teachers hated

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<sup>41</sup> Tara Yosso & David Garcia, *This is No Slum!: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Community Cultural Wealth in Culture Clash's "Chavez Ravine"*, 32 AZTLAN: A JOURNAL OF CHICANO STUDIES (2007).

me for that. Also, my name reflected me not following my family's expectations. I grew up hearing my mom say to my brothers and me "tienen que aprender ser cabron," in English, "you all need to learn how to be tough." My mom said that because she knew this is a difficult world to grow up in. It was her way to prepare us for the future. Sometimes I felt weak when she said that because my name was not strong enough as she expected me to be. It was a childish thought but it was always in my mind when I saw my brothers doing difficult tasks such as taking care of the bulls, the goats, and the cornfields. All I did was school and I felt weak there. My mother was a strong woman and her aspiration for us was to survive this difficult world. Our family capital was based on being able to survive with dignity in this world. It was the most important lesson my mother has thought me in my entire life.

The meaning of my name changed when my mom told me we were coming to the United States. The United States was a whole new world, not only economically but culturally. I stayed in Oxnard, California and this community changed my life drastically. In school, my teachers and classmates did not know how to pronounce my name. Some used to pronounce it like "No-e" others said "Noel" and others just said "No." Since I came from Mexico, everyone imposed to me the idea of me being just "another Mexican kid" who comes to the United States from a poor town to learn English and get a better life. My situation was the same but I knew I was different. In Oxnard, many Mexicans have the stereotype of Oaxacans as being short, brown, and shy. Some people call indigenous people "oaxaquitas." This is a diminutive word to make indigenous-looking people feel inferior. I remember one of my classmates told me I was too smart to be from Oaxaca. Many of my classmates said I wasn't shy or quiet. Because of this racism toward indigenous people I began doing research on my indigenous identity. It was until then that I realized my family's native language was not Spanish but Mixtec. I realized the Mixtec people have been living in southern Mexico for thousands of years. I realized I was indigenous but I asked myself: despite racism toward indigenous people was I still Mexican? Is my name a Mexican name?

My name is a symbol of colonialism. According to Rodolfo Acuña in "Occupied America: A History of Chicanos,"<sup>42</sup> one of the definitions of colonialism is the implementation of an alien culture and government imposed by people who invaded a foreign land. The Mexican

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<sup>42</sup> RODOLFO F. ACUÑA, *OCCUPIED AMERICA: A HISTORY OF CHICANOS* (7TH ED. 2010).

government imposes Mexican nationalism into indigenous nations which causes indigenous people to lose their culture. As I grew up in Oaxaca, I was taught to sing the Mexican anthem and salute the Mexican flag. The Mixtec language was not taught in my school but Spanish is still the dominant language in the books. The Mexican government is based on foreign ideals of government that does not follow the ideals of the government of indigenous nations. Mexicans impose a culture based on nationalism which is based on ideals that all Mexicans are mestizo- this means having indigenous and Spanish blood. However, Mexican nationalism follows the ideals of Spanish conquerors by implementing the Spanish language in indigenous schools and making indigenous people salute a flag that does not represent all indigenous nations. Most indigenous people know nothing about their own stories because they believe on majoritarian stories (stories told by privileged individuals) based on colonialism. Mexican majoritarian stories are based on the ideas that Mexicans are based on one race, culture, politics, etc. It is causing indigenous people to lose their language and culture. My name reflects my parents' expectation to fit majoritarian stories which hinder the idea that in order to fit into Mexican society one has to have a name that is not related to our indigenous roots.

I tried to change my name. I wanted an indigenous name like Cuahtli which means eagle in Nahuatl or Tonatiuh which is the name of the sun. I asked my mom to give me a Mixtec name but she started laughing. This relates to the poem "Stupid America"<sup>43</sup> by Abelardo Delgado in which the speaker blames American nationalism for his situation. I blamed Mexican nationality for indigenous people been subjects to racism and losing our identity. All I wanted to do was to decolonize myself. I wanted to be nothing more than an indigenous Mixtec. However, I remember one day when I was at a MEChA (Movimiento estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) conference and I started to meet Chican@s.<sup>44</sup> I was excited because many of them are proud of their indigenous roots. Some Chican@s at the conference had their long hair and were proud of who they were. I met a friend who called himself Guerrero Del Sol (Warrior of the Sun). He said he changed his name to honor his indigenous

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<sup>43</sup> Abelardo "Lalo" Delgado, *Stupid America* (1969), <http://www.xispas.com/poetry/delgado.htm> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> The term "Chican@" with the commercial at symbol as a suffix denotes an effort to avoid organizing around gender specific terms. An alternative gender-inclusive spelling has been "Chicana/o."

ancestors. When I started to make friends with Chican@s, I realized their identity as brown people was really important. Many of them accepted their Mestizaje. However, they referred to indigenous people as their “ancestors,” “roots,” and their “past.” Their present to them was being Chican@ and being part of a struggle to claim their identity. I realized my indigenous blood is not only of my “ancestors,” my “roots” or my “past.” I am indigenous and I am living in the present. It was then that I realized that Noé Lopez was a name imposed to an indigenous person who grew up in the Mixtec region of Oaxaca, Mexico and he then migrated to the United States. My parents choose Noé as my name because they thought it will bring me a better future in society. I am an example of how colonization still affects the present.

I realized my name is the symbol of my parents’ struggle to give my brothers and me a better life. My name is also an example of the struggle of many indigenous people who are still colonized by majoritarian stories that dictate them to assimilate to a different culture. Now I embrace my name because it represents these struggles. I am like the poem “I am Joaquin”<sup>45</sup> in which the speaker defines his Chicano identity. Although, my name is Noé Lopez and I am a modern day indigenous person who has been colonized for more than five hundred years. I’m still fighting to decolonize myself and my people. I know for sure that my children will have indigenous names because they will be free by then. But for now, in any public presentation I make I begin with the phrase: “My name is Noé Lopez and I’m an indigenous Mixtec from Oaxaca, Mexico.” It is like saying: “I am still alive.”

### NAME NARRATIVE™ No. 2

TIMMIE ESCOBEDO

“What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”<sup>46</sup> As endearing as young Juliet is, her understanding of the importance of names leaves much to be desired. I often wrestled with this line because it hit home with me, as I have often wondered how my life would have been different had I been named Nina or Michelle, or any other typically female name. Ideally the world we live in would consider

<sup>45</sup> Rodolfo Corky Gonzales, *I am Joaquin*, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/latinos/joaquin.htm> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> This quotation is an iteration of a popular line in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In this particular scene Juliet argues that the names of things do not matter, it only matters what they are in and of themselves.

the being rather than the name attached to them, but as it is our lives are affected by the names we are given and the perception of them.

My birth certificate records my name as Timothy Michelle Escobedo. My mother named me Timothy after my father, and Michelle after my aunt (her sister). Escobedo is my father's last name, which my mother took on when she married him, and is mine by convention. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the etymology of Timothy as a Catholic name, meaning honoring God.<sup>47</sup> Michelle is the feminine form of Michael, which is the name of a saint. While both my parents were born and raised in Catholic homes they both stopped practicing before I was born, as such I don't believe my parents considered the origins of my name when deciding. According to Ancestry.com the last name Escobedo either comes from the Spanish word "escoba" or broom, or comes from a small place of the same name in the Spanish province of Santander.<sup>48</sup>

The story behind my name is more interesting than the denotative history of it. My Residence Center, and I called to confirm that the problem was fixed and was told that it was, but on move-in day I was still assigned to a room with a boy. Even writing about it some months later brings back feelings of frustration.

The root of my frustration with my name comes mostly from perceptions of male and female, and my place in that. I was never a very outwardly feminine girl growing up, and even now. This goes along with long standing issues I have with femininity, where I was never really comfortable expressing it because I never felt pretty enough. But, I do identify completely as a woman, and every time someone questions my name it feels like a slap in the face. I know I am a woman, I feel like a woman, it is something that I always have been, but sometimes I don't feel like I look enough like a conventional woman and my name is a reminder of that. Other girls given traditionally girl names do not have to reassure people they are who they are, people do not question their identity.

Here is where I feel my name has shaped me the most. Due to my sensitivity about my name I think I have become a bit withdrawn from people because I hate dealing with the introduction; I tire quickly of people not simply accepting my name as they would were I named Jessica or Angela. At the same time, I also believe that my name has caused

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<sup>47</sup> Timothy, n—Definition, OED ONLINE, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202166?redirectedFrom=timothy> (last visited Oct. 20, 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Escobedo Family History, ANCESTRY.COM, <http://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=escobedo> (last visited Oct. 20, 2013)

me to be much more critical of gender roles in our society and allowed me to grow up questioning our constructions and perceptions of gender. Had I been named something else, I'm not so sure I would be as invested in these aspects of society as I am.

Though my legal name is Timothy, I go by Timmie. Mostly it is out of habit, I've always been called Timmie. The only times I was called by Timothy were when I was in trouble, as is the case with many people who use nicknames. Personally I feel like Timmie is more feminine than just Timothy and, as such, it is what I prefer to be called. My mother once told me that in addition to honoring her sister she figured if I wanted a more feminine name I could go by my middle name, Michelle. I never cared for the name too much, though I could never tell my mother that. My aunt Michelle was mentally challenged, and when I was young it was very difficult for me to understand and, looking back on it now, her name meant to me things that scared me because I didn't have the capacity to understand. It is something I feel guilty about, and still remains a bit of a mystery because it is difficult for my mother to talk about.

At this point I've grown to where I am comfortable with my name most days. I sometimes think about changing it, but I always run into the problem that nothing else quite fits right. Additionally, I feel like my name has heavily influenced who I am today and it is not something I can just throw away. I know names have the potential to give people an edge, yet I cannot think of a time when I was privileged by having a typically male name. However, I do know that people often tell me they were expecting a boy when they see my name so I do see how a document that does not reveal my gender could give me an edge with someone who prefers males. Additionally, though I have not to my knowledge experienced this, after meeting me in person people may assume that I am a transgender woman, which could be detrimental in the case that the person I'm meeting is discriminatory against trans\* individuals.

My issues with my first name consist mostly of gender perception, while my issues with my last name all have to do with my ethnic background. Let me begin by saying I love my last name. As a multiracial person I love that my name reflects, as I see it, the two halves of my heritage: Timothy is white and Escobedo is Mexican. I feel like my last name gives me some concrete evidence that I am of Mexican descent. Because I don't exhibit phenotypical traits that suggest Mexican heritage I have often felt a disconnect between Mexican American culture and myself.

Since I look just white I wonder if that is enough to overpower the fact that my last name is obviously, at least to me, a Spanish name. Though I do identify as Mexican American I often fear that I will offend someone when participating in cultural events because I do not look Mexican and grew up in a predominantly white area. Because of this I sometimes wish that my first name was also a Spanish name, but seeing as my father does not speak Spanish that was unlikely to happen.

I think one of the most important things I've realized in this class is the conscious decision in a name. While watching Margaret Montoya's Name Narrative™ video, I became aware of the choice on how you pronounce your name.<sup>49</sup> For the vast majority of my life I pronounced my last name as "Es-co-bee-dough," in English rather than in Spanish. I think this was just out of habit, as I often heard my mother answering the phone as "Doctor Escobedo" in English, of course. However, when Professor Montoya explains how she chooses to pronounce Montoya with its Spanish pronunciation it made me realize the importance of pronunciation in a name.<sup>50</sup> The conscious decision to pronounce the name with its Spanish inflection gives an undeniable link to the culture. As such, I have decided that I would like to say my last name with its Spanish inflection as well, to help create that link to my heritage.

In a similar vein, I am sensitive to how my last name is pronounced. I usually will let it slide when people refer to me as Tim or Timothy, but when people mispronounce, at least to my ears, my last name I find it very grating. Perhaps it is because, as previously mentioned, I view my last name as a tenuous link to my Mexican heritage, and when mispronounced or Anglicized that link is broken. Usually people will say "Es-co-bay-dough" rather than "Es-co-bee-dough," and while it does not seem like a big deal to me it is like nails on a chalkboard. I think Sandra Cisneros described it the best in *The House on Mango Street* when Esperanza says, "[T]hey say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth."<sup>51</sup> The sound of the mispronunciation practically becomes cringe worthy. Since I have discovered this, I now make it a point when I meet people to check if they have a preferred pronunciation because I would hate to distort anyone else's name out of ignorance or accident.

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<sup>49</sup> Margaret E. Montoya, *Name Narrative*™ VIMEO.COM (Apr. 3, 2013), <http://vimeo.com/63294353> (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Sandra Cisneros, *My Name*, in *THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET* 11 (2nd ed. 1991).

All in all, my name is what it is. It fits me for the most part, and the parts that do not fit I am accustoming to. Though things might have been easier with another name, my name is essential to my identity, and I don't ever plan to change it. This was probably the deepest look I have taken at my name, and I'm grateful. I have found this to be very helpful in the development and understanding of my identity, which is still unfolding.

**NAME NARRATIVE™ No. 3**

IRENE TEAL  
DIONDRE TEAL

A Name Narrative offers an opportunity to explore how a name can imply or disguise a social circumstance such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, ancestry, or geography. There may be various reasons why a family chooses a specific name to represent that child for the rest of his or her life. It may be simply a creative expression or it may have a historical significance within the family.

My son's name, Diondre Teal, resulted from a collaboration between my husband and I. The novelty of his name originated from a creative expression inspired from our love for him. The name we gave him set the tone for who he will become in a world where race is still a major factor in influencing a person's success.

The first time we learned that we were pregnant with our second child, Diondre, we were rather surprised being that our first born was only a few months old. The doctor also confirmed that we were already into our second trimester. I can recall feeling overwhelmed that day and I prayed that the baby was healthy. We found out that we were having another boy. This was completely unexpected being that I was the second born of four girls. "Another boy," I said to myself. "It must be my generation to have all the boys like my late grandmother, Eliza Rael did." I knew that the doctor could not have made a mistake either. Thanks to modern technology, we had the privilege of using one of the first ultra sound machines with 3-D capabilities. He was a boy and thankfully he was healthy and developmentally perfect.

We had chosen the name of our first born beforehand. It could have been because he was our first and we were more eager to give him an identity immediately. I suppose that we wanted a different experience the second time around. We wanted to wait until the moment we laid

eyes on him to give him a name. We were hoping that based on what his appearance was, we would know what name would be suitable.

During my pregnancy, I could sense that this one was very different from my first. He was rather active in utero. At times his movements made me so ill, I was bed ridden. He was also determined to enter this world prematurely. I had preterm labor issues on several occasions. I was hospitalized to prevent this pregnancy from taking place sooner than the due date. We had seen him more than a few times by ultrasound due to my high-risk pregnancy. At that time, we were more concerned that he was developing properly. I was also diagnosed with gestational diabetes and had to take even more precautions to ensure the safety of our child.

On September 14, 2001, Diondre came into this world by a cesarean section. He was born larger than the average baby boy but was in good health overall. We saw him for the first time in the delivery room. The moment we were waiting for did not happen as naturally as we hoped. In fact, it did not happen at all. Before us was this beautiful baby boy as perfect as can be but the name did not suddenly appear in our minds or our thoughts. Two days later and we still did not have the name. He became known as Baby Teal. The patience of the hospital staff began to wear away. By this time we were hard-pressed by the hospital staff to come up with a name. They said that they needed the name so that it can be recorded with the department of vital statistics. My husband and I struggled to find a name. We knew we did not want a name that was monotonous, prosaic, or even a trendy name. Time wasn't on our side so we eventually resorted to a baby name book in search for some ideas. As we flipped through the pages, we saw the name DeAndre and were immediately drawn to that name. The connection is mostly due to the fact that the name is derived from the name Andre and my husband was an avid fan of the hip-hop, gangster rap creator and producer, Dr. Dre. Dr. Dre's birth name is Andre Young. My connection to the name was the pronunciation of it. Dion-dre is a combination of two names essentially, Dion and Dre. Since I am a football fanatic, the name could represent something special from both my husband and myself equally. Deion Sanders was a famous cornerback for the National Football League. He played for both the San Francisco 49ers and the Dallas Cowboys. He won the Super Bowl championships with both teams. Because of his diverse athleticism, he also played professional baseball for several franchises. In 2011, he was inducted into the Football Hall of Fame, a prestigious

honor for any football athlete. The combination of both names resulted in his name Diondre Teal.

Denotatively, the name Dion according to wikiname.com is of French origin, Latin for dios meaning of Zeus. Andre has several denotative meanings and places of origination range from French to Portuguese to Scottish based on the website, behindthename.com. Newer websites whose focus is the meaning of names and their suggested origin will show Deandre as an African-American name. However, there is no information on its origin so it is primarily a name of modern times. The history of the surname Teal bears a strong family history. The name Teal, also spelled Teale or Teel, is of English origin and it is defined as a “nickname for a person considered to resemble the water bird in some way.”<sup>52</sup> Another reference shows that the origin of Teal is of English descent “(mainly Yorkshire) from the Middle English tele nickname for somebody that is considered to resemble a duck.”<sup>53</sup> However, the name that is denoted in a book of surnames doesn’t constitute or represent what the name means to a family.

Children are very curious by nature and sometimes may ask the most peculiar questions. As unusual as a question may seem to be, it sometimes deserves a more in-depth answer than the one we are willing to give. My son has often asked the question about how we got his name. Of course, we give him the story about how it was derived from two special people that are significant contemporary figures and whom his father and I admire. The response is very short and sweet and seems to satisfy his curiosity for now. His name, however, is much more than the answer that we give him.

Diondre Teal is biracial. His father is African-American and I am of Latina descent. His older brother seemed to have inherited most of my side of the family’s physical traits. He is very light in complexion in comparison to Diondre. His other two siblings that were born after him are also of a lighter hue. However, they are a little browner in contrast to our first son. As far as I can remember, our first son is always referred to as being white, Diondre as being black, and our other two as being brown. I have always tried to make sure that each of my children is treated equally as a mother should. My son, Diondre, has always felt dissimilar. I do not believe that he understands what his feelings truly signify. Since he was

<sup>52</sup> PATRICK HANKS & FLAVIA HODGES, *A DICTIONARY OF SURNAMES* 446 (1989).

<sup>53</sup> *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN FAMILY NAMES* 527 (Patrick Hanks ed., 2003).

about two years old, he has had to endure the unfortunate diagnosis of asthma and severe skin complications called eczema. The doctors assured us that this was just a phase and that he would probably be rid of the burden by the time he was four years old. His fourth birthday came and went and to this day he still struggles with both. This year we found out that he is just about allergic to everything under God's green Earth. He will undergo shot therapy this year to hopefully cure him of his allergies. He has also struggled with the fact that he is noticeably bigger than children his age. His pediatrician always gave us get well child progress notes comparing him to children his age by size and without failure; he was always off the charts. He sensed that this was just another abnormality and blamed the color of his skin.

There are emotions Diondre experiences that he feels he has but doesn't quite have the knowledge to understand the bigger picture. His perception of life at this point seems to portray color as a representation of inferiority and negative by association. He identifies himself as black whereas his siblings consider themselves the color they see, which is brown. Diego Vigil writes a lot about color and race.<sup>54</sup> It is very interesting to me that my children would differentiate themselves by color and what seems to be even be race. Somehow they do not make the connection that they come from the same pool of genes and are equally half of me and half of their father. In the Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies class, we discussed the definitions of race and ethnicity. Before my children were exposed to a larger society, they instinctively made distinctions but they have never used any hurtful or derogatory words towards their brother fortunately.

Diondre's name is modern and associated with African-American males. When we chose the name, we may have subconsciously targeted the name because his physical appearance was more African-American than Hispanic. Would a name descriptive of an African-American or of a Hispanic-American offer him better opportunities in life? And by choosing a name with African-American influence, did we predispose him to a life of struggle? In *From Indians to Chicanos*, Vigil writes, "The Latin American elite flourished during this period, while the situation for the working class, mostly the dark-skinned population, worsened."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> DIEGO VIGIL, *FROM INDIANS TO CHICANOS: THE DYNAMICS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE* (2011).

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* at 151.

The experience of the Native Indian after colonization is described in this excerpt from the book but it also reflects what even a twelve year old black child may come across in today's society. The darker the person the more inferior they are in any social classification.

Racial discrimination is a virus that plagues today's society even decades after emancipation. On a lighter note, did we bless him with a name that is an open gateway to endless possibilities and opportunities? Although there is no direct meaning for his name in the history of first names, did we provide him with a name that he can be defined by? I knew that he may struggle with his identity at one time. He made association with his health issues (allergies and asthma) and physicality with the color of his skin. He wondered why his other siblings did not have the same problems that he had. But as time passed, he doesn't seem to encompass any negative thoughts or feelings about being of African-American descent. He respects that he is more like his father and that being different is something that makes him unique.

Since Diondre has abandoned the notion that his struggles and his darker pigmentation hinder him as an individual, he has become stronger and more determined. At the age of nine years old, he found his passion in life. He wanted to play football and since his father also played the sport as a child and throughout high school, we were able to register him for YAFL (Young American Football League).

The first time he laced up his cleats, put on the protective pants and shoulder pads, and finally the helmet, he felt a sense of completeness. He finally found the missing piece to the puzzle. He no longer felt like an outcast. He dominated his position the first time he set foot on the football field. Even though he had to work past the allergies to grass, he was strong-minded to do what he needed to do to master the sport. He was a natural; it was as though he played the sport before. His name partially represents one of the best football plays in the history of the NFL. Although his team had a losing season, his abilities on the field stood out. Spectators saw his incredible talent and potential to do great things on the field. High school coaches were constantly approaching him hoping that he will be of age to play at the next level. He was often perplexed because he was only ten years old and he knew it but the coaches saw an older, talented football star.

Diondre loves when the crowd chants and cheers his name. He experiences nothing short of feeling superior, which is a new emotion that

he never felt before. His physique was no longer an issue and his color did not make him feel second-rate. This is his fourth season of playing football and with everything he has experienced in his short life, he has worked very hard to get to where he is today. He knows that his abilities on the football field can be advantageous to him academically as well. He knows that there are scholarships available for athletes that wish to pursue a professional career. His African-American race seems to represent the majority in almost any sport. According to The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, “during the NFL’s 2011 season, the percentage of African-American players remained at 67%.”<sup>56</sup> Diondre understands that academics are a priority and it is a requirement for success in whatever life endeavor he chooses.

Aside from the difficulty my mother still has when pronouncing his name, Diondre Teal is destined to become a great and powerful individual. Academically, his fifth grade teacher told me that he would not make it in sixth grade. He saw failure in Diondre and I sometimes question if his color had anything to do with it. I questioned his teacher and asked if he thought we should hold him back a year. His teacher replied, “No, Diondre knows everything. He passed all standardized tests but he lacks resilience and stamina. This child is not motivated to get the job done in class. In middle school, he will not have an educator that would be willing to baby sit and hold him by the hand.” It was beside myself to hear this from a professional that is supposed to encourage students. I can recall a few years earlier, another teacher at the same school told me that because Diondre is such a large kid for his age, everybody thinks that he should be mentally more mature but in reality, he is where he needs to be.

Diondre is a sixth grader at Cleveland Middle School. So far he has positively exceeded the expectations of his former fifth grade teacher. His interim report card reflects above average grades. His passion in school is Social Studies, in which he currently holds an A+. Adversity is an unfortunate situation that we may always be faced with regardless of how insignificant an incident might appear to be. Our ability to overcome any situation as negative as it may be is what progress is all about.

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<sup>56</sup> RICHARD E. LAPCHICK ET AL., THE INSTITUTE FOR DIVERSITY AND ETHICS IN SPORT, THINK BEYOND THE COMPETITION: 2011 RACIAL AND GENDER REPORT CARD, 10 (2011), available at [http://tidesport.org/RGRC/2011/2011\\_RGRC\\_FINAL2.pdf](http://tidesport.org/RGRC/2011/2011_RGRC_FINAL2.pdf) (last visited Mar. 19, 2014).

As I researched Ancestry.com for information on the Genealogy of our surname Teal, I was able to find information on an individual by the name of James Teel.<sup>57</sup> His lineage was traced from what would be Diondre's great, great, great-grandfather, Chester V. Teal. His occupation is listed as a servant and he was born in Virginia on May 18, 1822. From what I can gather, the information in the Census Record is that he may have been a servant for the family, Herchelroth. Mr. James Teel eventually found his way to Pennsylvania where the rest of the Teal family still resides today. Diondre's great, great-grandfather served proudly in the United States navy and fought in WWII. He was laid to rest on February 23, 1993 at the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery. Since the birth of social media, we are slowly becoming acquainted with that side of the family, which Diondre identifies with the most.

Today when you ask Diondre what his name means, he grins as though it's just a name that was derived from two parents with an infatuation with two celebrities. His name will be what identifies him in society. He may encounter negative as well as positive experiences based solely on his name. A recent search on Google for the name Diondre or De-Andre (more commonly spelled), returned results on several individuals whose commonality reflected the fact that they are all athletically talented and who are making a name for themselves in the sports world.<sup>58</sup>

In my personal experience, my oldest and youngest sisters were portrayed as porcelain dolls because of their fair skin and almost blonde hair. The two middle children, my sister and me, were the *trigueñita* often referred to as the "indianitas." In fact, my sister was nicknamed "Blackey" by one of our uncles. In the past, it may have been considered acceptable to discriminate on the basis of race but as we mature with experience, we understand that negative connotations in regards to color and race can destroy a family. Is the elimination of racial privilege possible? Is the legacy of racial stratification or placing precedence on one color over another like what Native people and African descent people experienced so durable that it cannot be overcome? Maybe not. But through the various movements aimed at eradicating racial discrimination at all levels, it may be possible to bring to an end the negative impacts of racism. The ethnic dynamics are currently shifting from where whites are currently the majority; they are slowly becoming the minority. According to the

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<sup>57</sup> ANCESTRY.COM

<sup>58</sup> GOOGLE.COM Search

Census Bureau, by 2043, Latinos will become the majority with Asians following.<sup>59</sup> Yet we must work as a society to destroy what race and color has done to the humankind if we are to move forward as one people.

I am confident that the stronger a family's foundation, the stronger the offspring will be. Home is where an individual's seeds are planted and with enough love and care, the roots are indestructible and resilient. Racial discrimination or any part of it should not exist in any household. So often, it is evident and breaks down the family structure, which should be the strongest. Even the slightest hint of racial prejudice has an immense impact on that individual. The worth that one color has over another in a family is terrifying.

#### NAME NARRATIVE™ No. 4

IRENE MORRIS VASQUEZ

On August 31, 1969, I was born Irene Elizabeth Morris to Evon C. Morris and Agripina Vasquez Morris. My parents met and married in Deming, New Mexico. My father is Anglo American born and raised in Dayton, Ohio. My mother is Apache Mexican and was born in Coahuila, Mexico. Eventually, they moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico and then to Rosemead, California. I was fifth in a line of seven children, the fourth female child in a mixed race family. Throughout my life, I have been asked by a variety of people if I was of Greek, Italian, Iranian, and Spanish background.

The first time I remember being aware of my name and its' meaning was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. A friend of mine who knew my sisters asked me, "Why do you and your sisters all have old lady names?" At the time, the question struck me like a pinprick. I went home and asked my dad why they named me Irene. Growing up my mother's relatives called me Irene (with a Spanish pronunciation) and my dad's relatives called me Irene. He told me he thought it was a nice name and that he and my mom selected names for their children that they thought could be pronounced in English and Spanish.

As we have grown up, my siblings and I all have chosen to use the different names available to us throughout our lives. Partly, this was the result of my dad encouraging us to use both his name and my mother's

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<sup>59</sup> Hope Yen, *Census: Whites No Longer a Majority in US by 2043*, NBCLATINO.COM (Dec. 12, 2012) <http://nbclatino.com/2012/12/12/census-whites-no-longer-a-majority-in-us-by-2043/> (last visited Mar. 6, 2014).

last name. He believed that by using the two names, Morris and Vasquez, we had more opportunities available to use. When our neighbors referred to us as “wetbacks” or “beaners,” he retorted that we were special because as mixed race children we were raised in a bicultural context and a bilingual household. This gave us the opportunity to navigate in several worlds.

My mother spoke Spanish and my dad spoke English. My father learned to speak fluently in Spanish. He had an affinity for the Spanish language because as a child his mother studied Spanish and encouraged him to learn the language too. As children, my dad would encourage us to get involved in social, cultural, and educational activities and frequently put the last name Morris De Vasquez on applications and paperwork. Legally, we were born with only one last name, Morris. His proclivity to borrow and use both names influenced my siblings and I. My brother and one sister use only Morris. One sister opted for her husband’s name. One sister uses both Morris and Vasquez and three of us use Vasquez.

When we applied for college, my father encouraged us to use both names. This was during the time of Affirmative Action and he thought we would benefit from being identified as mixed race. In college, the awareness I gained being Chicana influenced me to eventually drop the name Morris. This came at some disappointment to my father. However, I always felt closer to my mother’s family because our lives more closely matched theirs than my father’s family. My dad’s siblings were upper-middle class. They ate particular foods and ate in particular settings and interacted in particular ways. My mother’s family lived mostly in Juarez, Mexico. This side of the family seemed closer to the way we were raised. They were warm and generous. Although poor, my grandmother Paula Vasquez always filled our tummies with warm beans and fresh made tortillas. The chile and calabazas she made always suited our palates as young kids. I have fond memories of her scraping her coins together and buying Mexican coke for her little “pochas.” Her voice and embrace were warm and comforting.

When I entered UCLA as an undergraduate I became involved in activities through the Educational Opportunity Program. I felt comfortable with the culturally oriented activities and social justice opportunities. I got involved in the grape boycott that continued into the 80s. I became involved in MEChA and took as many Chicana and Chicano Studies courses as I could. I felt fully satisfied as an intellectual and social

being with the culturally relevant education I received through Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCLA. In my last year of college, I became immersed in activities around advocating for the Departmentalization of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

I increasingly grew distant from the name Morris, not knowing its origin and meaning. I remember explaining to a friend why I had both Morris and Vasquez as last names. She replied that Mexican women who married white men were like Malinche, wanting to be accepted by a white world. I remember the stinging pain I felt hearing this remark. I realize now that had I known more about my mom and dad's lives and the histories of their communities, I would have felt less conflicted and less hurt by the variety of comments and questions I heard about my name and my mixed racial and ethnic background throughout my life. Now, when white colleagues ask me what part of Mexico my accent comes from, I enjoy getting a chance to respond to this racialized question. But as a young person who lacked a culturally relevant education, I used to feel defensive. Now, as a college instructor, I work in strategic ways to encourage students to explore their lives, their family histories, and their families' historical background.

**APPENDIX B. PREPARED BY PROF. IRENE VASQUEZ IN CONSULTATION WITH  
PROFESSOR TARA YOSSO**

**NAME NARRATIVE™ ASSIGNMENT  
A SOCIAL COMPOSITE OF IDENTITY, PLACE, AND CULTURE**

***DIRECTIONS***

Students will complete a 5- to 7-page Name Narrative™ critically reflecting on the social, historical, and cultural significance of their name. This assignment entails explaining the origin of a name and the experience of carrying a name. Students are asked to consider the impact that a name has had on their personal, social and cultural development.

Each student will begin the research for the Name Narrative™ by selecting a name that will be analyzed using the Name Narrative™ worksheet and through a Name Narrative™ essay. Next, students will identify the sources available to analyze the name that include primary documents, such as notarial or archival records and interviewees, and secondary sources. Students will review all sources and develop specific lines of inquiry.

**STEP 1 – IDENTIFY A SUBJECT OR SUBJECT POPULATION**

Students identify a name or names to write about as the major subject(s) of the research paper. Students look up the denotative (meaning or literal meaning) of the name. Dictionaries can provide the meaning of names. One example is the Oxford English Dictionary at <http://www.oed.com/>.

**STEP 2 – COMPLETE THE NAME NARRATIVE™ WORKSHEET**

Each student will complete the Name Narrative™ worksheet and identify primary or secondary sources that illustrate the significance of the name. Students should also identify the secondary sources that support their summary and analysis for the Name Narrative™ assignment.

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\* Tara Yosso, Associate Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UC Santa Barbara, (developed a prompt that inspired this Name Narrative assignment).

**STEP 3 – UTILIZE RESEARCH METHODS TO DEVELOP MAJOR LINES OF INQUIRY**

Students will be required to use at least two research methodologies from the list below:

- Use the ancestry.com website to access primary documents or request them of the subject or subject's family
- Use the census database to describe the community in which the subject lives
- Conduct and analyze an oral interview
- Examine and analyze family photographs
- Examine and analyze city directories

**When using census records keep the following in mind:**

Take notes on some of these categories. What are the residential patterns, gender or age composition, ethnic or racial diversity, family structure, income, home ownership, labor force status, occupation, place of work, educational attainment, poverty, place of birth, citizenship status, languages spoken, marital status, military service, disability, of the community under study? Speculate on why you see these patterns. In speculating about the data, refer to course materials. You are required to cite two different sources of statistical information. Consider using the following:

Available Sources to Consult:

United States Census Bureau – American Community Survey

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

**If conducting an oral interview, keep the following in mind:**

Each student will conduct an oral interview. The goal is to understand an individual experience by drawing on primary and secondary sources, course materials, theories and concepts in explaining human behavior and interpretations.

Students must develop an interview questionnaire. The interview can involve a relative, an acquaintance or a stranger. The person should be an adult, 18 years or older. Please follow ethical standards of *informed consent*. Request permission to record the interview and explain that the interview will be confidential and no identifying information will be given in the final project.

Once the interview is complete, each student will type up the comments they use in their essay in a written transcript. Transcribe all the information from the interview including all digressions. Digressions can offer rich ethnographic clues. Leave in grammatical errors and verbal and physical cues (smiles, laughs, etc.) Make sure and take notes on the interview process such as where and when the interview took place as well as short description of the respondent's mood. Do not wait until the last minute to type the transcript. Every 15 minutes takes approximately one hour to type.

**Possible interview questions include:**

1. *Why was the name selected? What was the decision making process?*
2. *Were other names considered? If yes, why were they ruled out?*
3. *What does the name mean to the person who gave it?*
4. *Was the naming act following custom, tradition or practice in the family? If yes, explain. If no, explain why there was a break in custom?*
5. *Describe some family customs practices in the household in regards to naming.*

Please see the handout provided by the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center for additional questions and suggestions.

**If using primary sources or secondary sources, keep the following in mind:**

Provide an objective interpretation of the document or image. By using one of the worksheets below you can analyze the document objectively.

Think about how does the document or image supports your Name Narrative™ analysis and include your reasoning in your essay.

**Use the worksheets listed below to inform your analysis of the document or photo.**

When using a document complete the worksheet located on the National Archives website titled "Written Document Analysis Worksheet," located at [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written\\_document\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf) or on the Learn site.

When using photographs complete the worksheet located on the National Archives website titled "Written Document Analysis Worksheet," located at [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf) or on the Learn Site.

**STEP 4: COMPILATION AND ANALYSIS - THE NAME NARRATIVE™ ESSAY**

The primary purpose of the essay is to explain how the name connotes or masks social aspects of life including race/ethnicity and at least one of the following: class, gender, religion, ancestry, culture, geography, etc.

Keep in mind the following questions as you prepare your outline and thesis statement.

1. Students should start with the denotative meaning of the selected name(s).
2. Students should explain the origin and selection of the name.
3. Students can describe different reactions people have had to the name(s) and think about whether the name (s) offers access or lack of access to places and spaces.
4. Students should explain the meaning of the name(s), how they feel about the name(s) and/or how do they relate to their name.
5. Students should explore how the name(s) shaped self-identity or understanding of self.
6. Students should explore how their names connect them to people.
7. Students should describe any changes to the name(s) and the impact of the change.
8. Students should explain how the name(s) have affected friendships, experiences, and personal interactions.
9. If selecting their own name, students should explain if they ever wanted to choose a different name and why? If so, please explain how issues of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or religion impacted this desire to change the name.
10. Students should describe any nicknames associated with the name, how were nicknames chosen, and how do nicknames affect self-identity.
11. Students should consider whether the name(s) denote aspects of power or subordination.

**APPENDIX C. THE NAME NARRATIVE™ AND CULTURAL PROFILE.**

(Adapted from tools created by UNM Law School Professors Margaret Montoya and Christine Zuni-Cruz, adapted for the APS Cultural Proficiency Teachers Training and further elaborated by Professor Irene Vasquez for her Chicana/Chicano Studies course.)

<b>Clues / Cues</b>	<b>My Name</b>	<b>Identity/ Group Membership</b>	<b>List citation to course materials used to support the Name Narrative™.</b>
Gender	Does your name give away your gender?	Are you commonly identified as belonging to particular gender identification? What gender do you identify with? Are they the same? How is this reinforced in the family?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your gender identity.
Ethnicity	Can this be determined from your name?	Do you see yourself as part of an identified ethnic group? Why or why not?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your ethnic identity.
Race	Does your name provide a clue to your racial background? Why or Why not?	Do you see yourself as part of an identified racial group? Why or why not?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your racial identity.
Languages	Does the language you speak identify you are being from a particular social group?	Does the language you speak identify you as being from a particular ethnic or cultural group?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your linguistic background.

<b>Clues / Cues</b>	<b>My Name</b>	<b>Identity/ Group Membership</b>	<b>List citation to course materials used to support the Name Narrative™.</b>
Geography	Does your birthplace or current place of residence provide a clue to your ethnic or racial background?	Does your birthplace or current place of residence provide a clue to your ethnic or racial background?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your residential experience.
Birth Order	There are cultures that give names based on a person's birth order.	Has your birth order affected the way you identify personally or socially?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your birth order experience.
Intergenerational Linkages	Were you named after someone in your family?	Who gave you your name and why?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your own intergenerational experience.
Marital Status	If you are married, did you change your name? If so, what did it change from?	What does changing your name mean to you?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your marital identification.
Religion	Were you given a biblical name?	If you have a religious name, what does it mean to your family and what does it mean to you?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your religious identity.

<b>Clues / Cues</b>	<b>My Name</b>	<b>Identity/ Group Membership</b>	<b>List citation to course materials used to support the Name Narrative™.</b>
Intermarriage	If you are from a mixed-race family, does your name reflect this?	How has being from a mixed-race affect the way that you identify and relate to both sides of your family?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your own mixed-race identity.
Native / Indigenous Ancestry	Does your name indicate a Native American ancestry?	How does your name reflect cultural practices?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own experience in regards to your indigenous identity.
Political / Ideological Choices	Does your name reflect you or your family’s political beliefs?	How do you or your family’s political beliefs relate to your family’s historical experiences or background?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to you or your family’s political beliefs or ideologies.
Racial / Cultural Ambiguity of Appearance	Does your name mask your racial or ethnic background?	In what ways does your name illustrate or mask your racial or ethnic background?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to your name’s ambiguity.
Tribute or Honoring Rituals	Does your name point to a specific tribute or honoring ritual?	How is this ritual tied you’re your cultural or ethnic group?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to the importance of tribute or honoring rituals.

<b>Clues / Cues</b>	<b>My Name</b>	<b>Identity/ Group Membership</b>	<b>List citation to course materials used to support the Name Narrative™.</b>
Accents	Does you name have any accents?	How is the accent related to your ethnic or cultural group?	Find an example from the course that is similar to your own in regards to the accents in your name.

