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MODERN WARRIORS: AN EXPLORATION OF INDIGENOUS MALE
GRADUATES

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To my Daddy, the greatest warrior in my life.

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Abstract

This study explores successful experiences of Indigenous males who earned a master's or professional degree from non-native institutions. Research on this population in relation to persistence and success is limited. The literature is guided primarily on Indigenous undergraduate programs and the barriers Indigenous students face in higher education. However, the literature is limited on the Indigenous graduate student experience. To provide insight into the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous males, Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory approach and the Indigenous methodology of Story were used. Through in-depth interviews of 11 Indigenous males from across the United States, the graduate school experience of the males was analyzed. The major themes included Tribal Nation Building, Reliance on Support Networks, Warrior Mentality, and Reclaiming of Indigenous Masculinities. Recommendations for future study are to explore Indigenous fatherhood, gay Indigenous men, Indigenous men at different levels of higher education programs, establishment of graduate support programs, and reclaiming Indigenous masculinities.

Keywords: Indigenous males, Indigenous masculinities, Indigenous graduate student success, Tribal Nation Building, Support Networks, Native American males, American Indian male

Preface

I let my horse go and I was in the lead and I shot the first and second one and by the time I shot the second one the dust was too thick to see and I stopped shooting. After the dust all went away, I located my buffaloes. One was dead and the other was almost dead. Then the old man came along and asked him if I got any. I showed him. They were awful big buffaloes. My mother came with two mules and we all took our knives and butchered them and ate the livers. All around were buffaloes people had killed. Sometimes a man is thrown in a hunt. A man with a fast horse can kill four or five; some kill only one. That's the way with life. Those that try their best have the best. It's not only in buffalo-killing. That's my first buffalo chase and then I knew how to hunt.

Kiowa George's first buffalo chase from his autobiography as told to Alice Marriott and interpreted from Kiowa to English.

Now this is another of the things that happened long ago when they were creating the earth. The Wind and the Thunder were to work together. Suddenly they got angry at each other. And they separated. The reason that they separated and got angry at each other [was that] the Thunder spoke thus to the Wind: "I alone do good even if you do not help." he said to the Wind. Then the Wind spoke thus to him: "Because you say that you alone do good, I'll go far away from you." the Wind said to the Thunder. Then the Wind went far away from him to the end of the earth. And there was no wind. It was always very hot. Then the Thunder, he who had said: "I alone do good," caused much rain but it was always very hot. There were no crops. It was not good. The Wind

was nowhere and the Thunder did not like it. Then he continually set up

feathers. He looked in vain for the Wind on the feathers. Then he did not feel

right about it. He sent for the wind. He spoke thus to him: "My brother, you are

nowhere and it is not good. There are no crops. It is very, very, hot. Because of

that, I beg you to come back to me. From now on, both of us will do good on the

surface of the earth. We will work together. We will travel together. Because

of us, there will be good crops." The Thunder said to him, pleading with him.

Then the Wind came back to him. He became his friend again. That is why,

when it rains, there is thunder with the wind. They go along together always.

The Quarrel Between Thunder and Wind as told by Lawrence Mithlo, (Hoijer,

1938)

These two stories that introduce my dissertation came directly from my two

great-grandfathers on both my mother's and father's sides. I discovered the first story

(from my Kiowa Great-grandfather) in the University of Oklahoma Library's Western

History Collection, and the second story (from my Chiricahua Apache Great-

Grandfather) was found online from the Cornell University Library. In Kiowa

language, there is no word for great-grandfather and they are referred to as Naub'a:bi,

which translates to "big brother" in English. My Kiowa big brother was named Kiowa

George-he is my late dad's grandfather and he was a Medicine man. There are no

words for great-grandfather in my Chiricahua Apache language either, but my great

grandfather would be called my Tsuye because he is my mother's grandfather. My

Tsuye was named Lawrence Mithlo and he was a Chiricahua Apache prisoner of war.

I was not able to know my two big brothers personally because they passed away long before I was born, but I have seen pictures and have heard stories about them. From what I do know, they were strong and knowledgeable men who cared a great deal for their families and their people. Although I never was able to speak to my big brothers, I feel that I discovered their stories in the most serendipitous way because they came into my life at a time when I needed them the most. Archibald (2009) states "I believe that Indigenous stories are at the core of our cultures. They have the power to make us think, feel, and be good human beings. They have the power to bring storied life back to us." (p. 139). As I wrote this dissertation, it was incredibly challenging for me. The hours spent writing, rewriting, reading, and making sense of all of the literature was a huge battle for me, but when I found these stories in my big brothers' own words, I felt a sense of comfort, determination, and strength that invigorated me to finish because their stories inspired and empowered me.

Another important point to share is that my big brothers' stories were recorded by white researchers and were translated from their traditional languages into English. Their stories were told through a non-Native lens and perspective and were most likely shared to a non-Native audience of readers. I reclaim their stories here to serve not only as an introduction for this study, but to honor my big brothers and to position myself as an Indigenous scholar in the academy who has a great respect for all of the big brothers and sisters that were here before us.

The stories will serve as guiding frameworks for the Modern Warrior Model (Chapter V) that was created from the findings in this study.

<center>**Definition of Terms**</center>

Throughout this study, I use terminology that I feel is important to define for the readers. These terms will allow the reader to better understand this study and the participants' stories.

Indigenous/American Indian/Native American/Native

I use the terms *Indigenous, Native American, American Indian*, and *Native* interchangeably. Each of these terms refers to the Indigenous peoples of North America and those who identify as Native American or Alaska Native, to also include members or descendants of both federally and state-recognized tribes. (Shotton, Lowe & Waterman, 2013). The terms listed are used interchangeably to reflect the relationship that Native people have with the U.S. Government as both a racialized and political group, and to also reflect their sovereign right to identify themselves.

Non-Native Institutions

I use the term *non-Native institutions (NNI's)* to describe those institutions (colleges and universities) that represent the predominantly White populations, typically referred to as predominantly White institutions (PWIs) or mainstream institutions. The use of this term NNI is a conscious effort to center our experience as Native people. (Shotton, Lowe & Waterman, 2013).

Success

In this study, I refer to success as the act of an Indigenous person earning a graduate (Master or Ph.D.) or professional degree in a non-Native institution of higher education and serving the Native community in some capacity. This type of success is what

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drives tribal nation building and contributes to the overall sustainability of Indigenous communities.

Historical Trauma

I refer to historical trauma and intergenerational trauma throughout my study. Brave Heart (2003) refers to this endurance as *historical trauma* defined as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (p. 7).

Two Spirit

I refer to two-spirit men at certain points in my study. According to Jacobs, Thomas & Lang (1997), this term refers to a number of Native American roles and identities past and present, including:

- Contemporary Native American/First Nations individuals who are gay or lesbian;

- Contemporary Native American/First Nations gender categories;

- The traditions wherein multiple gender categories and sexualities are institutionalized in Native American/First Nations tribal cultures;

- Traditions of gender diversity in other, non-Native American cultures;

- Transvestites, transsexuals, and transgendered people;

- And drag queens and butches (p. 2)

Covert Racism

At points in my study, I mention covert racism. Covert racism is a form of racial discrimination that is disguised and subtle, rather than public or obvious. Concealed in

the fabric of society, covert racism discriminates against individuals through often

unnoticeable or seemingly passive methods. (Coates, 2007).

Chapter I: Introduction

I am a Native American male pursuing my Ph.D. in a non-Native Institution of higher education. I am a member of the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, and am also of Kiowa, Comanche, and Chiricahua Apache descent. My mother is Comanche and Chiricahua Apache and my dad is Kiowa and Delaware. I grew up in Lawton, Oklahoma and from my earliest memories until present day, I have always been connected to my tribal and cultural community. I report through the lens of a Native American male. This is my story.

I have been extremely blessed to have had an exceptional role model in my late father. My dad was a family practice physician who worked for and served his Native people in the Indian Health Service his entire life. It was through my dad that I saw first-hand the impact that a Native person could have in their community. Early on, I recall the many long nights, weekends, and holidays that my dad would be at the hospital. I missed him all the time, but I knew that he was doing good things for our Native people. There were many times growing up, that I can recall having people come up to me and tell me that my dad had delivered their child or that they themselves were delivered by my dad. This was important and empowering for me to hear as a young person, because I believe this set forth the path that I was to follow and instilled in me the mindset of reciprocity and relationship to my Native community. Although I was not exactly sure what I wanted to be growing up, I knew that I wanted to help my Native people as my dad had; he was a warrior for his people and I wanted to follow in those same footsteps.

From a young age, I have always been connected with my culture and my tribal community. Growing up with a very large family on both my maternal and paternal sides, I was blessed to know exactly where I came from and that my Native culture was a very important part of my identity and a reflection of the resilient and magnificent people I descended from. My paternal great-grandfather was a Kiowa medicine man and my maternal grandfather was born a Chiricahua Apache prisoner of war in Florida as part of the forced removal of the Apaches from their ancestral lands. From stories told of my grandfathers, I knew that my Native identity was something to be very proud of and there was an empowerment in knowing that I descended from very resilient people. I was raised knowing my Chiricahua Apache cultural side the most from my uncle who never let me forget that I was a "strong Chiricahua Apache" man from the Shark Clan. I was told not to be afraid of anything because I had "Apache blood in me", and this has stayed with me all my life and has given me inner strength as I entered into my higher education experience.

I did not realize it when I was young, but I was fortunate to have parents who instilled in me that an education was important and that I could have both success in life and maintain my Native identity if I worked hard in school and always remembered who I was and where I came from. Unlike many first-generation students and many of my fellow Natives, I knew early on that I was going to college. I had parents and older family members who attended and graduated college, and I was very blessed to know early on that a higher education was the path that I would follow. Another anomaly was that throughout my early educational journey, I had a very high Native American

student demographic in my high school and had numerous Native teachers, coaches, and counselors to help guide me and serve as role models during those formative years.

When I enrolled in college immediately after graduating high school, I was extremely happy to be around fellow Native freshman students at the university, both inside and outside of the classroom and I was active in the American Indian Student Association and other Indigenous student organizations on campus. I even had a handful of Native professors and support staff during my undergraduate program who helped provide guidance when needed. These relationships with my fellow Native American students and staff in college provided me with my own special support network, which allowed me to maintain my Native identity as I navigated through my undergraduate years in a large non-Native institution.

Sadly, as early as my high school years, I began to realize that my fellow Native students and teachers became fewer and fewer the more advanced my education became. This was especially evident among my fellow Native male classmates. After each year in high school, it became apparent to me that I would not always have my closest Native male friends as we progressed. This depressing reality became even more apparent within that first semester of my freshman year of college, when I was shocked and saddened to see that many of my fellow Native students did not even return to campus for the Spring semester. I was deeply troubled by this. Unfortunately, I discovered that this pattern would continue for the remainder of my undergraduate years.

This phenomenon was reflected in the limited research on Native students, which showed that compared to White students, American Indian students have the

lowest aggregate graduation rate among all racial/ethnic groups at 36.7 percent

compared to 57.2 percent of their White counterparts (NCES, 2005b). In addition to

this alarming rate, Indigenous men are less likely to graduate than Indigenous women

with only a 34.3 percent six-year graduation rate compared to 38.6 percent for

Indigenous women in the 1996-1997 academic year (NCES, 2005b). By the time I

reached my college graduation day, I did not have another Native male who started with

me in my freshman year beside me. There were a handful of my Native female

counterparts who graduated with me, but there were no males.

When I reached graduate school, I humbly understood that my experience in

advancing to a graduate program was an anomaly for a Native American male.

Although the national enrollment rate in graduate degree programs has increased in the

past two decades by 57 percent, Native students account for less than 1% of these

degrees compared to other racial groups (NCES, 2010). In addition, American Indian

women make up 64 percent of total graduate enrollment for American Indians/Alaska

Natives compared to only 36 percent for males (Bell, 2011). These statistics were quite

evident in my doctoral program, where I realized that there were a very limited number

of Native American students in my graduate classes. I had only one Native American

female who started the program with me, but there were no Native males.

I had known of three other Native American females who obtained a Ph.D. in

the same program I was in, but I did not know of any Native males who had completed

the same program. As I researched about the low numbers of Native American

graduates and the even more depressing numbers of Indigenous male graduates, I

wanted to know how the very limited number of my fellow Indigenous brothers were

advancing through their graduate and professional programs in non-Native institutions of higher education.

I understood that my experience was rare. I knew what my educational journey consisted of but what was this experience like for other Native males who had found success in their graduate level programs? What had been the driving force in their journeys and how did they navigate through the pathways to obtain their graduate and professional degrees?

Statement of the Problem

American Indians are underrepresented across all levels of postsecondary education. In 2009, Native students constituted only 1% of the total undergraduate population in postsecondary institutions (Aud, Hussar, Kena, Bianco, Frochlich, Kemp, & Tahan, 2011; Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2004), and although the Native American population increased by 39% from 2000 to 2010, the rate of college enrollment and degrees conferred stagnated at 1% during this time frame (US Department of Education, 2012). Furthermore, the six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students seeking a bachelor's degree at a four-year degree granting institution in fall 2008 was 41% which is the lowest of all racial/ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). To put these statistics of the underrepresentation of Natives in perspective, Brayboy et al. (2012) explains that "for every one American Indian or Alaska Native who has a bachelor's degree, seven White individuals do" (p. 56).

Underrepresentation is even more drastic at the graduate level. Between 2000 and 2014, the total graduate enrollment, which includes graduate certificate, master and

doctoral programs, fell slightly for American Indian/Alaskan Natives to remain around 1 percent, but showed gains of 3 percent for Hispanics/Latinos, 5 percent for Blacks/African Americans (NCES, 2015). While the national enrollment rate in graduate programs has increased over the past two decades by 57 percent, enrollment rates for Native students account for less than one percent when compared to other racial groups and this percentage has remained stagnant during this time (NCES, 2010). In 2014, only 861 (0.4 percent) of the 177,580 doctoral degrees awarded that year were earned by American Indian and Alaska Native students (NCES, 2015).

When these alarming statistics are explored further, there is a significant gender gap in the higher education enrollment rates for Native American males and females. Native males fall behind their female counterparts in all levels of higher education. In 2009, Native American females accounted for approximately 60% of the Native American students enrolled in higher education compared to 40% for Native American males (Aud et al., 2011). In 2010, the ratio of Native males to females was at 64% to 36% respectively (Bell, 2011).

These similar ratios are also comparable at the graduate level. In 2014, the percentage of enrolled female Native American students was at 63% verses 37% for males. Of the master's degrees awarded in this same time frame, 65% were for Native American females compared to 35% for Native males; a 2:1 female to male ratio. In 2013–14, female students earned 58 % of the doctoral degrees awarded to Native American students compared to only 42% of male students. (NCES, 2015). These data trends roughly indicate that for the past ten years, for every two Native American females awarded a graduate degree, only one male earns a degree.

The data available describes an educational attainment gap that shows observable differences in rates of enrollment, persistence, and completion between Indigenous male and female students in higher education, specifically at the graduate level. Indigenous males also show drastically low numbers in college access, retention, and graduation rates in higher education. This inequality reaches across other systems beyond education for this fact also contributes to the further isolation, marginalization, and invisibility of Indigenous males in our society.

These issues regarding Indigenous males stem have historical beginnings. From the onset of colonization, Indigenous people were forcibly removed from their traditional lifestyles as colonial masculinities encroached to control and replace Indigenous gender systems, and enforce a patriarchal and heteronormative society (Morgensen, 2015). Colonial patriarchy brought new gender roles and established new ideals of masculinities among Indigenous men and boys. Central to Indigenous epistemologies, is the social balance between individuals in Indigenous communities which is referred to as complementarity (Sneider, 2015). In complementarity, the contribution of both males and females are necessary for social balance which helps ensure a cohesive whole focused on survival and a flourishing community. As Indigenous men continue to fall behind Indigenous women in terms of higher education attainment, this long-standing ethic of complementarity will become unbalanced and will leave a startling and depressing outlook for future tribal communities.

By recognizing systematic barriers that challenge Indigenous men (and women), we can better understand the holistic picture of the crisis threatening tribal communities. From the establishment of the White colonial patriarchal structure until present time,

Native American men have historically been victims of oppression, marginalization, domination, racism, and consistently suffered through systemic inequalities in education, health care, housing, income, and wealth (Morgensen, 2015). Through an awareness of the intersectionality of the issues (race, gender bias, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) that Native American men face due to White supremacy and patriarchy that began with colonization, we are able to see how the historic disadvantages of this marginalized group continue to affect Indigenous men today, and in the bigger picture, our Indigenous communities (Innes & Anderson, 2015). It is imperative to counter these realities with research that illuminates the successful experiences of Indigenous men so that their insight can inform future generations for the survival of our tribal Nations.

Theoretical Frameworks

To guide this study, I will utilize Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy's (2006) Tribal Critical Race Theory (Tribal CRT), Tribal Nation Building (Brayboy, Castagno, and Solyom, 2014) and Cultural Resilience (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Tribal CRT acknowledges and unmasks the historical colonization that has been inflicted upon Indigenous people and how these structural forces have and continue to shape our education and sociocultural spaces. Tribal Nation Building provides a lens to better understand the reasons that Indigenous students participate in graduate and professional schools-to position themselves to better serve their tribal communities, so they may have continued success and sustainability. Cultural Resilience illuminates the factors that Indigenous people have used to help them withstand adversity. All of these theories place Indigenous people at the center of educational discourse, and also assert

hope for the future of Indigenous peoples in that they allow for a framework that calls

for a more proactive approach to issues surrounding the Indigenous men in this study.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal Critical Race Theory emerged in 2006 as an expansion of Critical Race

Theory (CRT), to specifically address the issues of Indigenous peoples in the United

States and their complicated relationship with the United States Federal Government. In

contrast to CRT, where the basic premise is that racism is endemic to society, the basic

tenet in Tribal CRT emphasizes that colonization is endemic to society and provides the

primary basis of the theory (Brayboy, 2006). Tribal CRT allows for the unique

experiences of American Indian communities to have a theoretical lens for addressing

the issues that face them. In total, there are nine tenets of Brayboy's Tribal Critical

Race Theory (2006):

1. Colonization is endemic to society.

2. U.S. Policies toward Indigenous people are rooted in imperialism, White
   supremacy, and a desire for material gain.

3. Indigenous peoples occupy a luminal space that accounts for both the
   political and racialized natures of our identities.

4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty,
   tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.

5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when
   examined through an Indigenous lens.

6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples
   are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.

7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.

8. Stories are not separate rom theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.

9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change (pp. 429-430).

Colonization is endemic in society is the first tenet of Tribal CRT and provides the primary basis of the theory. Brayboy (2006) holds that colonization is the domination of European American thought, knowledge, and power structures in American society. He explains "the goal, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, of interactions between the dominant U.S. Society and American Indians has been to change ("colonize" or "civilize") us to be more like those who hold power in dominant society" (p. 430). One example of such colonization is the realization that American Indians have essentially been removed from the awareness of the dominant members of American society.

The second tenet of Tribal CRT recognizes that the policies of the United States towards American Indians are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain (Brayboy, 2006). From a Tribal CRT lens, the theft of Indigenous land, and the justification of the removal and relocation of Indigenous people by the concepts of Manifest Destiny and Norman Yoke are all rooted in White supremacy - the idea that the European or western way of doing things has superiority over all things that are

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non-western. White supremacy has a long history in the United States that still continues today. Tribal CRT argues that White supremacy is upheld in institutions of higher education where the dominant culture prevails through the curriculum because it is viewed as "natural and legitimate" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 432). bell hooks reiterates this form of colonization even further as she describes the interlocking systemic power over marginalized groups as "White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy" (hooks, 2004, p. 17).

The third tenet of Tribal CRT recognizes that American Indians are in a liminal space, having dual statuses as both a political group and as a racial group. This liminal space "accounts for both the legal/political and racialized natures of our identities" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 432). Tribal CRT argues that American Indians are rarely treated as both legal and racialized beings and are left in a "state of inbetweeness" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 432). The legal status of American Indians allows for their inherent right to self-govern and to establish their own policies and governmental programs to provide for the health, education, and economic well-being of their own people.

The fourth tenet describes the desire for tribal autonomy, self-determination, self-identification, and ultimately tribal sovereignty. Understanding and knowledge of the relationship of American Indians and the U.S. Government in regard to autonomy, self-determination, self-identification, and sovereignty "allows researchers ways to better analyze interactions between Indigenous students and the institutional structures" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 434).

In the fifth tenet of Tribal CRT, the western concepts of culture, knowledge, and power are viewed through an Indigenous lens and culture is viewed as both fluid or dynamic, and fixed or stable (Brayboy, 2006). Tribal CRT acknowledges three forms

of knowledge: cultural knowledge, knowledge of survival, and academic knowledge. Brayboy (2006) explains that these various forms of knowledge complement each other and must integrate with one another for survival of American Indians. In addition, the blending of cultural and academic knowledges enables American Indians to determine their place in the world, which is power and described through an Indigenous lens as "an expression of sovereignty-defined as self-determination, self-government, self-identification, and self-education" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 435).

The sixth tenet of Tribal CRT recognizes that the governmental and educational policies towards American Indians have historically been tied to the ultimate goal of assimilation. Tribal CRT rejects assimilation of American Indians in educational institutions but argues for these students to "combine Indigenous notions of culture, knowledge, and power with western/European conceptions in order to actively engage in survivance, self-determination, and tribal autonomy" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 437).

The seventh tenet recognizes the importance of tribal knowledge, beliefs, traditions, and philosophies from a foundation in culture, knowledge and power (Brayboy, 2006). Tribal CRT argues for the need of a theoretical lens to view and examine the experiences of Indigenous peoples so they can be recognized as viable and important. Tribal CRT also recognizes the importance of tribal community and cooperation rather than individuality (Brayboy, 2006).

The eight tenet of Tribal CRT values oral traditions and knowledge among American Indian people. Tribal CRT argues that scientifically-based research is not the only legitimate form of research and furthermore that there is no separation from theory and story (Brayboy, 2006). Great value is placed on American Indian stories for they

transmit culture and knowledge and are "the foundation on which Indigenous communities are built" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 439).

Last, the ninth tenet challenges and encourages Tribal CRT scholars to expose and debunk structural inequalities and work to create structures that address the current and future issues facing tribal people (Brayboy, 2006). It is a call for action for research that works towards decolonization. Brayboy (2006) argues that this research must address the problems of the community and the praxis "moves us away from colonization and assimilation towards a more real self-determination and tribal sovereignty" (pp. 440-441).

Tribal CRT provides a theoretical lens to describe the issues and lived experiences of American Indians (Brayboy, 2006). This lens allows for researchers to specifically address issues in education to expose the colonial nature in institutions that may lead to "a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities and to changes in the educational system and society at large that benefit Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 441). To delve deeper into understanding the unique experiences of these communities, and in particular, those of Native American men who have earned graduate and professional degrees, Tribal CRT acknowledges the importance of these men and their stories by giving meaning to their graduate school experiences. In addition, Tribal CRT provides for an Indigenous lens to address concepts of culture, self-determination, and assimilation while examining educational systems and colonization which will be important in analyzing their stories (data).

Tribal Nation Building

Another Indigenous theoretical framework I will utilize is Tribal Nation Building (Brayboy, Castagno, and Solyom, 2014*).* Tribal nation building has as its core purpose, capacity and community building along with the goals of strong Nations and citizens. One primary aspect of Tribal nation building refers to the intentional and purposeful application of human and social capital to address the needs of tribal nations and communities (Brayboy, 2006). These needs are driven by native communities and benefit the entire community of people which includes "educational, health, legal, economic, nutritional, relational and spatial needs (Brayboy et al., 2014, p. 578).

A significant aspect of tribal nation building is the focus on the well-being of the nation and communities as a whole, rather than the individual. In Tribal nation building, the desire and motivation to serve others is more important than serving individual motivations and interests (Brayboy et al., 2014). Although nation building occurs in white mainstream society, Brayboy et al. (2014) argues that nation building in the dominant society places priority on individual rights of its citizens and privileges domination and power over citizens which is in direct contrast to the Indigenous sense of nation building

The philosophy of self-determination through self-education is very powerful. Tribal nation building embraces this philosophy. Indigenous peoples are capable of building capacity among their own people to meet all their needs: health, cultural, political, economic, and educational (Brayboy et al., 2014). An important point to remember about Tribal nation building is its primary goal is to create strong nations with strong Indigenous citizens. A strong tribal nation cannot thrive without the support

and existence of both men and women therefore, the lack of Indigenous men obtaining graduate and professional degrees is critically alarming. Education is essential to the economic, health, environmental, systematic, and community dynamics of the Indigenous nations and a decline in Native men obtaining a graduate education must be addressed for the current status and future of tribal nations.

From a social perspective, the role of Native American males as spouses, fathers, community leaders, and role models for young men is in danger because of continual systemic oppression, ultimately undermining their ability to fulfill the critical tribal nation building and social roles that are key to securing and continuing our Native communities. These oppressive situations weaken a tribal nation's ability to utilize its capacity for building strong nations and ensuring the success of families and tribal communities for future generations.

Cultural Resilience

My last Indigenous theoretical framework that I will apply is Cultural Resilience by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003). HeavyRunner and Marshall view resiliency as an ancient concept evident by the shared stories from tribal elders who experienced adversity but were able to recover. Cultural resilience refers to the protective factors that provide strength, nurture, and encourage Native students, families and communities. Cultural resilience emphasizes seven protective factors that students use to help them as they navigate through their challenge. These seven protective factors include: spirituality, family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks.

By viewing this research on Indigenous males through a Cultural Resilience framework, the strengths that have enabled these graduates will be acknowledged and focused on, rather than their weaknesses. Complimenting Tribal CRT, Cultural Resistance theory accounts for oral traditions (storytelling) as a valid and important tool. In addition, the spirituality and tribal identity unique to the Indigenous males will be taken into consideration and highlighted as a major source of strength in their navigational journeys. Finally, Cultural Resistance accounts for further Native cultural experiences including family, ceremonial rituals, and support networks. By incorporating these three theoretical frameworks into my study on Indigenous men, I will be providing an Indigenous lens to analyze and share their valuable stories. In the following section, I address the purpose of my study.

Purpose

There is a lack of research that identifies the experiences of Native American male graduates. This lack of research applies not only to males but to all Indigenous students in higher education. Research has predominantly focused on undergraduate Native American students and their barriers, however within the past ten years, the shift of research has focused on Native American student success. Several studies have focused on the high attrition rates among Native American undergraduate students (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993: NCES, 2005; Pavel, 1999; Reddy, 1993), but few studies that identify the contributing influences of success for Native American graduate students, especially males. Little research is known as to what the needs and experiences of Native American males are in relation to access and persistence (Brayboy, 2010). Although the numbers are very low for Native graduates overall, the

unequal numbers between Indigenous men and women graduates requires further study to explore the stories from the limited number of Indigenous men who have obtained a graduate or professional degree. This research is significant, so tribal nations can continue to grow, tribal nation building can prosper, younger Indigenous males will have role models, and Indigenous nations can be sustainable.

The limited amount of research on Indigenous graduate students is primarily on females or mixed gender studies. Scholars have identified several barriers that affect Native American graduate students such as isolation and cultural alienation, racism and discrimination, and a lack of Indigenous role models (Brayboy et al., 2012; Buckley, 1997; Rodriquez-Rabin, 2003; Shotton, 2008; Heionen, 2002; Moon, 2003; Secatero, 2009; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Henning, 1999; Woodford, 2005; Ballew, 1996; Kidwell, 1986; Williamson 1994). In the limited study of the elements that have contributed to Indigenous graduate students' success, the following have been identified: individual determination and resiliency, access to Indigenous faculty who serve as mentors, a strong surrogate Native community on campus, holistic balance, and a strong desire to give back to their communities (Moon, 2003; Henning, 1999; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008; Williamson, 1994; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007).

Although there has been a recent push to explore American Indian graduate students, there remains limited research focused on the experiences and voices of Indigenous males. There is a gap in the literature on this unique population of Indigenous male graduate students and their experiences at the graduate and professional level. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of

Indigenous males as they navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees.

Research Question

The research question that drives this study is how do Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees? In addition to this primary question the following sub-questions are included:

1) What facilitates the success of Indigenous males in graduate or professional degree programs?

2) What model (if any) can be created to help future generations of Indigenous men find success in graduate or professional degree programs?

3) What best practices can non-Native institutions implement to support Indigenous males in their graduate or professional degree programs?

Methodology

The overall research question for this study is how do Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees? For this study, a qualitative research approach is viewed as the most appropriate to capture the unique perspective of the Indigenous male graduates. Within the application of Tribal Critical Race Theory and Tribal Nation Building and to illuminate the stories of Indigenous males, I will use a blend of constructivist grounded theory and the Indigenous methodology of story (Brayboy, 2005; Charmaz, 2014; Kovach, 2012). These methods complement one another and when applied together, highlight the interconnectedness of the participants and the researcher's shared experiences of being Indigenous males in graduate and professional programs.

According to Charmaz (2006), constructivist grounded theory "places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (p. 130). Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory (2014) assumes "that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed, and that the researcher's position must be taken into account" (p. 13). Charmaz uses the term 'constructivist' to acknowledge subjectivity and to highlight the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data. Charmaz (2014) states "we are part of the world we study, the data we collect, and the analyses we produce. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (p.17). Charmaz' emphasis on shared experiences and relationships with participants blends very well with Wilson's (2001) Indigenous paradigm that knowledge is relationship and is shared with all creation and further explains that "you are answerable to all of your relations when you are doing research" (p. 177).

In agreement with the views of shared relationships and experiences in constructivist grounded theory and in accord with the eighth tenet of Tribal CRT that holds "stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439), Kovach (2012) explains that stories also provide a unique connection to our world. Kovach expounds that "Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon." (2012, p. 94).

One important aspect of the constructivist grounded theory is how this methodology makes meaning and interpretation of the shared experiences of *both* the participants and the researcher and thus can be used to advance social justice research by combining critical inquiry and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This is a critical component that allows me (the researcher) to study the voices and perspectives of these Indigenous males through story and reflect upon my shared interactions and experiences of the past and present involvements *with* the participants with my personal stories. Story allows for the passing of knowledge within tribal traditions and are personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences that can be shared to promote social cohesion and a strong social purpose (Kovach, 2009).

Much like Wilson's (2001) Indigenous research paradigm that charges researchers to do good for the community, the aims of Charmaz' (2014) constructivist grounded theory is to create theory that has "credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness" (p. 236). When taking both objectives into considerations along with the Indigenous importance of relationship, both methodologies are important for the shared collaboration and viewpoints of researcher and participant.

This methodology will be important because constructivism is about making sense of experience and constructing interpretations from shared understandings and practices (Schwandt, 2007). Through a Tribal CRT lens, the blending of the Indigenous methodology of story with constructivist grounded theory will provide a voice to the Indigenous communities that have struggled to be able to present themselves and have their voices and experiences heard (Smith, 1999). This study will provide the important insights into the perspectives of an underrepresented group of males who have been

overlooked in the vast research of students in higher education (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013).

Significance of Study

The themes that will emerge from the Indigenous male voices and perspectives will shine a much-needed light on a population of higher education students who have not been studied to the extent of their counterparts. The study will serve as a voice for Indigenous male students to share their experiences and effective strategies for other Indigenous males to pursue graduate school and to return to their communities to serve as role models for future fellow Indigenous males and females. In addition, this research will better equip tribal nations with much needed data to help create programs and initiatives to support Native male students, thus contributing to the cycle of Nation building. Another goal of this study is to increase awareness and knowledge of the Indigenous male graduate students' experiences. Such awareness and knowledge will direct graduate program administrators to develop programs and empowering experiences for Indigenous male students.

Constructivism is about making sense of experience and constructing interpretations from shared understandings and practices (Schwandt, 2007). Indigenous communities have struggled to be able to represent themselves and have their voices and experiences heard (Smith, 1999). This study will provide a voice to Indigenous men from an Indigenous lens to establish and validate meaning and importance to their higher education experiences and stories. By incorporating the Indigenous male voices of this study into strategies that can boost retention and persistence rates of Native American males in post-secondary graduate programs, I argue that this type of research

can provide valuable insight into Indigenous male perspectives, which is crucial not only for the Native communities but for higher educational in general.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states that "Creating is about channeling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems" (p. 158) It is important to not only share the insights and perspectives of the successful strategies of Native American male graduates, but to also use these insights into creating innovative programs that are creatively designed specifically for Indigenous male graduates so that future generations can advance in their educational journeys.

Although the numbers of successful Native American graduates are very small, the contributions and impact that they have on their tribal nations when they give back to their communities is very powerful. Indigenous graduates serve as mentors to other Indigenous students, create and establish programs for economic development, implement health initiatives, write policies for educational programs, and advocate for the rights of their people (Brayboy et al., 2012). When Native males are not included in this nation building dynamic, a large void is left that Indigenous nations cannot afford to leave unfilled. By addressing this issue and the experiences of Native male graduates through Indigenous theoretical frameworks and an Indigenous lens, a deeper understanding of the needs and successful strategies for Indigenous male graduates may lead to stronger Tribal nations.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature that assists in explaining the complicated historical and current circumstances faced by Indigenous males as they navigate through graduate programs in non-Native institutions of higher education. To acknowledge the importance of storytelling, I will share an Indigenous origin story that details the characteristics and values a Native man is to have in his life and within his community. Next, I will provide a historical timeline of Native American higher education in the United States and the barriers that Natives have endured which still contribute to the challenges in present day higher education. I will address colonial patriarchy and the ways in which colonialism has shifted traditional Indigenous ways of life which still have toxic remains today. Next, I will explain complementarity, Indigenous masculinities, the lack of research on Indigenous masculinities, (in)visibility, intergenerational trauma. I will describe how intersectionality can be used as a tool to address the complexities of the challenges facing Indigenous men. I will discuss ways to decolonize patriarchy, and finally, I explore the limited available research on Native graduate students with a focus on Native males.

The Twin Warriors Origin Story

In order to understand the traditional role of Indigenous men before colonization, I will briefly explain a Dine origin story that demonstrates how a Dine man is to live and his responsibilities to his family and community (Lee, 2015). These types of origin and creation stories (which I will not be sharing in this study due to cultural protocols) are shared by several Indigenous people (Kiowa, Chiricahua Apache, White Mountain Apache) and are vital because they detail tribal histories and are the

"foundation of people's identity and way of life" (Lee, p. 215). These stories also provide the foundation to our roles and responsibilities as Indigenous people. Archibald (2008) states stories "have the power to make us think, feel, and be good human beings" (p. 139). As one of the tenets of Tribal CRT, Brayboy (2006) states "Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (p. 430). The following story is provided from Amanda Tachine's (2015) dissertation.

Changing Woman (Azdaa Nadleehe), a central figure in Navajo history and culture, gave birth to twin sons, Born for Water (Tobajishchini) and Monster Slayer (Naayee' Neizghani). When they reached adolescent age, the twins wanted to know who their father was so they went on a journey to find him. They were guided with favor by gods who created a holy trail paved with rainbows. On their journeys, they met Spider Woman (Na'ashje'ii Asdaa) who shared with the twins that their father was the Sun (Johonaa'ei). Spider Woman gave Born for Water and Monster Slayer tools and a prayer to aid them on their quest to find their father. The twins were grateful for Spider Woman's assistance and continued on. As they travelled to find their father, they encountered four different obstacles. They survived each treacherous obstacle because of the tools and prayer that Spider Woman provided and that helped them to stay alive and continue on their journey.

When they finally reached their father's home, Sun put the twins through various tests as a way to determine whether the twins were indeed his. The twins were guided by Wind (Nilch'i) and therefore the twins succeeded each

test. Sun then asked, "Now, my children, what do you ask of me?" The twins

sought help from their father, requesting that he provide them with weapons to

slay the monsters (Naayee') who were killing the Navajo people. Father Sun

provided his children with weapons. The twins were grateful for their father's

help and went on their way to face the monsters.

The twin warriors first confronted the Big Giant (Ye'iitsoh) who was

very big and powerful. The twins waited for the Big Giant to arrive at a lake

which they were told was a place the monster went to daily. The Big Giant came

to the lake to drink water and it was there that the twins struck the monster with

lighting and arrows. The Big Giant fell down and died. The second

confrontation was with the Horned Monster (Deelgeed) who was said to be hard

to kill. With the help of Gopher (Na'azisi) and the weapons provided by Father

Sun, the Horned Monster was defeated. The third conquest was with Bird

Monster (Tse Ninahaleeh) and the fourth monster defeated was Who Kills With

His Eyes (Binaa yee Aghani).

After the twins conquered each monster, they returned home to their

mother, Changing Woman to share the news. Changing Woman rejoiced with

her two sons and told the great news to the Navajo people. Through their valiant

and courageous efforts, the twin warriors were considered heroes to the Navajo

People.

According to Lee (2015), the story of the Twin Warriors and others similar to it,

exemplifies how a Dine man should live and details the responsibilities a man has to his

family and his community. Throughout the story the twins showed responsibility,

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protection of their people, and independence with a strong sense of identity. These are core principles that Lee states a Dine man must possess, in addition "he must be knowledgeable, smart, and unafraid of responsibility, and he must protect his people" (p. 215). This traditional story teaches Indigenous men how they are to live their life in their families and in their communities. Bitsoi and Lee (2014) explain further that every Indigenous man has a foundational image of what it means to be an Indigenous man. This foundation is based on his spirituality which directs a man toward positive energies to enjoy life with happiness and laughter; his outlook on life and the path he takes all derive from his spirituality. Later in this chapter, I will discuss the arrival of European colonists, the impact of the imposition of their form of patriarchy on the land of the Indigenous peoples of America, and how the demoralizing outcome of their arrival altered the spirituality and the traditional role and core principles of Native men. The disheartening implications of colonial patriarchy that pierced Indigenous communities long ago are still evident today and affects Indigenous men.

The History of American Indian Higher Education

To understand the low rates of higher education attainment of Native Americans and furthermore, the present experiences and issues affecting Native American men, it is important to understand the historical context of Natives in higher education in the United States. The history of Native American higher education was shaped by federal governmental policies across three distinct periods: colonial, federal, and self-determination (Carney, 1999). These policies were designed to fix the Native problem which was rooted in a European framework that viewed Natives as savages (Adams, 1995). "Indian life, it was argued, constituted a lower order of human society. In a

word, Indians were savages because they lacked the very thing whites possessed –

civilization" (Adams, 1995, p. 6). This belief that Native Americans were inferior to

whites helped justify the taking of lands and other resources by European settlers

(Carney, 1999). The following sections provide a brief overview of the three periods

that federal government policy shaped the education of Native Americans.

The Colonial Period (1568-1776)

The colonial period extends from the first European contact through the

Revolutionary War (Carney, 1999). Before the arrival of the Europeans Native

Americans had established their own systems of education. However, the European

settlers did not value this type of education. Therefore, this period marks the beginning

of colonial attempts to assimilate and christianize Native Americans through their own

systems of education (Carney, 1999). The justification of European settlers' destructive

efforts included the taking of Native land because the early settlers believed that "the

natives were hopelessly primitive and unsophisticated" (Carney, 1999, p. 16). During

this time, Pierre d'Avity formulated a quasi-scientific experiment to prove that Natives

were "savages" on a five-area "savageness" level which included the following: 1) the

non-use of reason, 2) reliance on hunting and gathering like animals, 3) a lack of

morality and presence of nudity, 4) the types of habitation used, and 5) a lack of

recognizable government structures (Dickason, 1984, p. 65-68). These superiority

beliefs held by the European settlers justified the war against Native people. According

to Bartolome De Las Casas, the first Catholic priest ordained in America, in the first

fifty years after discovery, more than 12 million Natives perished due to wars and the

spread of epidemic diseases which the Natives had no resistance to (Utter, 1993).

In order to assimilate and colonize Native Americans, three of the original nine colonial colleges (Harvard, William & Mary, and Dartmouth) included the education of the Indigenous population in their original missions. What was to become the beginning of a long history of colonialism in higher education, the colonists viewed education as the primary way to Christianize Native Americans and to make them more in the image of Europeans. As a whole, higher education in the United States was established *by* white men *for* white men and still today, it is a "White male institution that is paternalistic, patriarchal, hegemonic, and heteronormative" (Bitsoi & Lee, 2014, p. 60). Lomawaima (2000) states that the purpose of these early colleges was to "transform Indian people and societies and eradicate Indian self-government, self-determination, and self-education" (p.5). Although the goal of assimilation was funded with the purpose of addressing the needs of the "infidels," the founders of these institutions identified these goals as profitable since funds donated to the cause did not directly go toward the education of Natives (Carney, 1999).

Harvard College, founded in 1636, received donations and grants for the building of a hall to house an Indian college. This Indian college building was completed in 1656, but the first Native student did not arrive until 1660. In total, only four Native students resided in the building in its total forty years of existence. The building did, however, house English students and in 1693 when the building was demolished, the bricks were used to build another building in which Harvard promised that future Indian students would live in rent free, but this never came to fruition (Layman, 1942). In total, Harvard enrolled a total of only six Native students prior to the Revolutionary period (Carney, 1999).

Like Harvard, William and Mary College, founded in 1693, included Native American students in their charter and also received funding for an Indian school (Layman, 1942). This building was completed in 1723, but the first Native student did not arrive until 1743. In total, sixteen Native students attended William and Mary during the colonial era, but none graduated with a baccalaureate degree (Carney, 1999).

Dartmouth College was founded in 1769 by Eleazar Wheelock, who was a Puritan preacher and educator, and was primarily concerned with saving Native souls (Layman, 1942). Wheelock incorporated the help of a Mohegan Native American, Samson Occom, in seeking funding for Dartmouth. Occom traveled with Wheelock to England as a spokesperson for financial support for the proposed Dartmouth College and successfully secured a total of 12,000 pounds for Native education (Layman, 1942). In 1769, Dartmouth's charter included "For the education and instruction of youths of Indian tribes in their land in reading, wrighting [sic], and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and Christianizing children of pagans as well as in all liberal arts and sciences; and also of English and any others" (Carney, 1999, p. 1). Only a very few number of Native students attended Dartmouth with only three graduating prior to the 1800s which displeased the English donors.

From the combined total of 240 academic years of the colonial period, these three institutions, who professed to be devoted to education for Native Americans, only produced a dismal number of four graduates: one student from Harvard, and three students from Dartmouth (Carney, 1999). In total, there were forty-seven Native students who attended these institutions, but this number is not consistent with the

significant amount of money allocated to these early elite institutions of higher education.

The Federal Period (1776-1964)

The Federal Period began with the end of the American Revolution, the formal establishment of the United States Government and a new relationship with Native Americans. Upon arrival, European nations had acknowledged and worked with Natives as sovereign nations. The newly established United States government continued this practice with the first treaty being signed with the Delaware tribe in 1778. For the next 100 years, the United States government recognized Native tribes as sovereign nations (known as the Treaty Period) and 645 separate treaties were signed with various tribes (Carney, 1999). By negotiating treaties with tribes, the federal government implied that Native nations were sovereign. In fact, these tribal rights were confirmed by the United States Constitution that stated that Congress had the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes" (Constitution of the United States, 1787, Art. I, Sec. 8).

Although negotiations were occurring between the federal government and the Native nations, policymakers still believed that the civilization of Native people was vital for their survival in a "civilized world" (Adams, 1995, p. 21). With this in mind, Native education came under the control of the U.S. federal government, but it was not a major focus (Carney, 1999). For the first 100 years of the federal period, the federal government subsidized church and mission schools to lead the efforts to educate Natives. By 1819, the U.S. Congress passed "The Civilization Fund" that appropriated finances "for the purpose of providing against further decline and final extinction of the

Indian tribes, to instruct them in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation, and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic" (Tyler, 1973, p. 45). However, in the 1890's, the funds designated to missions were mostly eliminated due to competition from other denominations and the changing role of the federal government (Lomawaima, 1994).

This new role by the federal government focused on the education of Native Americans, specifically the youngest members of the tribal communities. The federal government focused on the education of young Native children, as young as four years old, in order to destroy their culture and assimilate Natives into the mainstream society. The government understood that the older generations of Natives were firmly established in their culture and unlikely to assimilate to the Euro-American ideals. Therefore, a new system developed by the federal government took away their children by establishing boarding schools, day schools, and reservation schools and brought about one of the most devastating periods in the history of American Indian education (Carney, 1999).

The boarding school era was a heartbreaking experience for Native Americans. These boarding schools were often hundreds of miles away from the homes and families of these Native children and once forcibly placed there, they were no longer allowed to speak their language or practice their cultural teachings. These boarding schools restricted contact with family or home life and often times, Native children suffered from physical and sexual abuse (Lomawaima, Child, & Archuleta, 2000).

Upon arrival at the schools, the young boys and girls would begin their transformation into "civilization" by eradicating their cultural identity immediately with

a scrubbing and disinfection with alcohol and kerosene for the "dirty Indians." (Churchhill, 2004, p. 18). For boys, their heads were shorn military-style because "at the heart of the policy was the belief that the boy's long hair was symbolic of savagism; removing it was central to destroying their sense of selves of themselves as Indians" (Churchill, 2004, p. 19). In addition, the children were issued uniforms to separate them from the "excessive individualism" of their own traditions by reducing them "to sameness, to regularity, to order" and their "savage" names were changed to more Anglicized replacements like "Smith" and "Miller" (Churchill, 2004, p. 19).

In 1926, after several advocates for Native rights pressured the government for a review of their work toward Native Americans. Hubert Work, Secretary of the Interior, launched a comprehensive evaluation of Native policy known as the Merriam Report. The team of nine individuals were led by Lewis Meriam and spent several months visiting boarding schools and hospitals that "served" Native people. In 1928, the Merriam Report, titled "The Problem of Indian Administration" was released. The report documented that the boarding schools were overcrowded and unsanitary, the children's dietary needs were below standards, the teachers were unqualified, and the disciplinary actions were severe (Meriam et al., 1928). In a departure from the policy of removing Native children from their home environment, recommendations included that Native children must be educated in their natural setting at home and with family. Furthermore, the report indicated that the difficulty Native students were having was due largely to lack of culturally relevant curriculum and ways of teaching (Adams, 1995).

The federal period saw greater inclusion of higher education for African Americans and women with the boom in the establishment of colleges from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Despite this expansion of higher education, the higher education of Natives was largely ignored. (Tippeconnic Fox et al., 2005).

Self-Determination Period (1960's-Present)

The self-determination period brought about "the most dramatic changes by the federal government regarding of Native Americans in the history of the nation" (Carney, 1999, p. 95). These significant changes came during a time when Native Americans were suffering under the policies the U.S. government had imposed on them. The total Native population was down to 237,000, tribal nations were under the control of the government, tribal governments were outlawed, and all federal policies regarding Native Americans were designed to destroy their culture (Carney, 1999).

Leading this change in the self-determination period was the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 under President Franklin D. Roosevelt which enabled the advancement of education for Natives. This Act marked the beginning of self-determination of tribes by recognizing and affirming tribal governments and sovereignty and encouraging tribes to create written constitutions. This act also gave the control of education back to the tribes and provided for federal scholarship funds for Native American higher education (Carney, 1999). The Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934 provided funding for local state school districts that educated Native students. The Reorganization Act authorized $250,000 for college loans and the Johnson O'Malley Act authorized $250,000 for trade school and vocational loans (Wright and Tierney, 1991).

As tribes exercised their control of their own governments and higher education, they displayed their self-determination and sovereignty with the establishment of the first tribally-controlled college, the Navajo Community College (now Dine College) in 1968 (Carney, 1999). The establishment of the Dine College marked the beginnings of the most significant development in the self-determination period – the tribal college movement (Carney, 1999).   Since Dine College, there have been thirty-five additional tribal colleges established in the United States and Canada with each one being created and chartered by its own tribal government.

After the creation of this first tribal college, this significant milestone in the history of American Indian higher education was followed by additional key policies including the passing of the Navajo Community College Act of 1971 and the 1972 Indian Education Act that appropriated funds to public schools to meet the culturally related academic needs of Native students. The Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act passed in 1975 gave Native people the right to govern their own Native education of their children, and the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act in 1978 helped advance the tribal college movement in Indian country. Finally, an amendment to the Morrill Act in 1994 provided further support to the tribal colleges (Carney, 1999).

The self-determination period provided greater access to higher education for Native Americans and as a consequence, the enrollment for Native students in higher education institutions increased. As tribes focused on their governments and the control of education for their own tribal members, higher education access and attainment was a

key concern with tribes participating and investing higher education more than ever before (Carney, 1999).

This brief history of the education of Native Americans details the tumultuous journey that they have had to endure with the arrival of the European colonists. The changing political relationship with the tribes and the federal government is also noteworthy because this sets in place the current status of Native American higher education today. The three periods (Colonial, Federal, Self-Determination) demonstrate how Native American people have navigated through dominant Eurocentric structures and systemic barriers to arrive at their place in higher education today. This knowledge of the history of Native American higher education provides a foundation to understanding the barriers and successes of Native students in today's higher education institutions.

Indigenous Masculinities

To fully understand the complexity of the interlocking systems of oppression that Indigenous males deal with today, it is imperative to return to the arrival of European settlers, in which Indigenous people not only had their traditional education systems dismantled, but their entire egalitarian ways of life. As European settlers physically forced their way onto the land of the Indigenous people, sadly so did their demoralizing patriarchal values and dominant ways of life.

In this section, colonial patriarchy masculinity is defined and how this affects not only Indigenous males, but all men (and women) of color. Next, I explain how colonial masculinity disrupted the social balance of the pre-colonial Indigenous men and women known as complementarity and the devastating and lasting effects it has on

contemporary tribal communities. Indigenous masculinities and the lack of research on

Indigenous masculinities are discussed, followed by the (in)visibility, intergenerational

trauma, intersectionality of Indigenous men and their current status in the United States

today. Lastly, I discuss ways to decolonize patriarchy.

Colonial Patriarchal Masculinity

Indigenous men fulfilled their traditional roles as a warrior-protectors and

providers for their families and tribal communities. When European settlers came to

America, this protective role was dismantled by the "invading colonial masculinity"

(Antone, 2015, p. 27). The European colonial invaders were in search of selfish

wealthy conquests and their competitive, testosterone-driven masculinities were in

direct contrast with the selfless and cooperative values of the Indigenous males.

As colonists took over Indigenous lands and displayed their domination with

brutal force, Indigenous men became culturally disoriented and struggled to find their

place in this new world (Antone, 2015). Native men were subject to humiliation and

emasculation from colonizers and from Native women who did not understand how

their men were not able to stand up to the White oppressors (Bitsoi & Lee, 2015). On

top of these pressures, Indigenous men had to reckon with White influences such as

alcohol and superiority measures.

The unrest of colonization was elaborated with further ruthless methods

including the policing, reeducation, and assimilation of Indigenous people so they could

be controlled and forced to be subordinates to this new power of colonial patriarchal

masculinity (Morgensen, 2015). This imposition of white supremacist hetero-

patriarchal masculine identities did not only affect Indigenous peoples, but these

identities have, and still, affect all people of color (hooks, 2004).

To better explain the structural factors that affected traditional Indigenous

communities and shape the lives of all people of color, Gordon & Henery (2015) re-

theorize and expand patriarchy from the traditional conceptualization of unequal gender

relations to explore "how the values of patriarchy – dominance, control, hierarchal

competition, and subservience – configure gender roles and social expectations, giving

particular attention to how patriarchy construes men's relationships with themselves and

each other" (Gordon & Henery, 2015, p. 3). In this expansion, we can see how

patriarchy intersects with racism, economic inequality, and heteronormative orientations

to position men in competitive relationships of dominance and subordination to women

and other men. This approach which re-theorizes patriarchy as a technique of power

and control and falls in line with what bell hooks (2004) refers to as "White

supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (p. 17).

The disruption caused by colonialism supports the ideas of Black feminists who

were the first to theorize patriarchy's co-articulation with other structures of power such

as racism and capitalism and as history shows, patriarchal power has intersected with

White supremacy and racial privilege to sustain male domination and control

(Crenshaw, 1991). This patriarchal masculinity is the dominant cultural and social

conceptualization of masculinity in the United States today and encompasses a set of

White heterosexual capitalist values, orientations and expectations that men negotiate

(Gordon & Henery, 2015).

In the traditional roles of Indigenous people, there was a balance of power, men, women, and two-spirit people had equally important places in their communities. However, this traditional sense of balance and view of Indigenous masculinities has been altered by the colonization and the dominant views of power. Driven by the heteropatriarchal mindset of the European invaders, the traditional views of social balance were eliminated as a means to not only exercise their white supremacy, but to assert their domination over systems that were deemed aberrant (Morgensen, 2015). I describe how traditional social structures of balance were displaced in the next section.

Complementarity

Before coloninization, Indigenous men and women were equal in all aspects of traditional life including labor, economic and political authority, and spiritual ways. Among many community-centered Indigenous cultures lies a central tenet of social balance known as complementarity that is derived out of common Indigenous epistemologies. Sneider (2015) states the following:

> Complementarity is both a social as well as a theoretical principle and ethic central to Indigenous studies. Complementarity summarizes concepts of responsibility and relationship in the maintenance of social or communal balance and comprises the overarching ideology behind actions or performances reflecting responsibility, reciprocal, and respectful relationships (p. 63).

Prior to colonization, Indigenous gender systems recognized gender roles that exceeded European ideals of binary sex/gender and included a third or other gender, which is currently referred to as "two-spirit". In fact, prior to colonization, people who were recognized as genders other than "man" or "woman" were viewed in their

Indigenous communities as "integral to families, partnerships, and collective culture, religion and governance" (Morgensen, 2015, p. 43). Also, same sex partnerships were recognized and were viewed as acceptable. These traditional Indigenous views were seen as immoral to colonists, and in another tool to colonize, two gendered groups were defined by colonizers and Indigenous people "were expected to conform to contrasting behaviors as part of preparing them for subordinate cultural, political, and labour roles in settler societies." (Morgensen, 2015, p. 49).

The contribution of male and female to create a whole is a balance when men and women hold shared relationships and responsibilities in the household and the community. The division between genders is reflective of the need for balance, complementarity, and reciprocity (Souza, 1997; Bell, 2002; Anderson, 2000). "Complementarity does not enforce strict binaries but recognizes specifically delineated gender-based communal responsibilities; as long as individual contribute to the community, their sex in relation to or as classified by their gender is irrelevant" (Sneider, 2015, p. 64).

Lloyd L. Lee (2015) describes Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon (SNBH) as the foundational principle of the universe and produces a world described as *hozho*, which is an ideal environment of beauty, harmony, and happiness. SNBH represents a combination of female and male concepts that do not operate alone and are complements to and halves of each other. Prior to colonization, according to Lee (2015), Dine men and women lived in an egalitarian and autonomous relationship and integrated their work roles. Gender equity was a critical aspect of social life and both male and female worked together and needed each other in order for life to continue.

The masculinities of Dine men were based on "spirituality, social ways, common living, and physical body" (Lee, 2015, p. 217).

Unlike Euro-western ideologies that maintain a separate categorization of male and female, Indigenous ideologies focused on the balance between genders to better serve their communities and society in general. Historically, Indigenous peoples viewed identity as a holistic understanding of presence or being in the world and had little to do with biological sex or associated roles based on systems of power (Sneider, 2015). Colonial patriarchy relied on a gender/sex distinction system and used this binary system to implement a hierarchy where men were the rulers and maintained domination over women and feminine "others". When European settlers encountered the complementarity of leadership and authority among Indigenous men and women, they perceived it as a threat to their heteropatriarchal dominant views. Andrea Smith (2005) explained that patriarchy rested on a binary system and it was not a coincidence that colonizers used this belief as a way to dominate and conquer Indigenous people.

Indigenous Masculinities

The devastating effects of white supremacist patriarchy, i.e. the disruption of social balance, the assimilation into European ways of life, the destruction of their traditional lands, and the near genocide of their people demoralized Indigenous men because they felt they had no place in this new world. These men were no longer warriors (protectors and providers for their communities) and their loss of their traditional roles has a lasting and negative legacy still today.

As Indigenous systems of complementarity were destroyed, and European ideologies were forced upon Indigenous communities, colonial patriarchy changed the

way of life for Indigenous men since in colonial ideology, disempowerment was viewed as femininity. The way Indigenous men were perceived and treated was demoralizing. Roy Harvey Pearce (1971) writes that "American Indians were everywhere found to be, simply enough, men who were not men, where "men" indicated higher (white) male beings who reigned over culture and society." (p. 6). Indigenous men and women were forced to give up their previous roles in their communities. The men were forced to make decisions as individuals, rather than as speakers for all members of their tribal communities. In addition, Indigenous men were promised a sense of power acquired through assimilation tactics such as owning individual land; however, this was never granted since it was impossible to reach the social position of European men due to racial and cultural differences (Sneider, 2015). This oppression was not limited to Native men.

Ty P. Kawika Tengan (2008) explained that oppression affected Indigenous Hawaiian men by stating that Hawaiian men

in general, have lost their place and role in society. Often, they linked this to the loss of the old ways-the religious formations, political systems, cultural practices, and relationships to the land that our ancestors knew. With the arrival of colonialism, Christianity, and modernization, all of these configurations of knowledge and power were radically transformed" (p. 15).

As a result of the colonization of their lands, minds, and bodies, Indigenous men began to accept and internalize the perception of colonial masculinities (Innes & Anderson, 2015). These men, distraught from the adversity of challenges brought upon by colonization, became subject to the white supremacist patriarchal authority and

assimilated the perceptions of masculinities of the Euro-western males which was damaging to themselves and their communities (Sneider, 2015). By assimilating colonial ideologies of competition, violence, gender classification, fear of showing weakness, and other patriarchal misogynistic values, Indigenous men were and still are unknowingly perpetuating oppression of themselves and their people in their acceptance of colonial masculinities.

The manifestation of patriarchy is evident in the predominant stereotypes of Native men, which illustrates how gender, race, and class mutually constitute each other to structure Indigenous men's lives. Sam McKegney (2011) shares that Indigenous men appropriate three stereotypes: the noble savage, the bloodthirsty warrior, and the drunken absentee seeing they "offer relief from untenable social conditions as well as a sense of masculine agency that colonization has rendered difficult for many Indigenous men to attain in other ways [but are] problematic because they seek power through dominance and violence" (p. 258). Indigenous men bring harm to their communities and themselves when the power of these stereotypes is adopted in that these stereotypes restrict their identities and limit how Indigenous men view themselves.

Lack of Research on Indigenous Masculinities

Tragically, the pressures and internal conflicts of being conquered have lasting effects on Indigenous men, which may be why Indigenous men do not show the same enrollment and graduation rates as their female counterparts in higher education. The dearth of research on Indigenous men in higher education continues into the realm of Indigenous masculinities. The limited research available on Indigenous masculinities is primarily associated with Dine' males (Lee, 2013) and this does not provide for an in-

depth look at the broad diversity of Indigenous nations. Although Indigenous men are not fully represented (yet) in this current research field on men of color, the insights provided by the following studies provide a possible connection to understanding of Indigenous men in higher education.

In Harris' III study (2008) on twelve (mostly heterosexual) male college students of color: five White, four African American, two Latinos, and one Asian American, it was found that the men relied on hyper-masculine performance to emphasize their manhood, attain status among other male peers, and seek other males' approval. In another study by Edwards & Jones (2009), ten participants explained that in order to meet the expectations of being masculine, tough, and fearless, they would put on a performance that was like wearing a mask and not being their true selves. This study also did not include an Indigenous male perspective. Saenz & Bukoski's study (2014) found that Latino men avoided seeking help because they did not want to appear weak or compromise their appearance of confidence.

These views of masculinity are not only displayed by men but feature prominently in our society which expects men to be strong, to lack emotions, and to be competitive (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Indigenous men may also harbor these same toxic masculinity views by the men in these studies. Although there are no studies on Indigenous masculinities in higher education, Bitsoi & Lee (2014) speculate that the demoralization of Indigenous men by colonization has "led men to shy away from college, whereas Native women are being empowered through education" (p. 67). This lack of research in the academy is further discussed in the next section on (in)visibility.

(In)visibility

Since colonization, Indigenous men have had to endure the lasting and demoralizing effects of having their traditional lives unhinged by white colonial powers. As they continuously struggle to grapple with new roles and expectations for masculinities, Indigenous men (along with all Native Americans) suffer from invisibility in today's society. Since colonial invasion, American Indians have been misunderstood and miscategorized because our Native history in education and society is often inaccurate, incomplete, and often times we are portrayed not to have existed at all in the Americas. Journell (2009) states that American history curriculum in public schools "caters to a Eurocentric male point of view, starting with the voyage of Columbus and continuing with English colonization over a century later" (p. 19).

This white supremacist viewpoint that begins in public schools also is compounded by the present media with the racist portrayals of Native Americans in sports mascots and other disrespectful caricatures. Brayboy & Searle (2007) state "The image of the "Indian" is invented and does not exist within tribal communities but has been produced by Whites in the dominant society to fulfill their need to create and own a "real Indian" they can control and manipulate." (p. 177).

The long history of misrepresentations and misportrayals of Native Americans contribute to the invisibility that Natives experience today. This invisibility is connected to the ways we have been made visible by the government, in schools, the academy, and popular media. Brayboy & Searle (2007) fashioned the term "(In)visible" to describe the "mutually constituted relation" where "visibility and invisibility constantly exist as two sides of the same coin" (p. 174).

(In)visibility has tremendous effects on the Indigenous students in today's higher education systems. Suina (1987) asserts that American Indians "are the most underserved and least noted ethnic group in higher education" (p. 34). Over a decade later, Fryberg & Stephens (2010) describe Native people's representation in broader society and within higher education as nearly absent which limits how Indigenous students see themselves.

Keene et. al (2017) describe in their study that the experiences of Native doctoral students are shaped by (in)visibility and combined with the experiences of managing and searching for visibility. This invisibility extends into the research conducted on American Indian students in higher education where quantitative research represents Native Americans as an asterisk, indicating their numbers are so small that they cannot be studied (Fairchild & Tippeconnic, 2010; Brayboy et al., 2012; Shotton et al., 2013). The effects of colonization have left an indelible scar for Indigenous people. In the following section, I explain how traumatic events from the past can still have lasting effects in the present.

Intergenerational Trauma

The strenuous history Native Americans have endured over generations has emerged as an explanation for the current individual and community hardships of Indigenous people. Brave Heart (2003) refers to this endurance as *historical trauma* defined as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (p. 7).

The near catastrophic genocide, the depressing boarding school era, and the severe changes to their ways of living in a short period of time are the types of

experiences that have remained with Indigenous people. The reaction to historical

trauma is referred to as Historical Trauma Response (HTR) and includes substance

abuse, suicidal actions, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and difficulty with

recognizing and expressing emotions.

As Indigenous men experienced their power and sense of identity destroyed, the

damaging effects were extreme and long lasting. Historical trauma has lasting effects

for generations of young Indigenous men and evident by the dismal statistical numbers

in higher education attainment, high suicide rates, poverty, health issues, and substance

abuse (Sarche & Spicer, 2008). In the next section, I describe how multiple factors

affect Indigenous men in higher education and society.

Intersectionality

To better understand the experiences of Indigenous males, a holistic view of

their social identity needs to be taken into consideration to incorporate and address the

multiple social dynamics that come together to create the unique challenges that

oppressed Indigenous males endure in modern society. When white patriarchal

masculinities replaced traditional Indigenous masculinities, Indigenous men and their

traditional identities became (in)visible to society or were lost entirely. The historical

traumatic effects of colonialism-the loss of our traditional way of life, our identity and

our Indigenous communities coupled simultaneously with the additional weight and

intersections of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and societal norms-- contribute

to the complexities and harsh realities that socially marginalized Indigenous males face

today. Using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1993) as a frame to examine the

subordination and social inequalities that affect Indigenous males is appropriate to

understanding the multiple dimensions of their experiences in contemporary higher education and society.

Although they do experience some privilege because of their gender, in addition to negotiating forms of subordination enacted because of their race, Native American males are forced to straddle other intersecting identities as well including ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and other social forces of power. This intersectionality contributes to Indigenous men as a whole being the victims of multiple levels of social injustices and disparities in terms of their education achievement, health care, housing, income, and wealth. As described in the previous sections, the devastating effects of patriarchy have and continue to overshadow our worlds. In the next section, I provide tools to decolonize patriarchy.

Decolonizing Patriarchy

Harper & Harris (2010) believe that feminist methods should be leveraged to aid in the study of men. Findings of the College Board (2011) suggest that men of color can actively disrupt the white heteronormative middle-class patriarchy and adjust social attitudes towards them by appropriating feminist methods because men of color also share the same unique social positions and access to power differently than their white counterparts.

Through exploring patriarchy by imploring feminist of color methods, there is greater insight into the types of gender roles and social expectations of men of color. In a White supremacist patriarchy, "men of color, and especially queer men of color, are unable to achieve normative and naturalized gender and sexual roles because of their

economic, racial and sexual positioning and performance" (Gordon and Henery, 2015, p. 21).

Similar to how Gordon & Henery (2015) argue that black feminist methods can be applied to men of color due to their relation to white heteropatriarchy, Indigenous feminists (LaRocque (2007), Smith (2005), Grey (2003), Kuokkanen (2003), Hall, (2008), Anderson (2000), Denetdale (2006), Goeman & Denetdale (2009) views can provide healing and decolonization methods for Indigenous men through traditional stories and a return to cultural traditions. Indigenous feminism acknowledges how white heteropatriarchy has disrupted Indigenous communities and how decolonization occurred by restoring social balance by renewing female leadership roles and male leadership roles in the community.

According to Hall (2008), "Indigenous feminism grapples with the ways patriarchal colonialism has been internalized within Indigenous communities as well as with analyzing the sexual and gendered nature of the process of colonization." (p. 278). The Indigenous feminist approach goes beyond gender constructions and specifically addresses the colonial ideologies that inform constructions of gender, race, class, nationality, physical abuse, and sexuality (Sneider, 2015). In order to restore balance, or complementarity, Indigenous feminism calls for and relies on Indigenous masculinity studies to determine Indigenous men's complementary contributions to personal and communal decolonization. As Denetdale & Goeman (2009) claim

> The structures of our lives as Native women and men are shaped by racism, sexism, and determination. We strive to recover our former selves and push toward creating better future selves by reclaiming Native values, which have

seen us through multiple traumas, including land disposition and the loss of our freedoms. (p. 9&10).

By focusing on the revitalization of Native values and traditions (primarily complementarity) that were dismantled by colonization, together Indigenous masculinity studies and Indigenous feminism seek to balance the individual, cultural and social needs of their communities through reciprocal relationships to decolonize together. Grey (2003-2004) viewed the goal of Indigenous feminism as gender harmony and refers to Fernandez's (2003) observation that "gender balance strengthens our circles; the values and teachings show us that women occupy one side of the circle and men occupy the others. The vision is not to make one better than the other, but to show how they are complementary" (p. 254).

The multitude of issues that contribute to the lack of Indigneous males in higher education is quite complex. In the previous section, I provided important context information on the historic struggles of Indigenous men in society. In the following section, I present the limited research available on this marginalized group of men in higher education.

Indigenous Graduate Students in Higher Education

In this section, I provide the available insight into Indigenous graduate students. I will first discuss the barriers that affect Indigenous graduate students, and then I will highlight the factors that have contributed to the success of these students. The limited amount of research on Indigenous graduate students is primarily on females or mixed gender studies (Ballew, 1996; Buckley, 1997; Garvey, 1999; Hanna, 2005; Heionen, 2002; Henning, 1999; Moon, 2003; Mullan, 2002; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008).

Barriers

Some scholars have identified several barriers that affect Native American graduate students which include: isolation and cultural alienation, racism and discrimination, lack of academic guidance, and a lack of Indigenous role models (Brayboy et al., 2012; Buckley, 1997; Shotton, 2008; Heionen, 2002; Moon, 2003; Secatero, 2009; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Henning, 1999; Woodford, 2005; Ballew, 1996; Kidwell, 1986; Williamson 1994; Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac of Higher Education, 2011).

Isolation

For many Indigenous graduate students, feelings of isolation and academic and cultural alienation exist. In their programs, these students reported feeling very lonely due to the isolation of being the only Indigenous student (Buckley, 1997; Rodriquez-Rabin, 2003; Williamson, 1994). They also reported having little contact with other students or faculty in their program (Herzig, 2004) because they are often the only Indigenous person in their programs (Henning, 1999; Rodriques-Rabin, 2003; Shotton, 2008). Indigenous students in graduate programs often feel academic isolation because they have few colleagues who share their unique culture (Buckley, 1997). These indigenous graduate students' feeling of isolation are furthered since other students or faculty are not familiar with Indigenous perspectives and their support from family and their Native community is far away (Heionen, 2002; Moon, 2003; Secatero, 2009).

In a dissertation by Secatero, (2009), Secatero created an indigenous corn model to base the 29 Indigenous graduate students' experiences in graduate school. In the study, the graduate students expressed feelings of isolation and academic and cultural

alienation. These Indigenous graduate students' feelings of isolation are broadened since other students and faculty are not familiar with Indigenous perspectives and support from family and their Native community is often far away. Secatero's study incorporated male and female Indigenous students yet was limited to two narratives from male students. New in-depth research into the Native American male experiences would provide a thorough insight into the Indigenous male experience of graduate programs. In addition to feelings of isolation, Indigenous graduate students report racism in their experiences in graduate programs.

Racism

Indigenous graduate students describe racism as a major obstacle (Shotton, 2008). College students indicate that race continues to be a significant issue and that the underrepresentation of Black, LatinX, and Native American students serves to reinforce stereotyping and discrimination in the college environment (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). One example is Indigenous students' thought they are expected to speak on behalf of all Native Americans as a monolithic voice and that they are often tokenized in their graduate programs by other classmates when the class subject falls upon Native Americans issues or events (Moon, 2003; Shotton, 2008). In addition, Native graduate students feel uncomfortable sharing parts of their lives since they feel that cultural differences may be interpreted and stereotyped by faculty and peers (Henning, 1999).

For example, in a study by Shotton (2008 & 2017), with Indigenous doctoral female students, the females felt pressure to be unobtrusive in their class responses in order to be successful and to not make their White classmates and faculty feel uncomfortable. Native graduate students feel uncomfortable sharing parts of their lives

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since they feel that cultural differences may be interpreted and stereotyped by faculty and peers. In this study, Shotton (2008), stated that with Indigenous doctoral female students, they felt pressure to be unobtrusive in their class responses in order to be successful and to not make their White classmates and faculty feel uncomfortable. Although Shotton's study focused solely on Native American female doctoral students' experiences, further studies on the issues of racism in Native American males in graduate programs needs to be explored. In the next section, I describe how Indigenous graduate students often do not have a Native American in their programs.

Lack of Indigenous Role Models

Graduate students of color often seek role models who look like them and seek out people whose presence allows these students know that they, too, can make it (Woodford, 2005). Native graduate students, in particular, look for role models who have paved the way and there is a major drought in the Native faculty academic pipeline (Ballew, 1996; Kidwell, 1986; Moon, 2003; Williamson, 1994). This lack of Indigenous role models in their academic programs or even on campus furthers their feelings of isolation. It is reported that American Indian full-time faculty at the professor level account for no more than 0.5% of the total faculty population (Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac of Higher Education, 2011). Native graduate students feel isolated as the sole, lone person of their culture. There are even fewer faculty that share their same unique background. In relation to a lack of Indigenous faculty, Indigenous graduate students also report a lack of academic guidance from their counselors of faculty. I discuss this challenge in the next section.

Lack of Academic Guidance

At the beginning of American Indian students' graduate journeys, they miss out on effective advising and counseling (Heionen, 2002). Since Indigenous graduate students and their families are not accustomed to the rules and systems of higher education, they are at a significant disadvantage (Ballew, 1996). In a study by Patterson, Baldwin, and Olsen (2009), 35 percent of American Indian medial school applicants indicated that they had received incorrect information or discouraging advice from their counselors or faculty when applying. One student stated

> No guidance. No one knows what an Indian needs to do to get into medical
> school, only the schools themselves, and they rarely are in a position to
> advise…We don't have the benefit of having a father or a relative who is a
> doctor and can advise us (Patterson et al., p. 316).

In addition to missing academic guidance, Native graduate students experience fewer experiences for career-building interactions with faculty and other professional opportunities (Woodford, 2005). In the following sections, I illuminate the success factors that Indigenous graduate students report in their graduate journeys.

Indigenous Graduate Student Success Factors

In the limited research of the elements that have contributed to Indigenous graduate students' success, the following categories have been identified: individual determination and resiliency, balance, access to Indigenous faculty who serve as mentors, a strong surrogate Native community on campus, and a strong desire to give back to their tribal communities (Moon, 2003; Henning, 1999; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008; Williamson, 1994; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007).

Resiliency

Several studies indicate that a primary element that supported success and persistence for Indigenous graduate students is individual determination and resiliency (Moon, 2003; Henning, 1999; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008). In Shotton's study (2008), the female doctoral students shared a love of learning for research that provided the motivation and tenacity to complete their programs. Secatero (2009) found that a primary influence that supported success and persistence for Indigenous graduate students was a strong individual determination and resiliency. The students in the study reported they felt their inner strength was the important driving force that allowed them to concentrate on the tasks at hand and complete their paths to a graduate degree. In addition to resilience, Indigenous graduate students in one study reported that holistic balance in their lives is necessary in order to be successful in graduate programs. I discuss this in the next section.

Balance

In Secatero's study (2009), an Indigenous corn model was created to describe the 23 Indigenous graduate students' experiences in graduate and professional school. The model highlighted four major areas of balance that an Indigenous graduate must have to be successful. These included: a spiritual well-being; a mental well-being; a social well-being; and last, a physical well-being. Secatero's study incorporated four narratives of male and female Indigenous students. However, the study was limited to only two male narratives. This study illustrates the need for in-depth research into the Native American male experiences thereby providing additional insight into the

Indigenous male experience of graduate programs. Next, I will discuss how faculty

play an important role in the success of graduate students.

Faculty as Indigenous Graduate Success Elements

Indigenous graduate students reported another major success contributor is

access to Indigenous faculty who serve as mentors. This support and guidance proves

beneficial even if the faculty member is not a Native person. In some occasions, this

meant going outside of their department and finding other faculty of color to serve in

this mentor role (Shotton, 2008). Pavel (2013) reports that he and other Native graduate

students were able to "fare much better" when they had a faculty member was engaged

in their lives (p. 129). In Garvey's (1999) study over 24 Native graduate students, a key

finding was that mentoring relationships were critical to the success of Native graduate

students. In addition to a faculty member providing guidance, Indigenous graduate

students also report that a vital source of support came from their peers, as I discuss in

the following section.

Native Support Community

Indigenous graduate students also found an additional source of encouragement

by creating a surrogate community composed of Native students on campus that

provided support for their successes (Williamson, 1994; Shotton, Oosahwe, Cintron,

2007). Pavel (2013) explains that an important lesson he learned from his graduate

experience was that "shared passion and commitment among highly cooperative

colleagues make positive things happen, and Native graduate students benefit from

this." (p. 129). I address the importance of Indigenous students giving back to their

Nations in the final section.

Giving Back to Their Native Community

Finally, Indigenous graduate students shared a desire to give back to their tribal communities as a chief motivator in their completion of a doctoral program (CHiXapkaid & Inglebret, 2007; Moon, 2003, Henning, 1999; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008). The act of giving back to their communities is one of the primary motivators for Indigenous graduate students to pursue a graduate degree (Pavel, 2013). CHiXapkaid & Inglebret (2007) states that Native graduate students "see themselves as ready to be role models and decision makers and to implement self-determination. There is an underlying desire to give back to American Indian and Alaska Native peoples and society in general." (p. 151-152).

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed several factors that have impacted (the lack of) Indigenous men in higher education today. Many of these factors can be attributed to colonialism and the multiple lasting traumatic effects on Indigenous men and their communities.

First, I provided an overview of the history of Indigenous education in the United States and how this history shaped the current status of higher education for Indigenous students with a focus on Indigenous males. I then provided an overview of Indigenous masculinities, specifically, colonial patriarchal masculinities, complementarity, Indigenous masculinities, the lack of research on Indigenous masculinities, (in)visibility, Intergenerational trauma, intersectionality, and provided ways to decolonize patriarchy were explored. Finally, an overview of the current

literature on Indigenous graduate students was provided as well as a brief look at the limited studies on Indigenous graduate students available.

The literature is sparse, especially in relation to Indigenous males. Although there has been a recent push to explore American Indian graduate students, there remains limited research on the experiences and voices of solely Indigenous males. There is a gap in the literature on this unique population of Indigenous male graduate students and their experiences at the graduate and professional level. Many of the success factors mentioned may in fact be applied to Indigenous students of graduate and professional programs, however there is a need to develop a model or theory that can be developed that addresses the needs, cultural backgrounds, and unique intersectionality of the identities of Indigenous males in graduate and professional degree programs. This literature review provides a glimpse into the complex background that all Indigenous males share. However, further exploration is warranted to examine the experiences shared by the inadequate number of Indigenous males who find graduate success.

By establishing the framework to understand Indigenous males in a holistic way, one recognizes, despite the colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, and the genocide of their people, Indigenous males have a demanding burden of succeeding in higher education and few males do. How do these exceptional Indigenous males who successfully navigate non-Native institutions (that are not designed for them) persist and graduate? What can their stories tell us to illuminate their experiences so other Indigenous males can advance to obtain graduate degrees and balance can be restored to our Indigenous communities? The stories and experiences of these victorious

Indigenous males are invaluable and must be included with the limited amount of

current literature on this marginalized group of men.

Chapter III: Methodology

In the previous chapter, I described the tumultuous ways United States history cast a dark shadow over the lives of Indigenous men and the circumstances of how this history had an overwhelming effect on their quality of life, primarily education. In this chapter, I will describe the methodology that helped guide my research in uncovering the ways in which a sparse number of Indigenous men defy the odds of their complicated historical wounds and navigate through non-Native institutions of higher education to obtain their graduate and professional degrees. Through an Indigenous lens, I will be sharing their stories to illuminate how their experiences intersect to tell a broader story of cultural resiliency and illustrate hope for our younger generations of Indigenous men and future tribal communities. My research is guided by the following research question.

How do Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees?

In addition to this question:

1) What facilitates the success of Indigenous males in graduate or professional degree programs?

2) What model (if any) can be created to ensure future generations of Indigenous men find success in graduate or professional degree programs?

3) What are the best practices that non-Native institutions can implement to support Indigenous males in their graduate or professional degree programs?

In order to reveal the experiences of Indigenous males as they navigated through their graduate programs, I will be utilizing story as my central tool in this qualitative

study. In connection with Tribal Critical Race Theory and Cultural Resilience, this study will be using a blending of the Constructivist Grounded Theory and the Indigenous methodology of Story (Brayboy, 2006; Charmaz, 2014; Kovach, 2012). These methodologies place a strong emphasis and a high respect for the knowledge/data that is produced through the shared stories and experiences between the storyteller and the listener. This interconnectedness between the storyteller and the listener is recognized and valued by both methodologies. As Kovach (2012) explains "stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system." (p. 108). Archibald (2012) describes this reciprocity between the storyteller and the listener as a respectful relationship that creates and sustains culture. This holistic interconnectedness is a critical component of these methodologies that has allowed me (the listener) to study the voices and perspectives of these Indigenous males (the storytellers) and reflect upon my own shared interactions and experiences of my past and present involvements in graduate school *with* the participants.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

According to Charmaz (2006), constructivist grounded theory "places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, p. 130). Unlike Glaser and Strauss (1967), who felt that theory was discovered through emerging data from the scientific observer, Charmaz mused,

> I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered either as given in the data
> or the analysis. Rather, we are part of the world we study, the data we collect,

and the analyses we produce. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices. My approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it. (2014, p. 17).

As a contemporary version of grounded theory, Charmaz (2014) applies the term 'constructivist' to acknowledge subjectivity and to highlight the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data. Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory assumes that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed and that the researcher's position must be taken into account (p. 13). Charmaz' emphasis on shared experiences and relationships with participants falls in line with Wilson's (2001) indigenous paradigm that knowledge is relationship and is shared with all creation and further explains that "you are answerable to all of your relations when you are doing research" (p. 177).

The Indigenous Methodology of Story

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have relied on the methodology of storytelling as a vital and legitimate source of understanding and navigating their lives. For generations, the fluidity of storytelling has been used for three major purposes: 1) creation stories explain how we came to be and how we are all connected; 2) trickster stories convey important life lessons through humor; 3) and experiential family stories describe struggles and acts of resistance (Kovach, 2009; Archibald, 2008; Smith, 2009). To value the importance of Indigenous methodology in research, I will employ the use of story.

Brayboy's (2006) eighth tenet of Tribal CRT describes "stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being" (p. 439). In addition, Kovach (2012) explains that stories also provide a unique connection to our world and that the story is both method and meaning. According to Kovach (2012),

Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are both of connections within the world and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations. (p. 94).

In addition to Kovach (2012), Indigenous scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) reclaims Indigenous ways of knowing in research by implementing seven theoretical principles when conducting what she refers to as *Storywork*: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Archibald (2008) describes story as work that educates the heart, the mind, the body and the spirit. Throughout my study, these seven principles will be used as a basis for gathering the stories of my participants, conducting interviews, respecting cultural protocols, and finally analyzing and sharing the stories (data) I collected.

Charmaz (2006) explains that constructivist grounded theory can be used to advance social justice research by combining critical inquiry and grounded theory. Indigenous story views the passing of knowledge within tribal traditions and personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences as a way to promote social cohesion

and a strong social purpose (Kovach, 2009). By combining these multiple methodologies, I will share the important stories of this marginalized and (in)visible group of Native men to illuminate the complexities of their challenges and experiences in higher education.

Positionality

Milner's (2007) concept of reflexivity asks researchers to work with their subjects through reflection and representation; to raise awareness and consciousness of their own racial and cultural backgrounds in order to "engage in processes that reject the exploitation, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation of people and communities of color" (p. 395). In keeping with Milner's notion of reflexivity, and to engage in the social struggles with Native males, I provide my story to illustrate how my life has influenced this research topic and to explain the Indigenous ways of knowing and being as it applies to the Indigenous research paradigm of my study on Indigenous males (Fine, 1994, p. 72).

I am a Native American male in a non-Native institution pursuing my doctorate. I am a member of the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma and am also of Kiowa, Comanche, and Chiricahua Apache descent. My mother is Comanche and Chiricahua Apache and my dad is Kiowa and Delaware. I grew up in Lawton, Oklahoma and from my earliest memories, I have always been connected to my tribal and cultural community. I report through the lens of a Native American male.

Growing up with a very large family on both my mom and dad's sides, I was blessed to know exactly where I came from and how my Native culture was a very important part of who I was and the resilient people I descended from. Early on, I knew

that my Native identity was something to be very proud of and there was empowerment in knowing that I belonged to powerful people on both sides of my lineage.

I was blessed to have parents and an older sister who attended college. I knew what college was and what an education could mean for my life. In fact, I do not remember the moment that I decided to go to college because I always believed that college was the normal path that everyone in my family would take. My undergraduate years went by very fast and I felt a great sense of community on campus with my fellow Indigenous classmates and enjoyed being a part of campus activities and organizations.

After I received my first Master's degree, I began to work in my Comanche Nation tribal college. I felt blessed and fortunate to work with my Native people and give back to my community as my dad had as a medical doctor. For the first time in my life, I experienced what I assumed my dad felt when he helped his people although I was helping in a different capacity – higher education. I felt (and still do) that I was doing what I was destined to do and each day was rewarding because I knew that I was in a position that directly supported and impacted my Native community. Working in my tribal college, I learned about higher education and the higher education system. I took on more roles at the college because I wanted to do all I could for my students. When there were Presidential searches at the college, there was always a shortage of qualified Native people and this puzzled me. I had thought there would be more qualified Native American people for the position, but there were very few. This scarcity prompted me to take it upon myself to go back to school so I could gain the academic knowledge necessary to work for my tribal college in administration. I saw

the value and importance of tribal colleges and I wanted our students to have a president who looked like them and had the same culture and values they had.

When I returned for my Ph.D., I was nervous and intimidated because most of my classmates were younger. I had never been the older student in the classroom and I felt like an imposter. As I witnessed the struggles of my tribal college and engaged with my tribal college students, I knew I had to gain more knowledge about student development theories and explore best practices for retention and persistence. My goal was to take what I learned and implement those best practices into my tribal college. I was often tired from working all day, driving to classes at night, and I often felt that I did not know what I was doing in my graduate courses. However, I knew that I was on the right path and that I would be doing what was best for my students, my tribal college, and my Native community.

As I continued my graduate courses especially in critical literature and the diversity classes, I learned about social justice and people like Paulo Freire and bell hooks. Their ideas spoke to me. I had not understood what *identity*, *oppression*, or *intersectionality* were until I read their works. As I became knowledgeable about concepts of *imperialist*, *white-supremacist*, *capitalist*, *patriarchy* as described by bell hooks (1984), I learned how to think critically when I performed research, selected articles for assignments and analyzed them. I began to realize how much my Indigenous people were left out or not mentioned in articles and in data samples— especially, when it was a very specific statistic I needed. In addition, I realized this absence of mattering applied to other marginalized people of color. As I developed my

research skills, I discovered we were often lumped together as one big "other" or minority group.

In addition to becoming aware of social justice issues, I realized that the Indigenous ways of knowing and being that were instilled in me from my Chiricahua Apache, Delaware, Kiowa, and Comanche upbringing would continue to be reflected and practiced in my adult life, my position at the tribal college, and especially in my research. As a Native American man, this harmonious balance is something that I strive for in my life, my connection to myself (the individual), my family, my community, and my nation.

In my doctoral program, I realized that there were a limited number of Native American students in my classes. I had one Native American female who started the doctorate program with me, but there were no Native males. I knew three other Native American females who had obtained a Ph.D. in the same program I was in, but I was not aware of any Native males who had completed the program. In my graduate courses, I did not have any Native American professors. In my professional role at my tribal college, I began to track the retention and persistence rates of our tribal college students and learned that our Native American females outnumbered our males 3:1. I researched the existing literature on the low numbers of American Indian college graduates and the depressing numbers (or lack of) Indigenous male graduates. After conducting this review, I decided to explore this phenomenon and understand how and why so few of my fellow Indigenous brothers were advancing through higher education institutions.

My Indigenous ways of knowing and being has continuously been at the center of my holistic wellness throughout my entire life. The example my dad set for me and his influence on me to always give back to my community still guides me today. My inner self-strength in knowing my culture and values as a Comanche, Chiricahua Apache, Delaware, and Kiowa man has given me resiliency throughout my life. Wilson (2008) states "we could not be without being in a relationship with everything that surrounds us and within us" (p. 76) and this relationality is what has guided my interest in researching and writing about Native experiences.

Based on my personal and professional experiences, I chose the topic of my study on Indigenous males because I wanted to provide a voice to Indigenous men who had to learn how to use their inner strength and tenacity to succeed in their higher education journeys. Like the participants in my study, I know what it is like to be the only Native male in a classroom and I know what it is like to struggle with feelings of isolation and being unsure of yourself. I can relate to the men on many levels and it is because of this shared experience I have with them, that I feel I can use my position to provide an in-depth look into the stories of this marginalized group of men to provide a much-needed insight into our graduate journeys that often go unknown in the realm of higher education research.

Methods

In this section, I will describe the significant selection of my Indigenous male participants, the methods I used to recruit the participants, general information on the participants, the interview protocol, the analytical process, and finally the limitations of the study. Just as Charmaz (2008) highlighted with using constructivist grounded

theory, my study was an iterative journey as I stepped back and forth between data collection, analysis and reflection on literature. I feel this cyclical manner of research was extremely useful in producing this study and feel connected with the holistic aspect of the Indigenous methodology of story.

<p style="text-align:center">Participants</p>

There are 567 federally recognized tribes in the United States and 5.2 million United States citizens who identify themselves as having American Indian or Alaskan Native ancestry. The American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) population is spread broadly throughout the United States with 78% of the AI/AN population living outside of tribal areas. The fifteen states that have more than 100,000 people with AI/AN ancestry include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Washington (U.S. Census, 2010).

In my efforts to gather a diverse range of Indigenous male participants' experiences from multiple tribal nations across the US and to include a broad range of graduate and professional programs, I used purposeful sampling (Yin, 2011) to create a wish list of potential participants based on three main criteria: 1) their tribal affiliation; 2) their graduate or professional degree(s) 3) and my social connection to them. In addition to selecting potential participants who obtained their degrees from non-Native institutions of higher education, I included males who were currently working professionally with or for Native Americans in various professional areas such as higher education, health care, business, policymaking, government, and the arts. Finally, I considered participants based on their home residency (on or off the reservation). From

this initial wish list, I placed twenty-one potential participants in a ranking order using a combination of my three main criteria.

Once I received approval from the Institutional Review Board committee, I began to reach out to the participants on my wish list starting from the top to the bottom. Since there are few Indigenous males with graduate or professional degrees, the degrees of separation of social connection to the males on my wish list were either narrow or I had an existing professional or personal relationship with them. Depending on my connection with the participants, I either sent an email or a message through social media to each participant to provide a brief explanation of my study and a request to see if they would be interested in potentially participating. Some participants responded right away, some never responded, and some responded after I had moved on to another possible participant on the wish list. I originally wanted to interview fifteen participants for my study, however, with time restraints becoming a factor and the delay in responses from potential participants, I decided on eleven Indigenous male participants for the study. The following Tables 1.1-1.6 provide the breakdown of my eleven participants' demographics with careful consideration to their anonymity.

Table 1.1 Participant Age Demographics

Age Range	Number
20-25	0
26-30	2
31-35	2
36-40	2
41-45	2
46-50	3

Table 1.1. Participant Age Demographics.

This table represents the major age ranges for the Indigenous male participants.

Table 1.2. Reservation Status

Lived On	1
Lived Off	9
Both	1

Table 1.2. Reservation Status.

This table represents the number of Indigenous male participants who lived on a

reservation.

Table 1.3. Tribal Nation Representation

Tribal Nation	Member
Apache	1
Comanche	2
Cherokee	3
Cheyenne	1
Prairie Band Potawatomi	1
Osage	1
Navajo	2
Seminole	2
Creek	3
Kiowa	1
Wichita	1

Table 1.3. The Tribal Nation Representation table shows the number of different tribal nations represented in the study. The number of members represented by each tribal nation is also included on the right column. It is important to note that some participants claimed more than one tribal nation.

Table 1.4. Graduate School Location

Graduate School Location	Participant
Arizona	2
California	1
Oklahoma	6
Texas	1
Washington DC	1

Table 1.4. The state location of each Indigenous male participant's graduate or professional school is listed.

Table 1.5. Current Employment

Current Area of Work	Participant
Education	6
Entertainment Industry	1
Health	2
Law	2

Table 1.5. The current area of work for each participant in the study.

Table 1.6. Program Major/Area

Program Major/Area	Participant
Education	3
English	1
Health Education	1
Linguistics	1
Native American Studies	1
Optometry	1
Professional Studies	1
Law	1

Table 1.6. The programs that each of the eleven male participants received their graduate or professional degrees are listed in this table.

After I received a positive response from a participant, I followed up with a detailed explanation of my study, answered any questions they had, explained the future interview process and sent the consent form. I followed up by either a phone call or email and inquired about a possible location for the interview. Once an agreed upon date, time and location was determined, I made the necessary travel plans as the majority of interview destinations were two to three driving hours from my home.

I traveled to the interview locations and accepted the signed consent forms in person from the participants. In two separate instances the participants lived out of state. Therefore, I conducted phone interviews. A phone interview was the most convenient method of conducting the interview in relation to my financial and logistical limitations. These two participants signed and returned their consent form electronically prior to the phone interviews.

Interview Guide

According to Charmaz (2014), "an interview guide prepares for conducting the actual interview," (p. 63). In an Indigenous research methodology use of story, relationship and respect are important and central to the methods of inquiry (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009). Therefore, specific protocols and ethical considerations were made that I blended throughout the entire interview process. My prior knowledge and experience in working with Indigenous people provided me the insight to think holistically in the formation of my interview guide (Appendix A) -meaning that I wanted to ask questions that accounted for the interrelatedness of my participants' families, schools, friends, mentors, and tribal community.

At the beginning of the interview guide, I selected an initial open-ended interview question that fit well within the Indigenous story methodology: "Tell me how you came to obtain your graduate or professional degree?" This open-ended question, I believed, would allow the participants to share their story of their journey openly and would allow me to gauge the participants' willingness to divulge personal insights. Then, I included additional in-depth questions to ascertain how particular situations made the participants feel and to answer any lingering questions that occurred with their opening response. I concluded the interview with questions that related to their present situations that would perhaps invoke feelings of retrospect and thoughtful summary of their overall experiences.

I created the interview guide draft while in a qualitative research class and was able to test the draft in a pilot study based on the three pilot study interviews, I adjusted the questions that were either too difficult to understand or redundant. I changed my initial open-ended interview question from "Tell me how you came to obtain your graduate or professional degree" to "Can you tell me your story about how you came to receive your graduate or professional degree?" I changed other questions into better guided directions, for example, "Tell me about a time when you felt that you couldn't handle another day of graduate school."

Archibald (2008) states that a goal for Indigenous Storywork is to move from "research as conversation" to "research as chat" and further to "research as storytelling." The subtle changes that I made to the interview guide allowed the participants to become the *storytellers* and my interviews shifted from simple answers

to amazing stories. In addition, as my participants began to share more with their storytelling, I was able to skip over questions that became redundant.

However, I made a modification to the interview guide. After listening to the early stories repeatedly and the constant comparison with my initial memos, I began to see early trends and a noticeable insight into my participants' stories. I found that some of my participants (up to my fifth interview) did not mention seeking help when they experienced hard times in their programs.   This trend struck me as odd and I decided to explore this further so I adjusted my guide to include one simple question: "Did you seek help when you faced difficulties in graduate school?" I will explore this question and the answers more thoroughly in my next chapter.

Interviews

I conducted eleven intensive interviews starting in the Summer of 2017 and continuing until early Spring 2018. According to Charmaz (2014), an intensive interview is a gently guided, flexible, one-sided conversation that explores events in which the research participant has had substantial experience. The intensive interview focuses on the participants' statements about their experience and what it means to them thereby providing a space to enable the participants' views to emerge. Charmaz (2014) states, "during the intensive interview, the participant talks; the interviewer encourages, listens, and learns" (p. 57). This process aligns accordingly with Kovach's (2008) methodology of Story in which an open-structured approach shows respect for the participant and encourages them to share openly and allow the "stories to breathe" (p. 99).

A constructivist approach views interviews as an emergent interaction where social bonds may develop between the researcher and the participant. This interconnectedness provides for what Charmaz (2008) calls "emergent understandings, legitimation of identity, and validation of experience" (p. 91). Following Indigenous ways of protocol and to establish this interconnectedness between myself and each participant, I would introduce myself and provide my self-location-my cultural identification (Kovach, 2009). This meant that I would share what tribal nations I belonged to, and in some instances when I knew that I was the same tribe as my participant, I would share what bands I was from. Then I would proceed to provide my own story of my journey through graduate school and how I came to be at my current stage in my field. This sharing of my story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective that blends suitably with the shared experiences that constructivist grounded theory implements (Kovach, 2009; Charmaz, 2014). I learned that as I progressed through the interview, the participant appeared to relax and their responses and stories were extensive.

With the exception of two phone interviews, the interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face, and were all audio recorded. The majority of the interview locations were held at the participant's place of work. A few interviews were conducted in coffee shops and restaurants, and one was held in a tribe's board meeting room. Before each interview, I would ask the participants several demographic information questions such as their tribal affiliation, age, degree, major, and location of their graduate program. I would record this information in my memo journal. This demographic information was shared in a previous section as Table 1. During the

interviews, I would make notes in my memo journal of any key phrases or comments that stood out to me as an important piece of their journey. After each interview, I would write a short reflection about the interview with my initial thoughts and feelings about my participants' stories. The reflections were placed in my memo journal.

On Charmaz' (2014) list of "Do's and Don'ts of Intensive Interviewing," her number one "do" is "Listen, listen, and listen some more" and number three is to "be empathetic and supportive" (p. 70). Likewise in Indigenous Storywork, Archibald (2008) calls for listening with an open mind and heart and states "I have heard Sto:lo and other First Nation storytellers say that we have 'Three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head and one in our heart'" (p. 76). While I listened to these Indigenous men tell their stories, there were moments when personal and touching stories were shared and I could relate to a lot of what they were saying. In these heart-wrenching stories, tears were shed by the storyteller and researcher because I was moved by their touching stories. This connection with my participants was a key component in the interview process and made the stories (data) shared richer.

Growing up around traditional ways of knowing, I understood from a young age that certain cultural stories were specifically told at certain times of the year. For instance, I knew that Kiowa Saynday Trickster stories should be told in winter. In addition, I knew that in some tribal protocols, when someone passes away, their names are not spoken until a certain amount of time has passed. Being aware of such protocols, I made sure to be careful about what questions I asked and was on alert to recognize body and verbal clues as to what may or not be explored during the interviews. As I listened to each interview, I always acknowledged this principal of

respect (Archibald, 2008) and I valued my participants' traditional beliefs as well as my own. When the subject of death and loss came up in the interviews, I would always wait and listen to allow the participants to share as much as he wanted. I did not probe with my questions when participants would mention their ceremonies because I knew that these ceremonies were sacred and were often times only shared among tribal or family members. In respecting these cultural protocols with my participants, I sensed that trust had developed during the interview. I observed that my participants felt comfortable in sharing their stories with me.

Analytical Process

In this section, I will describe how I analyzed the interviews of my participants and discuss my thought processes as I sorted through the codes of my data (stories). The eleven interviews averaged one hour and fifteen minutes, which resulted in approximately fourteen hours in audio-recording. As I drove back and forth between my interview sites, I would listen to the interview's audio recordings to gain a better understanding of their stories and try to identify any early themes that I might distinguish before I transcribed their interviews. Sometimes I traveled to two interviews in a day. Therefore, I had ample time to listen to entire interviews multiple times, this review of the interviews later assisted me during the analyzation and transcription process.

I transcribed each interview word-for-word paying special attention to and taking note of each laugh, long pause, and delayed response. After interview was transcribed, I provided each participant with a transcript for their approval to ensure accurate representation. This action is often referred to as credibility, however, from an

Indigenous methodology, it is essential because of the often misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures in research and establishes trustworthiness (Kovach, 2009).

In my undergraduate years, I was a Zoology major and in my ecological field research work, I discovered that by using visual classification and naming systems with organisms, I was able to better understand my data and see the broader holistic picture of a particular ecosystem. Having this type of science background and being a lifelong visual learner, I understood that, in order for me to better analyze and make the broader connections of the stories, I would need to rely on drawings, highlighted color coding, concept walls, and memo writing. In addition to my implementation of visual tools, I thoroughly embraced constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to make comparisons at every level of my dissertation process in order to establish my analytic distinctions.

Memo-writing played a major role in my study and was utilized from the beginning until the end of the research. Memo-writing was a way to track my personal analysis and to document any of the emerging ideas that helped to make meaning of my research (Kovach, 2009). These memos, which I kept in a memo journal, charted every detail and step of my dissertation study and became extremely useful for assisting with analyzing comparisons and connections between my stories and ultimately this helped to crystalize my analysis. According to Charmaz (2014), "Memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers. When you write memos, you stop and analyze your ideas about the codes in any – and every – way that occurs to you during the moment." (p. 162).

Initial, Focused, and Axial Coding

Charmaz (2014) states that "Grounded theory coding is a powerful tool that can enable you to define what constitutes the data and to make implicit views, actions, and processes more visible" (p. 113). I knew this unique characteristic of coding aligned with my need as a visual learner to make sense of the data and to conceptualize emerging trends. I focused on "incident-to-incident" in my initial coding process to reflect the responses of the Native males regarding their experiences in the graduate programs whether positive or negative. For example, an incident such as returning home to the reservation was coded as Family Support; experiencing being the only Native student in class was coded as Isolation.

As I read through each transcript and came across an "incident," I made highlighted notations with these initial codes in the right-hand margin of the transcripts. I completed this process for each of the eleven transcripts and simultaneously making memo notes in my journal of all the initial codes that were emerging in the transcriptions, assigning an entire page (or more) for each participant.

After I made my initial code analysis, I performed the second phase of grounded theory coding known as focused coding. With focused coding, I made a constant comparative analysis of each participant's initial codes. I concentrated on significant and frequent initial codes using color coded highlighters to synthesize, compare and sort through the stories (Charmaz, 2014). This process required many iterative comparisons and distinctions among the eleven stories, so I relied heavily on my memos to help keep track of all of the possible focused codes that were emerging as I analyzed the data.

After having identified initial codes of each participant's story, I assigned each initial code a designated highlighter color.

During my dissertation journey, my two young nieces were curious as to what I was writing. To allow them to take part in my dissertation and to assure them that they also may one day write a dissertation, I asked them to help me draw pictures of Native American men so that I could use these pictures in my analyzation process (see Figure 1.1). Together, we created eleven drawings of Indigenous men and I randomly labeled each drawing with one of my eleven participants' pseudonyms and placed them on my concept wall.

Figure 1.1 Drawing of Indigenous Male Participants, Jeffrey and Monte
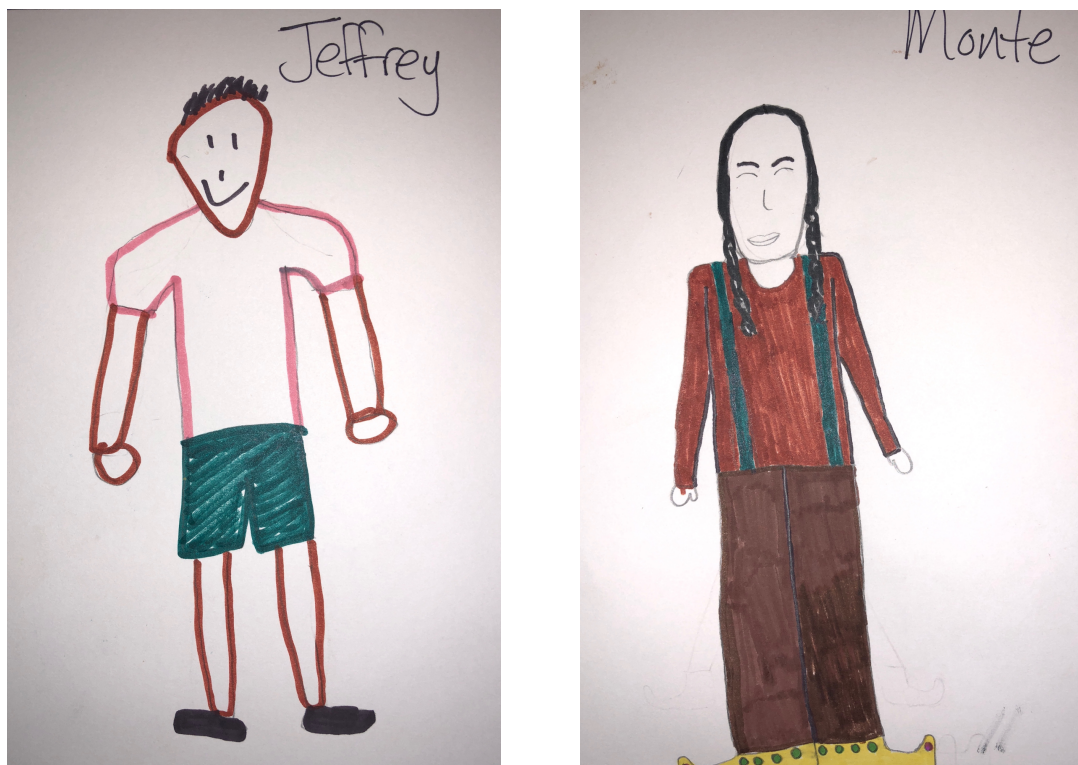
Figure 1.1. Illustrated drawings of two Indigenous male participants in the study: Jeffrey and Monte to be used in the Visual Concept Wall (figure 1.2).

The next phase of my analysis was placing a list of the initial codes that emerged for each participant under their corresponding picture on the concept wall. Using color coding assignments, I highlighted the lists of initial codes under each picture. For example, I chose the color blue for family support, and the color purple for resilience. By viewing the entire concept wall in this color-coded fashion, I was able to visually assess and make sense of the data by viewing the colors (initial codes) side-by-side, allowing me to better analyze the big picture and determine the initial codes that would become the focused codes of the study. By viewing the data in this way, I was able to view the connections between the focused codes across all of the participants which allowed me to see how the participants' experiences were similar in multiple ways (see Figure 1.2). The focused codes that emerged in the study were mentors, family, peers, community, not asking for help, reciprocity, language/community, giving back to family, tribal nation building, cultural identity, balance, spirituality, toughness, and resourcefulness.

Figure 1.2 Visual Concept Wall of Participants

Figure 1.2. Visual Concept Wall of participants with focused codes. Each Indigenous male participant of the study is represented by a drawing on the visual concept wall; their corresponding initial codes are highlighted under each participant.

After I determined the focused codes, I completed the final stage of coding which was the axial coding stage. With axial coding, I completed a constant comparative analysis of the focused codes utilizing a clustering technique with line connections between similar focused codes (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Axial Coding Diagram of Focused Codes
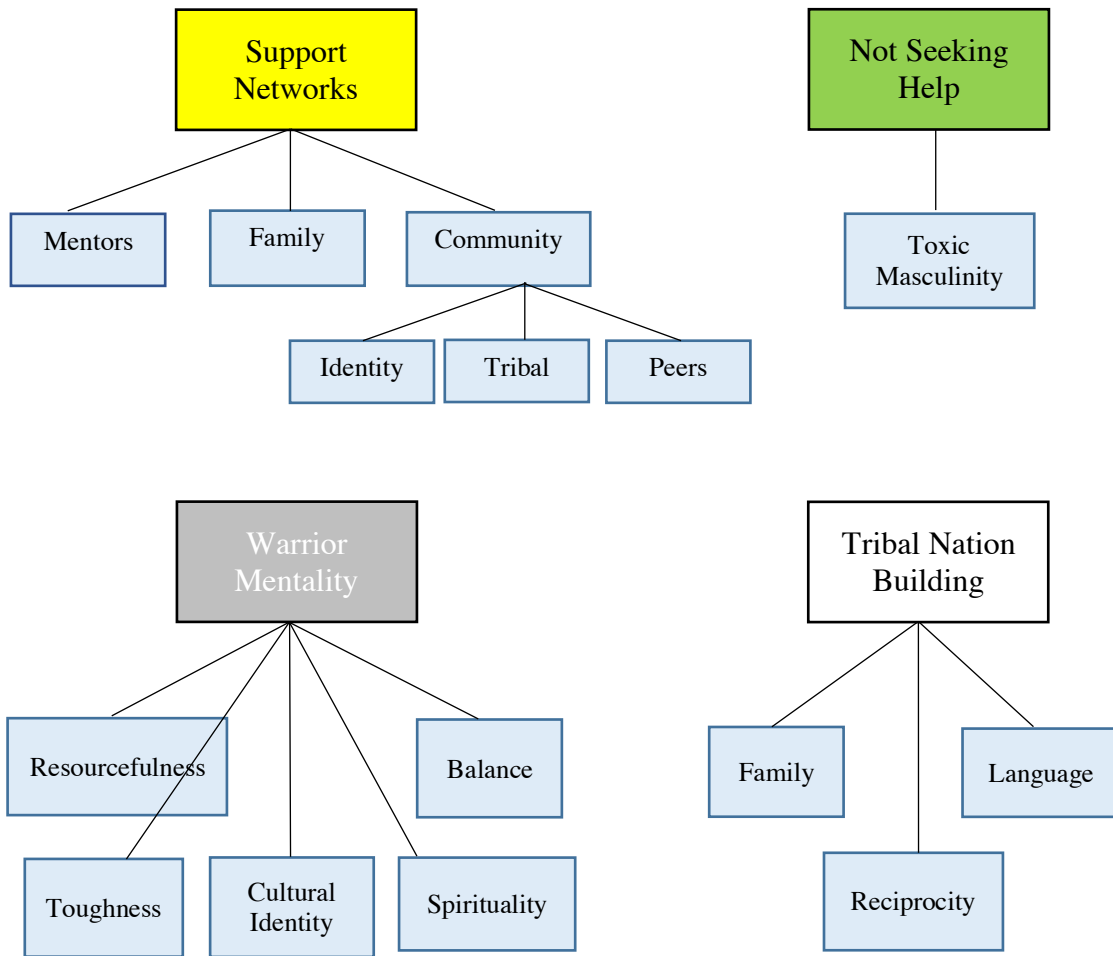
Figure 1.3. Axial Coding Diagram of Focused Codes. The four major themes of the diagram are highlighted in colors: yellow, green, gray and white. These four themes include: Support Networks, Not Seeking Help, Warrior Mentality, and Tribal Nation Building. Each of the four themes has subthemes that represent smaller units of the larger theme as represented by the solid lines.

Looking more holistically at my focused codes in the axial coding diagram, a

larger unifying theme began to emerge. This theme captured all of the focused codes

into one major model and encapsulated the intersectionality of all of the Indigenous

men's stories. These four themes and subthemes in the axial coding diagram unified to

describe the foremost qualities and characteristics of what I believe an Indigenous male graduate student must encompass in order to be successful: 1) they must rely on their **support networks**; 2) they must exercise their **warrior mentality** as needed; 3) they must be committed to **tribal nation building**; and 4) they must **ask for help** in times of need. I assigned the name "Modern Warrior Model" to signify these important qualities that Indigenous graduate and professional students must possess in order to navigate their way through their institutions. I will discuss the Modern Warrior Model in Chapter IV.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodologies Indigenous story and Constructivist Grounded Theory, that I utilized to answer my research question: How do Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees? Next, I provided my positionality as researcher and then described the methods, participants, interview guide, the analytical process including the initial, focused, and axial coding stages for the study. Finally, I presented the Axial Coding Diagram that lead to the major themes and model for my study. In order to ensure trustworthiness and respect of their stories, member-checking and peer review were utilized. In the following chapter, I will provide the findings of my study and describe the Modern Warrior Model in more detail.

Chapter IV: Findings

The research question that drove my study was how did Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees? My three secondary research questions explored what facilitated their success, were there best practices that could be identified that could be implemented to support their success and was it possible to create a model to assist future generations of Native men be successful in earning their graduate or professional degrees.

In this chapter, I first introduce each of the eleven Indigenous males. Next, I present an overview of the major obstacles that these men encountered in their journeys to provide a more holistic framework for the major themes in my study. I provide a summary and description of the four major themes that emerged from my study on eleven Indigenous male students in their graduate or professional degree programs. These four themes are (1) reliance on support networks; (2) a warrior mentality; 3) a commitment to tribal nation building; and 4) reclaiming Indigenous masculinities. Finally, I provide a model based on the four themes, the findings as related to the theoretical frameworks, and the significant findings of my study.

Native Brothers

Each of the Indigenous males shared his remarkable story of the journey to obtain his graduate and/or professional degree(s). In listening to my participants share their stories, I felt a tremendous bond with these other Indigenous males because of our shared experiences, similar hardships, and our resiliency to achieve success in higher education. I felt not only a great sense of pride in my fellow Native brothers, but their stories emboldened me with empowerment and encouragement to keep moving forward

on my dissertation, so I could reciprocate this knowledge back to my tribal and academic communities. I am very honored and grateful to share their stories with you. I will introduce the eleven Indigenous males by providing a brief biographical story of each one to include their tribal nation's region, their degree information, a brief overview of their educational journey, and their current field of work. In a traditional Native introduction, I would include their specific tribal nations, their family names, and their clans, bands, or dance grounds, but in order to protect the anonymity of my participants, I do not disclose this information. The participants often selected their alias name drawing from cherished relatives such as Big Brothers (grandfathers and uncles). Respectfully, all individual names, cities, and institutions are pseudonyms.

Bryan

Bryan is currently a doctoral student in a large non-native research university in the central plains. He obtained his bachelor and master's degrees in a large non-native research university in the southwest. He is of a southwestern tribe and also grew up on a reservation in the southwest. He is a first-generation college student from a single parent household who describes his motivation to go to college as starting "fairly late." In high school, he made good grades and was placed in a program that provided Bryan the opportunity to meet regularly with a counselor who would provide valuable information about college that neither he or his family knew virtually nothing about. He described learning about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and initially being startled that his Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) was zero because he believed that was how much money he would receive from the government to attend college. Initially, Bryan's motivation to go to college was so he could own nice things.

He recalls growing up on the reservation and driving 200 miles away from his small

hometown to go to Silver City where he would admire large houses and nice cars. He

describes telling his mom "I wanna live in a house like that on a side of a hill at the top

of the hill" to which his mom would reply "Go to college and you can get yourself a

house like that" and after seeing a nice car, he told his mom of his desires "to drive a car

like that" to which she replied again, "Go to college so you can have nice things like

that." While attending his undergraduate institution, Bryan initially had plans to

become a lawyer and describes maturing as a person in his undergraduate program for

his motivation changed from obtaining material wealth to becoming "a change agent for

my community." Bryan described being very appreciative and very close to his

grandparents who helped raised him and were like additional parents to him throughout

his life, and although they did not truly understand why he couldn't be home with them

while he was in college, he says they were "sort of like my biggest cheerleaders."

Bryan's story included great loss and mourning at key points of his journey as he lost

his grandfather on his first day of his last undergraduate year and his grandmother in the

last semester before he graduated with his master's degree. He was profoundly affected

by these losses and feels he is still in the process of mourning and "re-centering"

himself. He describes the loss of his grandparents as "one of the biggest challenges" on

his graduate journey. He stated that he wants to make his grandparents proud and

"uphold the legacies of excellence that our ancestors have left behind." Having

relocated from the southwest to the central plains for his current doctoral program,

Bryan feels that his temporary home "suffices", but he misses his home and his family

and will return back home after he receives his degree because he describes he "needs

to be around my people, my family and [it's] just what I'm familiar with and what's comfortable to me." Bryan's story to obtain his graduate degree included multiple mentors that he looked up to, made crucial networking connections to other mentors, and provided guidance and support along the way. As he continues to work on his doctoral degree, he presently has a network of Native American classmates who have formed their own "family" to support one another on their paths to a Ph.D. Currently, Bryan is working as a Graduate Student Assistant as he completes his doctoral program.

Carl

Carl received his undergraduate degree from a non-Native university in the central plains, and his professional degree from a non-Native university in the central plains. He is from two southern plains tribal nations and grew up in the southern plains region. Although Carl started out unsure of what to major in, he took a wide arrangement of courses and found an interest in Biology and decided to go into the health field. After serving an internship at his local Indian Health Service hospital and seeing all of the departments, he liked the optometry department the best and that began his path to obtaining his optometry professional degree. Once Carl decided to become an optometrist, he was very "focused" and "disciplined" in achieving his goals of an optometry degree and did not find any issues of hardships while in his undergraduate program. When choosing where to apply for optometry school, he chose a small one because he came from a small town and he felt "he would be more comfortable in a smaller class size". Carl also decided to apply to this school because it was close to his family and he wanted to "be able to see my nieces, my nephews, and my sisters, and for my mom's birthday" and he stated family was "very important to him." Carl was able to

attend the optometry school on an Indian Health Service scholarship which requires payback by working for the Indian Health Service. He now works for a tribal nation's health facility and explained that he enjoys serving a tribal nation over operating his own private office because he describes being with the tribe as "more of a health care giving thing" and they do not sell for a profit, but "just to help people to see pretty much." In optometry school, he was one of the youngest students because he came directly from college, whereas many of his classmates were older and had work experience, but he did not. He explained that optometry school was a lot of work, but because he was still used to college life where he studied all the time, he adjusted quite well because "studying and everything was just like second nature." The optometry school was small with only 28 students in Carl's class, which he enjoyed and felt contributed to his success in the program.   Due to the small class size and the large amounts of time practicing and learning together, Carl explained that he and his classmates "became like a family, so it was pretty fun." While growing up and attending school, he explained that he always "felt like he had to prove myself" and "work at my best like all the time" and this is where his focus and discipline comes from. Carl's story is unlike the others in that he was very focused and driven and planned his pathway very methodically and strategically because he states, "that's just how I have always been." He describes himself as "quiet" but discovered that he was a good speaker in optometry school where he found pleasure in pushing himself to do presentations and speeches and would even became the president of his class. Currently, Carl works as an optometrist for a southern plains tribal nation in southeastern Oklahoma.

Billy

Billy received his bachelor's degree from a non-Native Ivy league university on the east coast and recently completed his master's degree program at a non-Native university in the central plains. Billy is from a southern plains tribe and grew up in the southern plains area. Billy recalls always knowing he would attend college, because his parents were always telling him that he would go to college when he was a young boy because his parents thought "that he was really smart and different than the other students." Coming from a small town and with a mom who never completed college and a dad who took thirteen years to complete college, he never dreamed he would attend an Ivy League institution. He recalls working on his college application and answering the question "who was your biggest role model in your life?" in which he wrote about his sister. He would describe how she excelled in sports and even received a sports scholarship but was afraid to leave home because college was too far away. Bryan felt encouraged by his sister and wrote about how his sister supported him "through everything" and how she did not want him to give up his dream of attending college. He was accepted into the Ivy League university. Bryan first thought he was going to major in Biology or vocal performance, but after working in a program with minority and underprivileged high school students, he discovered his passion for working with young children and changed his major to Sociology. He graduated in four years and then spent a year working at an inner city high school in the northern plains region and decided that he wanted to be a high school counselor. He was accepted into a non-Native institution in the northern plains region and was doing successful, but his stepfather lost his life in a tragic car accident and he returned home to be with his

family, because as Bryan states "family is super important to me." Bryan then enrolled in a graduate program at a non-native institution in the southern plains, where he also secured a graduate assistant position working in the office of diversity and inclusion. He eventually became a full-time staff member in that office and worked full-time on both his master's degree and his job, which he described as very challenging, but with his family close by and the supportive network he had in his office, he graduated with honors and was even selected as the outstanding student in his program. Bryan currently works as a coordinator of Diversity Education with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at a non-Native university in the central plains.

Charles

Charles is of two tribes from the Southwest and the Northeast regions of Oklahoma. Charles has spent most of his career focusing on increasing the health status of Native American communities. He has earned both a Master's Degree in Biology Education and a Doctoral Degree in Health Administration and Public Policy and serves as an Assistant Professor at a large research university as well as multiple positions within tribal communities. One of three children, he was the only child to complete any sort of college education and is frustrated that his siblings did not, although perhaps this was in part due to his desire to travel and explore, which education and summer internships allowed him to do so. He shared a powerful moment in his story where he was encouraged by his uncle to continue along his educational journey. Charles described his path to his Ph.D. as a tough and long journey, but he was resilient and finished. He joyously recalled the day when he passed his dissertation defense, and he called his mom to share the news. He found it funny to hear that her first response was

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a comment of how long it had taken him. Throughout his story, there were elements of humor, commitment to his tribal community, stigmatism, and possible racism, and definitely a tough resiliency that empowered him to persist. His ultimate driving force was to prove to his children and younger generation that they can do it as well; they can achieve educational goals and exist in a westernized world without having to sacrifice who they are or forget where they come from.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey has an undergraduate degree from an Ivy League non-Native university on the east coast and a Juris Doctorate degree from a non-Native university in the southwest. Jeffrey is from two southern plains tribal nations and grew up in the southern plains. Jeffrey's story begins after he graduated from his undergraduate institution and spent the next four years exploring different jobs in large US cities. He describes making friends and experiencing life as his main priorities at that time in his life after college, but he eventually felt it was time to go back to school and "take the next step". Having been involved in in his Native community and organizations from a young age, he felt it was a natural fit for him to be an advocate for tribal issues, and tribal communities. Jeffrey viewed law school as a "way to place me in a position that would expose me to opportunities to do policy work, to do government work for the tribes or for the federal government." During law school, Jeffrey recalls having, for the first time, a connection to the curriculum because "they were talking about Native people, and Native issues." Jeffrey explained that he really enjoyed the Native aspect to the curriculum, although he also described his classes in law school as "very tough" and "competitive." He humbly contributes his ability to "get through to the other side" and

his "grit" to his parents, whom he refers to as "a stable force" in his life and during his years of law school. Currently, Jeffrey is working for the United States Office of Indian Affairs.

John

John has an undergraduate degree from a large non-Native research university and a master's degree from a small non-Native university, both located in the central plains. John is from a central plains Nation and grew up in the central plains. Growing up as child with parents and family members who never attended college, John did not expect to attend college. Having a very strong cultural connection and having worked with his tribe during the summers as a cultural resource person in high school, he felt that working with his tribe was "what he wanted to do" and "where he wanted to be." When his college prep teacher at his high school told him "you can go to college" and "hounded" John to apply for the Gates Scholarship, he applied and eventually was informed he was a recipient. When the realization came that he could attend college anywhere with the Gates Scholarship, he decided to shift his initial decision to attend a tribal college, where his cousins were going, to attend a much larger non-Native institution. He recalls receiving the official notice from the Gates Scholarship Foundation as one of true excitement and delight for him as his mom opened the letter for him and gave him the positive news over the phone while he was out of town, "I remember like dropping that phone and dropping down to the floor and yelling and screaming and people were coming out of the hotel and their hotel rooms, and like my friends took me outside, and I literally just started running laps around the parking, just screaming." He started his undergraduate journey believing that he would go into Law,

but eventually changed his mind when he "fell in love with education" after taking an American Indian Education Policy Development class with one of his Native faculty mentors. John describes how this class opened his eyes to "see how education is really the gate to sustaining our Native students and making critical impacts in our Native communities." John had the support from his Native mentors during his undergraduate journey, and also had support and friendship of several Native student organizations and a Native fraternity on campus, in which he became a member. After he graduated with his undergraduate degree, he decided to attend a small state university close to his hometown because he missed home and his family. He expressed his desire to move out of his undergraduate college city because "it's too much concrete, too many buildings. There's no woods, there's no creeks, there's no home." He was able to secure a graduate assistantship position in the Indigenous Center on campus and complete his master's degree in which his thesis focused on the experience of Native students. After completing his master's degree, he was content with "the little letters after his name", but his former undergraduate Native mentor pushed him by scolding him and telling him, "You're not done yet. You're gonna go for your Ph.D. You have funding, use it!" John's mentors and his large support networks have and continue to play a large role in his academic journey. He is currently a doctoral student in a large non-Native research university in the central plains.

Monte

Monte has a bachelor's degree from a tribal college in the plains region of the US, and a master's degree from a large non-Native research university from the central plains region. Monte is currently a doctoral student at a non-Native university in the central plains. Monte is from a southern plains tribe and also grow up in the southern plains. Monty's story to obtain his graduate degree is a long journey with many life's turns and up and downs, starting when he graduated high school and went into the army. Going to college was never a thought for Monte, for he believed that he would spend his life in the military. However, he soon found out that he did not like the military life, and he began his educational journey after he left the Army. He entered college as a non-traditional student and found that he was not prepared for the rigors of college. He struggled with math and stopped out a couple of times, but found help through mentors, tutors, from the empowerment he received from serving in leadership roles in student organizations, and through his culture and language courses at his tribal college. After persisting through eight years and four colleges, Monte received his bachelor's degree. And then at age 35, he entered graduate school in a large non-Native research university with a "determined" and "focused" mindset and wisdom. He states, "I knew what it took to get that degree. I was a better writer, a better researcher, so that's kinda where I was at that point." With the help of mentors, the support of his Native fraternity brothers, and a newfound "balance" in the spiritual, physical, mental and social parts of his life, he was able to obtain his master's degree. When Monte was asked to reflect back on his journey, he remembered when he was younger he had goal of working for his tribal nation one day, and that is what he currently does now as an

administrator in his nation's tribal college. Monte will also be receiving his Ph.D. in the very near future.

William

William has a bachelor's degree from a non-Native university in the west and a master's degree from a large non-Native university on the east coast. William is from a southwest nation and grew up on the west coast. He grew up with strong minded parents who advocated for the rights of oppressed people and served as great role models for William and his brother. He believed that he would go into law school, but after researching the law field, he decided that it was not for him. After graduating with his undergraduate degree, William spent time discovering what he "passionate about" which lead him to working in a variety of positions. He worked for his tribal nation as a press secretary for the tribal president and that lead to him working as the executive staff assistant on state affairs with his tribal Nation, where he learned valuable information about the legal affairs between his tribal Nation and state. He also worked for the US presidential campaign of Kerry, completed a couple of internships, and had a brief stint in academics, but he kept returning to his love and passion for politics and decided on a master's program that centered around his three main interests: politics, fundraising, and public relations. During his graduate school program, William faced racism in classes from an instructor, and also found that researching for Native data was nearly impossible because of the lack of information available on Native populations, but he persisted and completed his program. He holds his cultural teachings of maintaining balance in one's life and always moving forward as the ways in which he found success in graduate school and in life. William held many positions and had

several opportunities during the time between his degrees, which made him question whether he should hold off graduate school because he was earning a good living with his then position. But after a Native mentor instructed him to focus on his education, he did just that and found out that she was right. After he completed his graduate degree, he immediately found a job that allowed him to work for tribal nations and do the type of work that he was passionate about. William currently works for a National Indian organization where he focuses on Indian housing and legislative work in Washington D.C.

Neil

Neil has a bachelor's degree from a large non-Native university in the southern plains, and his master's degree from another large non-Native university in the southern plains. Neil is from two different tribal nations; one is in the southwest and one is in the southern plains. He grew up in a very cultural family environment both off and on the reservation, where he says he was "raised by a lot of other people besides his parents." Having grown up in this environment, Neil explained that it allowed him to learn about his culture because he was taught how to participate in his cultural ceremonies and how to sing ceremonial songs. Neil split his time growing up between his southwestern tribal reservation and on the southern plains. He was especially close to his grandmother, who he respected and cared for very much. Neil describes his grandma as his source of strength who taught him a lot and was someone he had a great deal of respect for because "of the way she navigated the world. Her second language was English, and she was a fluent reader and writer of her language." He describes his journey get to into graduate school as very "serendipitous" as it was his undergraduate

Native American advisor who urged him to apply to multiple scholarships, internships, and fellowships and to his surprise, he was awarded a full-ride fellowship to a large research university in the southern plains. When he arrived on campus, Neil, who had always been around other Native Americans his entire life, found he was the only one in his graduate program and this made him feel uncomfortable. He also struggled with the rigor of the graduate program but was able to persist with the help of a strong mentor, a strong support system of fellow classmates, and a tough flexible attitude that he obtained growing up. Although Neil now works in the film and entertainment industry far from his reservation and family home, he still contributes and gives back to his Native community and maintains a strong cultural connection due to his grandmother's teachings and his strong spiritual connection to his upbringing.

Horace

Horace has a bachelor's degree from a large non-Native research university in the central plains region, a master's degree from a large non-Native research university on the west coast, and a Ph.D. from a large non-Native research university in the central plains region. Horace is of two southern plains tribes and grew up in the central plains. Horace is a first-generation college student who grew up being very close to his grandparents who taught him many cultural teachings and ways of life. When he was in his undergraduate program, Horace developed strong relationships with his mentors who encouraged him to pursue further opportunities and in doing so, build up his confidence on his educational journey. He expressed his excitement and the empowerment he felt when he saw Native faculty members who "looked like me" in his degree program because he did not see many Natives on campus. In his graduate

program, and still in his early career as a faculty member, Horace described feeling resentment and racism from his colleagues as he advanced to his higher academic status. Horace shared experiences he often encountered in his professional academic setting where he would be accused of being "hostile" or "aggressive" when he brought up or argued for an idea or a different viewpoint than that of his white colleagues and faculty members. Horace expressed his anger at this marginalization by stating his view, "I do think this notion that the Native male is angry, is prone to anger, is prone to violence, and is prone to destructive behavior. I think that [misconception] is just as prevalent now in the professional world, as it was in the James Fennimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*." As a single parent, and despite having to deal with these microaggressions in his graduate and professional career, Horace managed to persist and complete his graduate programs. Currently, Horace is an associate professor at a non-Native university in the central plains region.

Legus

Legus has a bachelor's and master's degrees from a large non-Native research university in the central plains. Legus is of three southern plains tribes and grew up in the central plains. Having grown up in an urban Indian community and as one of only a few Indians in his high school, Legus decided to attend a college with a high population of Native students. Legus was unsure of what he wanted to study when he went to college, but he started out in the direction of the health field because of his parents' wishes for him to "have a better life" and to not "have to struggle" like they did. Despite living in his urban community away from his tribal headquarters that were located in another neighboring state, he and his family still managed to retain "a lot of

our cultural values from all three of our tribes" because he would visit his family and tribal community often and as Legus puts it, "we knew who we were as Indian people." In his undergraduate years, Legus became involved with his Native community on campus and also became interested in the Native American Studies program, which he decided to major in. After six years, he graduated with his bachelor's degree, but was unsure what to do with his degree because he "didn't have a job waiting for him, like non-Indian people would", so he began to work for a tribal casino in the area. But, Legus felt he "could do much more to help out Indian people than just trying to make money" and he wanted to attend graduate school but did not know what program to go into and also was worried about the costs of attending. A friend suggested that he look into the military reserves, and after learning that the military would pay for his master's degree and provide him a signing bonus, he joined and spent a year in training. When he came back home from his military training, he applied and was accepted into a master's program in the department of anthropology. Legus feels that language use allows Indian people to maintain their cultural identity, and this became the focus of his thesis and his love and passion for his tribal languages served as the impetus to complete his graduate degree. Despite having to put his graduate program on hold because he was deployed for over a year with the reserves, he managed to graduate with the support he received from his mentors and faculty. Currently, Legus works for the non-Native university that he attended in a leadership position that allows him to serve his tribal community and also be a mentor for the Native students on campus.

Each of the Indigenous men's stories created one larger frame to better grasp and understand the experiences of these men in their remarkable journeys through

higher education that few Indigenous men encounter. Their stories offered an insight

into the lives of a marginalized group of men who are (in)visible to the academy.

However, before I can proceed in answering the research questions, it is imperative to

present an overview of major obstacles these men encountered in their journeys to

provide a holistic framework for the major themes.

<p align="center">**Overview of Major Obstacles**</p>

Although some of the eleven participants experienced fewer obstacles than

others, every Indigenous male in the study shared a story of at least one occurrence

when they faced a battle in their journey to their graduate or professional degree

programs. These men shared a broad spectrum of obstacles that conflicted with the

trajectory in their programs and these obstacles occurred at various times in their

journeys and occasionally lead to the participant stopping out, dropping a class, or

having to endure the issue until the semester ended. The limited amount of research that

identifies the obstacles faced by Native graduate students (Buckley, 1997; Gay, 2004;

Henning, 1999; Heionen, 2002; Moon, 2003; Shotton, 2008, 2017) corresponds to the

obstacles I identified in my study. These obstacles included racism, isolation and

cultural alienation, lack of mentors/role models, and financial issues. These four major

obstacles are identified and supported with narrative.

<p align="center">*Racism*</p>

One of the primary obstacles that a few of the men in my study faced was

encounters with racism. Five of the 11 participants described an experience with racism

in their graduate or professional degree journeys. These incidents with racism occurred

primarily in the classroom or institutional setting and often were perpetrated by faculty

or co-workers. This type of racism was often in the form of microaggressions and false

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assumptions as several of the men shared incidents when they were singled out in class to represent the Native American perspective.

Bryan describes his experience with racial microaggressions when a guest speaker was invited to his class to give a lecture on decolonizing education research:

> I was sitting with a couple Indigenous graduate students on one side of the room and she went "So what did y'all all think about [the] presentation? Let's start over here with our Indigenous graduate students-the experts on decolonization." And we're just like "Whoa!" and just seeing that type of microaggression perpetuated by, not only a faculty, but an administrator, it's disheartening. Because she was teaching on a class that advocated against perpetuated against those types of attitudes, but yet she perpetuated it herself, and you know, it's just like, in instances like that, and it was only one experience but in instances like that, it's like, exhausting. It's like will they ever get it, you know? And it's just like how many more times does that have to be perpetuated for them to realize that it's wrong? And it sort of got me thinking, like do they even attend these sort of like culturally relevant programming or training sessions that they encourage students to attend? It's like…I don't know… it's just like exhausting at this point. Like, when will they learn that type of thing. Um, so yeah, and I think also, for me, as an empathetic person, you know I definitely feel [for] Native students when they experience something that derails their motivation to be here and I hear about it. It also does something to me because I could just as well be in their shoes. So, hearing about those instances is also something that makes me question being here [at his non-Native university].

Similar to Bryan's story, John felt frustration when he was tokenized for being the Native student in the classroom and asked multiple times to provide an answer or a response on behalf of all Native people. John explained, "A lot of times, as Native people, we have to justify who we are, we have to justify that whole 'Well, you're Indian, you're Indigenous, can you give us a perspective?" to which John firmly responded "I'm not speaking for all 567 tribes! No! I will speak for one Indian, *this* Indian!"

Whereas John was assertive when the situation arose, William shared a story when he left in the middle of class because his professor "was just ignorant and didn't know anything about perspectives, not just from tribal communities, but communities of color, and so I had to stand up and say "Hey, I'm not gonna stay in your class. You're ignorant, so I gotta leave!'"

These incidents laced with racism left a few of the Indigenous men feeling distressed and very drained at the constant encounters with the microaggressions faced in their graduate programs; one participant considered dropping his program. This "racial battle fatigue" is common in students of color who have to experience these constant microaggressions in historically white institutions (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). John described an experience in his master's program when he was told, by the Dean of the Graduate College that he was not allowed to use Indigenous methodologies "because they weren't *real* methodologies." John continued to express his frustrations.

> The academy doesn't understand, the academy still sees itself as a gatekeeper [where] they get to pick and choose who and what kind of knowledge is produced. They don't understand that this isn't a hundred years ago, that we get

to be our own gatekeepers now and you don't get to tell us how we do research. And I think that for me, those were some of the most crushing times, and in regard to people not understanding who we are as Native people, and saying "No, you have to fit this mold" when that mold wasn't made for us. That mold wasn't… that mold was created by [non-Natives], that mold was created by philosophies and ontologies that don't come from our people. It was created by non-Natives and they try to stick us in this mold. We're not gonna fit. Well, there's a lot of places I don't fit! [laughs] I ain't gonna fit your mold! [laughs] [Imma] make my own damn mold if I have to!

Whereas the Indigenous women in Shotton's (2008, 2017) study were portrayed as combative in their doctoral programs when they expressed their opinions, these findings corroborate previous research that shows Native American students often encountered stereotypes, false assumptions, and feelings of being tokenized in their programs from their faculty and peers in their graduate programs (Henning, 1999; Moon, 2003; Shotton, 2008, 2017.) In Shotton's study, the Indigenous women were portrayed as combative when they shared their opinions or raised questions that challenged the status quo and were only validated if they did not contradict dominant cultural beliefs. These same feelings of pressure to be unobtrusive and being silenced were also shared by the men in my study. Charles shared his experiences of being viewed as the stereotypical "hostile" Indian when he was not "compliant" in his role as a faculty member amongst non-Native colleagues. In the following section, Charles shares his frustrations.

They think, as Native males, we shouldn't be expected to do more, just like I would say Native women, and African American women, and other women of

color. And I'd say, you know, transgender people. So, they're not used to people, I guess, seeing people as equals, so some of my colleagues who see people who like me, or come from the same background as me, as equals. The compliance, indifference is something that people will expect from a Native male, and anything out of that will be seen sometimes as aggressive or hostile or arrogant. And, you know, I've dealt with that and it's like microaggressions. I'm not going to be a quiet teacher of color who only teaches ethnic lit, and I'm not going to allow you to say that ethnic lit is not as important as... you know Momaday or Joy Harjo is just as important as Shakespeare, or James Joyce, or Jane Austin. And I think sometimes taking those positions is mind-blowing to them. And I'd say when you go into academics, and I'm fairly confident a lot of academics, Native academics will say this, that once you begin to say, 'I don't want to be invisible, I want to be present. I don't want to conform to your quiet stoic Indian. I don't want to always tell you how grateful I am. I shouldn't have to always say how fortunate I am to be here. I've earned this', you know? Those are ideas that are embedded about this notion of deviance, this notion of hostility, of aggressive… I mean all these different things that they told us about Native Americans. I mean that there's two types and this goes all the way back to the first perception of American literature and how American writers distinguished themselves from British writers was this creation of the red devil and the noble savage. The noble savage recognizes that they're second rate and I think people still think about that in the twenty-first century. Although I do not think it is that bloodthirsty, I do think this notion that the Native male is angry,

is prone to anger, is prone to violence and is prone to destructive behavior- I think that is just as prevalent now in the professional world as was in the James Fennimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*.

In one instance, one of the participants described being marginalized as a Native and as gay. The intersectionality of his gay and Native identities made it difficult for him as he negotiated the politics of his graduate program and his career. William describes how he managed to navigate around this barrier.

When you get into the non-Native circle, you're already pushed back because you're Native, you're a brown person in basically a white person's world, especially in public policy and advocacy. Most of the people, like 98% of the people who are advisors and speaking on behalf of issues on Capitol Hill are white men, and so you're already a minority in that circle, but also to me as a gay individual, a lot of the conversations that you have are not conversations that you have in offices. They're not conversations that you have in typical meeting circles. A lot of these conversations about policy, if you want to get down to the nitty gritty- you meet up with somebody for coffee, or at barbecues at somebody's house-and as a gay individual, if you don't fit that prototype of a nuclear family, it's very difficult for you to make those connections. So, you kinda have to work around them to see where you can find those connections, often creating these sub-cultures of areas where they can be of assistance. So maybe you find a group of women who are very helpful towards you, or you find these men who do support you. There's always, in any area, there's always an older person that will help you that knows the ropes and I was thankful that

the congressman that I worked for was able to step up at times when I needed

assistance and he was able to make the connections and things and then calling

upon, really good friends, my former boss, who is the Director of [a large Native

organization], often stepped up to help me and things, make connections and

stuff, so it's often making those connections that find you ways of getting

around those obstacles or walls.

I found it fascinating and not surprising, that two men shared similar stories of

feeling despair and distraught when learning the news that Donald Trump was elected

as the President of the United States. Bryan and Billy, who both identified as gay,

worried about the harsh political climate and the resulting potential harmful effects on

college campuses for marginalized students and themselves after the 2016 presidential

election. Bryan describes his anxiety.

So, when he was elected… I don't even acknowledge him as president, but

when Trump was elected into office, you know there was just something about

the air. It didn't feel right as a person of color, and not only as a person of color,

but I'm also gay and… yeah, just the different ways that I'm a marginalized

person, it didn't feel right. Something felt hostile in the environment, you

know? Like I can't explain the feeling, but that's just the way that it felt. It was

just… an unpleasant feeling knowing that he was in office especially off of the

platforms that he ran on, and just a lot of the… a lot of the very ugly stuff that he

stated and the way that he carried himself, you know? That's not the way I see a

president doing or saying [things], and he definitely does not represent me or my

interests at all! So, that was sort of like an interesting point and just like him

being elected into office and hearing all of these policy changes-these policy

enactments that hurt marginalized groups-like that's mentally and emotionally

exhausting. You know, like for example, when the DACA thing was not going

to be renewed, that was definitely a tough time for campus, the whole campus.

And that's something that I also dealt with, it was sort of like a moment where I

realized 'Should I continue on in this doctoral program? Should I just get to

work?' You know, because I wanted so bad to just get to the work and go to

work on social justice, to sort of like make the world a better place for everyone,

you know? And sort of advocate on behalf of marginalized groups, but I had

to… but when I feel that type of way, I have to like, always step back and look

at where I am and look at why I started. Because one of the reasons why I chose

to pursue a graduate level education was to dismantle discrimination and social

injustices-to combat against that-that's one of the reasons why I'm here.

Billy shared a similar view.

I think there were times too, like the Trump election was something that was

very negative, because I didn't know what the future of higher education

entailed. Because my focus in graduate school is working with diverse

populations, but I was like 'But he doesn't care about diverse populations' and

so I was like-the future of my office-is that even going to be something that is

going to be nation-wide? Because the office of diversity and inclusion is so

important on campus, but when there's something nation-wide that is seen as not

relevant… And that was a concern. I was like 'Am I doing all this for nothing?'

That was an interesting… I mean because it was just so… it really struck me,

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but it struck my students too. Because, you can already tell with the support, not only with just all diverse populations, but with Natives too-he doesn't care. He does not care. I mean he even talked about that, on Columbus Day. Last week, he talked and… revered Columbus… Columbus as a man of faith, and someone we should look up to. And that to me, is like a slap in the face to Indigenous populations…and so, that was a negative time for sure.

The next section will present the second obstacle the participants experienced in their journey to their graduate or professional degree programs.

Isolation and cultural alienation

Four of the 11 men shared their stories of isolation and cultural alienation in their graduate and professional programs. As the statistics in higher education data demonstrate, the more advanced the degrees are, the lower the enrollment numbers for Native men (Bell, 2011). Often times, these men in advanced programs were the sole Native person in their classes; in some instances, they were the only Native in the entire graduate program. These experiences of isolation and cultural alienation can lead to self-doubt, depression, and dropping out (Woodford, 2005). These feelings of isolation and exclusion proved to be so troubling for one of the men that it was a major factor in his near decision to leave his graduate program. John shares his story here.

My first year, I was the only one. My first year, I was kinda all by myself. My first year was tough! My second year, I thought about quitting. [I] wrote up my withdraw letter from the program. It was that first semester that they (fellow Native classmates) had all come back, 'cause I had gone through that whole year and I was tired.

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Billy shared a similar story of being the sole Native student in his graduate program and being asked to speak his opinion on Native issues.

> I would say I'm probably the only one that identified as Native in my classes. Um, and so sometimes, it was always like 'Well, let's look at Billy for the Native…what's the opinion of the Native people?' and so [laughs] I think the, the difference in helping me prepare that is saying that I could only speak for myself. I'm not speaking for an entire Native community. Um, so once I was able to figure that out, I think that was something that helped a lot.

These men described feeling alone and also felt disconnected from their families and their Native communities, as this was the first time for several of the men to be distanced from another Native person in their entire lifetimes. These feelings of isolation are common among Native students in higher education and are pervasive in the current literature (Buckley, 1997; Henning, 1999; Shotton, 2008). For some Indigenous people who live on a reservation or in small Native communities, their world consists of exclusively Native people. Neil had never been the sole Native person in any realm his entire life. This perspective changed the day he arrived on campus for his graduate program. He describes this feeling of isolation for the first time. Neil describes how he used his warrior mentality to handle this adversity.

> When I showed up at the university to start grad school, you know, like I was the only Native person in the entire graduate program. You know? And it was really the first… the first time, I think in my entire life, and at that point I was twenty-three, that I was in an environment where there were no other Native people. None, whatsoever. And in my whole life, I've always constantly been around other Native people whether it was Oklahoma or New Mexico, and it

was kind of jarring, it was different. It was, um, unusual, but I just kinda took it in stride, and again, had to focus on the task at hand, which was to finish a program in two years, and to be able to write my thesis.

These feelings of isolation at their institutions rendered these men to miss their families frequently. A few students were geographically isolated from their Native communities and families and not able participate in familial or ceremonial events. This isolation proved especially hard for John who describes missing home and his strong connection to his family. Below, John explains why he decided to return home to complete his master's degree.

> For me, I missed home. That was a big, big thing for me. You know, while I was in my undergraduate [program], my younger sister had two babies, and I really wasn't [there]. By the time I graduated, I think Ashley was already four years old, three years old. She was just turning three and Jackson was just turning one. And so, I had missed most of Ashley's early years, and so I needed to go home. I wanted to go home because in our way, um, our clan ways, I'm responsible for their education. I'm responsible for teaching them about who they are, not their dad because we're the same clan; their dad's not their clan. And so, a lot of it was, I wanted to go home. I missed my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, um, really there's just that feeling of place of being home. Because where I'm from, it's not flat. No, in Northeastern [part of state], we have the hills, we have the valleys, we have the rivers, you know? I miss just being able to sit outside on the bank of the river at night with a little fire and just listening and watching the stars and not looking up and seeing lights and being able to

drive and not being able to see five miles, only being able to see maybe a half

mile up the road before there is a hill. Um, I miss that. And so, I took that time

to go home and did my [master's] degree back home and got me connected to

who I was, who I am.

In addition to feelings of isolation, William faced the additional burdens of

feeling (in)visible in the academy.   Ballew (1996) discusses in her study that often

times Indigenous students identify as "different" from others based on their research

topic. These feelings of differentness were compounded with feelings of fatigue and

distress in a story shared by William, who not only was the only Native graduate

student, but he also could not find the data he needed to complete his research due

to the lack of Native literature in the academy. William found this troubling and

also exhausting as he had to do extra work when his classmates could easily find

the more dominant cultural literature to support their research projects. He shares

his story here.

> My projects were very Native focused. Every single project in my graduate
>
> school education-because I loved it so much-was focused on Native policy and
>
> advocacy. They had these great projects that I would do, elections and things-
>
> everything was Native focused-and there's not a lot of research materials and
>
> information to support you when you're focusing on those areas. Like, for
>
> example, I did a mock campaign plan for the Obama campaign Get Out the Vote
>
> efforts in 2008, and I had to literally go to every single… I picked out the
>
> districts that had a significant number of Native people. I had to go through the
>
> Secretary of State's office and then also to the County recorder just to get data
>
> and information about those populations, whereas my colleagues who were

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going through the same cohort, you know they could just go to… their projects

were focused on the more larger population, non-Native population, general

population, so they could just go out and get that data and do the project.

Whereas I was really focused on something that I wanted and was meaningful to

me and my education, [but] I had to really *dig* for the data and the research, so I

think that was very difficult.

A few of the men in my study who held close ties to their families far away,

shared stories of the complexities of being the first in their families to attend college

and leaving home. Some men shared stories of missing home and felt guilty for not

being there for life events but were always encouraged by their families to stay in

school and complete their programs.

Bryan grew up close to his grandparents on the reservation and found it difficult to

leave them when he returned to his university in another state. His grandparents did not

understand his responsibilities as a graduate student yet were supportive of him and his

journey. Yosso (2005) describes cultural wealth as "the array of knowledge, skills,

abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color to survive and

resist macro and micro forms of oppression (p. 77). This type of cultural wealth is

what Bryan poignantly describes in his story as he was able to receive encouragement

(strength) from his grandfather to persist on his journey.

My late grandfather, he was a traditional medicine man, and the interesting thing

about my relationship with him, is he and my late grandmother, they were not

western educated in any way. You know, like they lived the traditional way of

life until the day that they died, and Navajo was the only language that they

spoke. They did not speak a word of English. And, so it was interesting to [me] how they did not understand what college entailed. Like, for example, when I said I couldn't [come home] … I, I was really close to them, you know like there's that one grandchild who's like spoiled by the grandparents, that was me [laughs]. And, you know, like they made a big deal about me not coming home so often and having to explain to them what an internship was or why I couldn't stay home because I had to study for midterms or finals or why I couldn't go home soon enough because I had to finish writing up a paper. You know, like all of that didn't make sense to them, but at the same time, they knew that I was doing something that was good for me, for my family, and for the community, and for my Nation. So regardless of their lack of understanding, and I just assume it was a lack of understanding, because they would follow up with questions, maybe it's just like… maybe I shouldn't say lack of understanding, but just their lack of familiarity with what college entailed, and what it required of me, and just being absent from home, you know, like a lot of that, even though they didn't, they wanted me home, but I couldn't be home, because I had to do things for college. You know, like a lot of that took a toll on them, and even though they didn't fully understand why I had to do these things, they still were sort of like my biggest cheerleaders. So, one of the things that my grandfather always told me was to 'Go to school. Do well and do my best.' And that's one thing that I always remember when I'm on this journey and that's one of the reasons why I haven't stopped yet, until I get the Ph.D. So, every degree that I do get is in tribute to those two, first and foremost.

These feelings of isolation and marginalization were also compounded by a lack of an Indigenous mentors and role models in their graduate and professional programs -this is the third obstacle that impacted the Native men's journey.

Lack of Indigenous Mentors and Role Models

Having a mentor or role model that graduate students can emulate and who looks like them is important because this allows the students to visualize what they can potentially become (Woodford, 2005). Many of the men discussed the need for more Native male role models in higher education settings, because many of them did not have anyone who looked like them in their classrooms, advising sessions, or in administrative roles. Often times, these men had Native females that were in these supportive mentor roles, but for many males, they relied on mentors who were non-Native.

When the men in my study had the benefit of having an Indigenous role model who looked like them in the classroom or who served in a mentor position, it made a profound impact on their retention and overall success in their programs. The men shared that having a person who resembled them and understood their cultural background and identities allowed the men to feel a connection to their institution and also empowered them to excel in their programs. These connections with mentors or persons in positions of power often played a key role in introducing the men to other mentors who were in the academy or work field who could also be counted upon as mentors and guides in their journey.

The men who did not have the luxury of having a Native mentor reported that they missed the special connection to a person who they could identify

with, and they often shared how the absence of Indigenous males in their graduate programs gave them motivation to complete their programs so they could return to their Indigenous communities to fill this void. The absence of an Indigenous mentor inspired the men to serve as role models for other Indigenous men they met. Billy shared his frustrations with the lack of mentors in higher education and how this need motivated him to serve as a mentor for other marginalized students.

> Sometimes, I feel like the, when you go into college, or when you go into *a* college, like all your professors are white, or all of the people in power or on the cabinet are white, so it's like why am I trying so hard when I can't even see success because there's no one that looks like me, so it was important for me to get my, get my… or go into graduate school and pursue graduate level, because I want the students that I work with to know they… that they can do it too. And when they see people that look like them, we know that there's like an unspoken bond that you can talk to someone like that, because they look like you. And I think diverse populations and students from those backgrounds don't necessarily always get that chance, especially at non-Native institutions, because there aren't…a lot of the times, students just say that they don't feel comfortable talking to certain people because they don't know, they don't *think* that they can share the same experience, so that's what motivated me to go to grad school is because I want to be there for them. I want students to know that there's that support and that people like them succeed too.

When discussing the mentors on his journey, Bryan described not being able to identify male mentors in his graduate program and shared his views on why Native male mentor support was important:

In spaces like this, it's hard for us to find mentors. For example, I talked about mentors… fortunately, I do have one male mentor, but most of the mentors that I did talk about were female. So, you know, we definitely need more male role models in order to increase the number of males at this level. I think that there's definitely support that a Native male can give a Native male that maybe a female might not understand, so… like for example, questions about masculinity, and for females, like I doubt a female would go to a male about like menstruation or questions about that, but like for me, culturally, when I… there's certain things that you go to males for, you know? Like a lot of women probably wouldn't talk about or won't discuss, so culturally along those lines, that it would be appropriate to have that and I feel like that for me, growing up, I grew up around a lot of women, so I'm like drawn towards that, but I think for some males, there's also the connection to other males that strengthen them and they're more comfortable around other males, so I think that's important for that as well.

John discussed the lack of Native male role models and mentors in his graduate program. John shared how he now feels the need to be an example for other Native males to get their graduate degrees.

This [university] is an entirely different place then I ever thought it would be. And it is, in some ways, but it just seemed completely foreign, and it was something that, again going back to with the exceptions of, Dr. Sky, there were

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no Native men that I knew of. Very few and far between that had completed a

master's degree. You know even in the program, I think there was Dr. Sky, Dr.

Star, Dr. Ocean, those are doctors. Everyone else was a woman. And there

really wasn't anyone my age, or even a generation above me, really, who was

out trying to get a masters. A lot of my friends here, my women friends say

'Yeah, let's go! We're gonna go for our masters!', and I was like, I didn't see

many of us, many Native men going. I think Jacob had just finished up his

masters around that time and he was really one of the only ones that I connected

with that I knew. I'm working on my Ph.D. and across the country, I can

probably count on two hands how many [Native] guys that I know who are

doing a Ph.D. [program]. Three of us, four of us are here at this campus!

[laughs] Definitely, I mean because growing up, the only ones who I seen who

had graduate or professional degrees growing up, again, were those that

generation who came in when they were pushing for K-12, and a lot of the

people, even today, a lot of the men who have those higher, those higher level

degrees-their focus was on K-12 or they're rooted in K-12, not in higher ed. Dr.

Sky, he's one of the reasons why I finished my bachelors, and my masters;

having his support as a role model. But he was rooted in K-12 and so I think if

there were more people out there, more men out there, I'm not saying there

weren't *any*, but you had to go hunt for them. You had to go find them… which

is why I think, I made it a very big deal for me, personally, even as a graduate

student at [my university] that [when] I engaged with undergrads, I made it a

point to make sure that those Native guys in their undergraduate work saw

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someone who looked like them in a master's program, going "Yeah, I'm doing it, you know, you can do it too" and that's why I came back [for his Ph.D.].

Although not all of the men had role models and mentors who resembled them, the remainder of the men had a mentor that they could go to for support and encouragement. These mentors were often women of color, but a few were white men. As in Shotton's (2008) study with Indigenous doctoral students, the men in my study also did not identify their chairs as their primary source of support-their peers and family held those positions.

The final obstacle that impacted the participants was financial issues. For the Indigenous men in my study, a master's or professional degree was a major goal for them after they graduated with their bachelor's degrees. The opportunity to pursue a graduate degree was hindered by their financial stability as for many of the men, the financial cost of a graduate degree was the largest hurdle in the way.

Financial Issues

During their graduate programs, most of the men had financial stability and were able to continue their programs mostly worry free from financial burdens. The real issue regarding finances came *before* the men started their programs, because the majority of them did not know how they were going to afford their graduate or professional degrees. Financial assistance was a key factor in determining whether or not the men in my study would be attending graduate school. Luckily, almost every man in this study was able to secure financing in the form of scholarships, tribal assistance, the GI Bill, loans, fellowships, or spousal support that allowed them to continue their graduate journeys. William describes the financial costs of his graduate program as his primary hurdle.

Financing-I think that's the biggest part. You have to find a way to pay for it. And I don't know how other people do it. I know that when I went to graduate school, I received a… [non-Native Institution] is the most expensive university in the Nation for their tuition. And so, when I went in, I had to have at least a good financial aid package; I couldn't pay for everything myself. And so, the University gave me a fellowship that helped pay for one third of my education, and then I was able to secure scholarships from my tribe, and also other nonprofit agencies. So that paid for another one third, and then the last one third is what I had, was on my own with school loans. So, two thirds of my education was paid for, and one third was paid for by me, also I was in a relationship with my current husband now. At the time, we were dating and we're living together, so he covered a lot of my household expenses, and so when I seriously say I don't know how Native students do it-I don't know how they do it, because I know I was blessed to get the financial aid that I did and went at the right time and knew the right people and was able to get some support. But I can't imagine coming out of graduate school with that amount of loans, if I had to put it all on school loans.

After talking to a friend, Legus decided that joining the Army Reserves was his only option to pay off his loans and pay for his graduate degree. Below Legus describes how he was able to arrive at this financial solution for the continuation of his higher education:

I'm going to need money to pay for this graduate program. About that time, one of my friends, you probably know him, James River, just joined the military and

we got into this discussion at one point and he said 'Man, you oughta think about joining the military into the reserves. They pay for everything for my degree' and so I started thinking about that…I wonder if they would pay for a master's degree or Ph. D? And so, I went and saw a recruiter, and you know they kinda gave me, they talked about several programs. One of them was a student loan repayment program which I still had loans and they said they would pay up to $20,000 in student loans and they offered me a Montgomery GI Bill, which would pay for my Master's Degree, and there was also a bonus at that time, 2006, a $10,000 signing bonus for just signing up to be a part of the military and certain military specialties, and so I signed up… and that's what I ended up doing. You know, I went to the military just for about a year, kind of did all of my basic training, and my advanced individual training, came home, and then applied to the graduate program.

When discussing their personal tips to what they believed to succeed in graduate programs, many of the men pointed out the importance of financial preparedness and budgeting. Often times, these men did not learn how to budget their money appropriately until their graduate programs. Bryan describes how he developed budgeting skills and maturity has taught him to acknowledge and appreciate the importance of financial planning.

It's really during the summer times that I feel financial hardships, um, yeah. Like, it got to the point where I took out credit cards and I paid it off during the academic year when I'm more financially comfortable and so I manage to work my way around it, you know, like I do have a car thankfully. My car is paid off

and I pretty much just pay for insurance and other than that, you know, I just pay for health insurance. Rent, I think is the biggest thing that I do have to worry about. But mainly in the summer time, is when I feel financial hardships and also like going to conferences is also costly. Unfortunately, there's not enough money to pay for all my conference attendances, but there is some, so I also like do my best to separate that enough so that I'm at least getting something back after each conference. And I feel like, during my master's program is when I had the toughest time, because that's when I started to budget-when I actually started to learn how to budget. Before then, I was just…I was [laughs] like 'oh, I have money, let's go to the mall!' you know? It wasn't until my graduate program where I started to mature and be like, okay, I need to have enough money to last me until December and even then, I need to have extra money in case something should happen, you know? So, yeah, I feel like I've gotten better at budgeting, but I'm just fortunate for the financial aid that I do have, like for example, AIGC-that really helped out a lot. So, I do have to take out loans, which I'm kind of worried about paying off at the end, but thankfully, if I understood correctly, I took out the loan that does not start earning interest until six months after I graduate so that's a little glimmer of hope for that, so…[laughs]. And also, for my car, I mentioned that even though it is paid off and I'm not paying anything on it, it is expensive owning a car. You know, like just the upkeep of it. Like for example, I had to buy new shocks and struts and I had no idea how much that stuff cost, and it ended up costing me $800 and they also told me I needed like ins and outs or something like that. And I know nothing about cars,

and that cost an extra $400 for all four, so that was about $1200 that I spent on getting my car taken care of so… Yeah, like, just a lot of spending money is expected, I guess. And it's definitely hard to…I don't know. I find it hard to talk about money, I don't know because you either have it or you don't [chuckles]. And you know, like I definitely have more of it then I used to have when I was home, but I don't see how my mom was able to support me and my two older sisters on only $24,000 a year. I don't know how she did that especially now that I see how much things actually cost.

This concludes the section of the obstacles that the Indigenous men in this study faced in their higher education experiences. The stories shared are typical of the majority of the limited literature available on the challenges that affect Indigenous men in higher education. Although understanding the complex barriers that face Indigenous men is warranted, for the purpose of my study, I refocus the discourse on Indigenous males and employ an anti-deficit approach that focuses on the inherent powers that these Indigenous men used to find success in their journeys. In the following sections of this chapter, I provide a more in-depth focus on the initiatives and factors that facilitate to the success of Indigenous men in the education pipeline.

Research Questions

To continue the investigation into the factors that allow Indigenous men to find success in their graduate program journeys, I now share their experiences of determination and success. Despite the intersectionality of the issues they faced throughout their lives and the multiple obstacles they encountered in their educational

journeys, the stories of my eleven Indigenous male participants will answer my overarching research question:

How do Indigenous males navigate through non-Native institutions to obtain their graduate or professional degrees?

In addition to this question, I will answer the following questions:

1) What facilitates to the success of Indigenous males in graduate or professional degree programs?

2) What model (if any) can be created to help future generations of Indigenous men find success in graduate or professional degree programs?

3) What are the best practices that non-Native institutions can implement to support Indigenous males in their graduate or professional degree programs?

To answer these questions, I will rely on the Indigenous men in my study to share the best methods they implemented on their successful trajectories in their graduate and professional programs. By sharing their stories from their Indigenous perspectives, I provide a voice to this marginalized group of men that are often unheard and (in)visible in the academy and in society.

The Emerging Themes from Graduate and Professional Program Experience

My study sought to examine the experiences of Indigenous men as they navigated their paths in their graduate and professional programs. It is important to consider that each of the stories shared by the participants occurred at various stages in their educational journey to obtain their graduate or professional degrees. As the listener to their stories, I did not instruct them to start at any specific age. I encouraged them to start where they felt comfortable. Therefore, some men began their stories

when they were young in age and others shared their stories when they entered and began their graduate or professional programs.   Based on their time frames, I share their stories at diverse stages in their lives and bear in mind, the overall journeys of their stories always conclude in their success. In this section, I provide and explain the major themes of my study by retelling vignettes of my participants' stories as a way to show their individuality and to show how their identities intersect to produce a more holistic understanding of their journeys.

Four themes emerged from their stories and will be presented and discussed in detail in this chapter. These themes include a 1) reliance on support networks, 2) a warrior mentality, 3) a commitment to tribal nation building and 4) reclaiming Indigenous masculinities. The first theme, *reliance on support networks,* revealed that the men in this study all relied on some type of support network to help them in their graduate or professional programs. These support networks were cited as the crucial element to their retention in their programs. I divided these support networks into three sub-themes to include: *mentors*, *family*, and *community*. From these sub-themes, I found the intersecting categories of peer, tribal, and identity.

The second theme, *a warrior mentality*, evolved from examples of males exhibiting a warrior mentality to overcome obstacles. Each of the men described various ways in which they relied on an inherent power to confront and maneuver around difficult situations in their journeys. I refer to this resolve as having a warrior mentality.

The third theme, *a commitment to tribal nation building,* illustrated a driving force common among the men's commitment of reciprocity to their tribal communities.

This tribal nation building theme is divided into three categories: *family, community*, and *tribe*. Each of these categories was described as an important catalyst for the men in this study and their decision to pursue their graduate or professional degrees.

The final theme was *reclaiming Indigenous masculinities* refers to how Indigenous men have been influenced and transformed by colonial patriarchal behaviors and masculinities and how this has disrupted our traditional social structure. This theme ultimately addresses the need for Indigenous men to reclaim their traditional Indigenous masculinities. All four of the themes will be explored in depth in this chapter.

Reliance on Support Networks

Although they described various obstacles in their journeys, all eleven men in this study relied on some form of support network to navigate through difficult situations and overcome the challenges that they encountered in their programs. Every man in my study had some sort of support system that was vital to his success in his program. These support systems provided crucial supplemental assistance that proved invaluable to the men in their academic journeys. These sources of support were family, tribal community, and peers and this study illuminates each of these various components and functions that each provided to these men. Support from these groups provided the men in this study with guidance, encouragement, academic support, reassurance, and often provided a sense of belonging because these men were largely isolated from their tribal communities and their families. These systems of support have proven to be very effective for Native students in higher education in a number of studies from undergraduate to graduate levels.

(Brayboy et al., 2012; HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; Henning, 1999; Jackson et al., 2003; Pascarella, 1980; Shotton, 2008; Waterman, 2004).

These support networks provided a sense of encouragement, support, and belonging to these men who were often the only Native man and sometimes the only Native person in their programs. These support networks fell into three categories: (1) Mentors; (2) Family; and (3) Community. Within the category of Community, my analysis featured three subsets: 1) Peers; 2) Tribal; and 3) Identity. The first support group that emerged from my analysis was mentors.

Mentors

Many of the males in the study spoke of their gratitude and respect for their mentors. These mentors were often cited as the primary reason that they were in college or their graduate programs, because they did not have a parent or family member who had attended college before. In certain times in their journeys when faced with issues of personal adversity, the situation required some "tough love" and a more forceful piece of advice and their mentors provided this. The mentors also provided a listening ear, introduced the men to important people in their fields, encouraged them to apply for scholarships and fellowships, and came to their rescue when they had issues in their programs. Often times, these mentors were Native American and this helped form a special bond between the participants and their mentors by having someone who looked like them or who came from the same cultural background as them, especially if they were an Indigenous male mentor. All of these positive interactions the participants had with their mentors helped to alleviate the challenges faced by the men and provided a strong anchor to depend on in their programs.

Many of the males I interviewed shared moving stories of how their close connections with their mentors provided them support and were their powerful ally in

mentoring them to complete their graduate programs. Often times, the men shared stories of their early starts in their journeys. These portions of their stories showed appreciation and gratitude for their mentors who encouraged them, introduced them to other supporters, or "made" them apply to their undergraduate or graduate programs. After graduating with his undergraduate degree, Bryan believed he would return to his reservation to work; however, one of his mentors pushed him to apply into his graduate program.

> They [his mentors] really took to heart what I wanted to do and what I wanted to become, and they pushed me to take advantage of opportunities and just pushed me out of my comfort zone and it really helped me to become who I am and help me to get where I am. And before I met either of them, I never considered graduate school. I originally thought that like I would just get my bachelor's degree, return home to the reservation, and just work there for the rest of my life, you know? And it came time to apply for graduate school, and [laughs] I was so late in deciding to go to graduate school that I submitted the application a week before it was due, and that's when I also started it, and fortunately there was a faculty, his name was Dr. Mountain. I think he's at King University right now, but he's one that really helped me to get the application together…last minute. And he's the one who really helped to push my application through the American Indian Studies Department there at [his non-Native institution]. So, that's the only program that I applied to, just given the lateness of it and I don't know what I would have done had I not completed the application. I don't know if I would have come back or not, but you know, it's just people like that who

really take your interests to heart and they see the potential in you, and then they really push you to do more, be more, and you know, like essentially pursue something more than you thought you could ever pursue. So, yeah, that's really the reason why I am on this path.

John shares a similar touching story of one of his earliest mentors who was the first person who told him he could go to college. In sharing this part of his story, John thanked "that little Creek woman" who he says he was "scared to death of," and strongly encouraged him to apply to scholarships. John shares that this mentor still follows him and his journey today. She even took time off from work to come watch him graduate with his undergraduate degree. This is John's story about his mentor.

So, I remember starting out, and I had a counselor by the name of April Jones. She was the one who really said to me 'you can go to college' and she was the one… she was our college prep teacher at Chief Joseph Indian school and she's the one who really said 'You know, you can, you can do this. You can go to college. You can actually achieve a degree' and she mentioned a scholarship by the name of the Gates Millennium Scholarship and (laughs) as I think about it now, really the real reason I really kind of applied-this is horrible for me to say-she required us to, if we were in her college prep class, we were required to apply to five different institutions and apply to ten scholarships. Her deal was that if you apply to this Gates Scholarship, that would count for five of your scholarships, so I was like 'Hey, I could just do this one scholarship and get half of the ones I need to get done, done.' And I didn't understand the magnitude of it and so she started talking to me and she goes 'You know you really need to

get serious about this' and so, she would hound me like hound me every day. You know like 'John, are you working on your scholarship? John, are you working on your scholarship?' And [she] would help me and it wasn't just for me, it was for any of her students, any scholarship or application, it wasn't without her proofreading it, or without her looking over it to making sure that it was the quality of work that she knew we could produce. And she, I think truly because of that, I became a finalist and actually became a recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship.

Having a mentor that looked like them was of great importance to the men. The men expressed a close bond and respect to those Native mentors (male or female) who shared the same cultural backgrounds. Legus describes how vital it was in having a Native male professor and mentor who was from the same tribe.

When you see somebody like that [referring to his Native mentor], and you're like "Well, if he can do it, I can do it!" And just the… the Indianness of who he was, you know? He was very…he was a professional, but he would always laugh, and cut up, because that was just his personality, you know? When he came down to it, he would talk to you and help you to understand the theory that he was discussing with you or his work within language, and how it can relate to what you know. You know what I'm talking about? His area of expertise was song and dance, and language usage. He would always be able to break it down and framework it to a very Indian way of teaching, versus just focused too much on theory or practice. And he would break [teaching] down to how your grandparents were teaching. They were teaching you through their experience,

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through grandparents being around their grandchildren, telling stories or singing

songs, everything had a purpose and even those songs had a lesson. You know,

and of how you were to respect your elders, or respect your kinfolk, or care for

others, care for people who can't do for themselves? And I always thought that

was an inspiration to me, you know seeking my master's degree. But, I think he

was [the same tribe as Legus]. He was a Ph.D., but more importantly, I think he

was kind of that person that you could relate to. He was… it was like working

with your uncle or your grandfather, you know? When you're talking about

your business, or you're talking about theory, he would be able to kind of break

it down in a way that was very relatable to how I'd been raised.

Jeffrey shares a similar story when he discussed having Native male professors

in his law program for the first time and the impact that had on him during his journey.

This is a snippet of the interview I had with Jeffrey.

Jeffrey: I was inspired by the people at the university… like the, the professors.

A couple of them come to mind, as just, kind of just, really opening my eyes to

hearing race relations, and tribal relations, and I never thought about the

approach that they used, and that was inspiring to me…I didn't want to let them

down. These professors, because I respected them so much, was a pretty good

motivator. In undergrad, I never had a Native professor and that's one thing I

will say about the curriculum that I got at the university, it was… in many ways,

it was the first time I've felt a connection to the curriculum, … in that they

were… talking about Native people, and Native issues, and, and, we never had

that in undergrad, you know? I even took a Native poetry class and that was

amazing. I had an elective that I could take and so I took that on the main

campus, but that was something that I really loved was the materials that dealt

with issues that are sometimes particular to Native communities-we were

dealing with, you know?

Me: Did that make an impact seeing a Native male in the classroom? I mean,

would it be different if it was a non-Native?

Jeffrey: Yeah, it would have been different because… there aren't that, I

haven't encountered in my educational experience, that many Native professors,

and so… it definitely makes a positive impact.

Me: How so?

Jeffrey: [pause] It shows people that we can do it too… that we can do the... we

can fill these professions just as anyone else. And…I think that's inspiring to

students of all ages, to see Native people in positions of leadership and positions

of excellence. It definitely pushes back against some of the negative narratives

that our people face.

Bryan shares how his greatest mentor was, and still is, an Indigenous male who

helped guide him along his graduate journey and continues to encourage Bryan in his

doctoral program. Bryan's relationship with his mentor has evolved to where Bryan

feels his mentor is family. Bryan describes their relationship.

Our relationship has transpired from him being my supervisor, and then from

him essentially being my mentor, and then now I consider him my brother, and

that's sort of like where our relationship is at right now. We're family now, you

know? And, I consider him my greatest mentor because, like I mentioned,

before I had mentors who just asked the generic question a mentor brings to the relationship, and they were just going with motions to get the mentoring done and over with, you know, like they weren't in it for the long run. But with him, he actually took to heart what I wanted to do and what I wanted to become, and he actually got me interested in higher education. He got me interested in a graduate education. He got me interested in, serving Native students in the best way possible, and also just challenging the institution to be more accepting of culturally relevant pedagogies, especially in the student affairs side. So, he's really opened a lot of doors for me and really put me in situations that really tested me and pushed me outside of my comfort zone, and I also, owe him a lot for the network that I do have, because he took me to my first national conference. He's the one who encouraged me to present at my first national conference. He's the one that introduced me to some of the scholars like Dr. Stone. I met her at NASAI, that he took me to the first time. Um, Miles Redcloud, Dr. Rachel Bluecloud, Dr. Sam Yellowcloud, you know, he introduced me to all of these people. And even though he introduced me to a few, the network just blossomed into like a whole garden of awesome Indigenous scholars. So, I credit him for a lot of things, and I'm definitely gonna have to pay him back for the rest of my life. I don't think I will ever pay him back for all that he's done for me. You know, I can't even put into words how much I am indebted to him, and how much I appreciate him. He's just, he's just one of those practitioners in higher education that keeps it real *real*, and

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I appreciate that, and he's also one of the people that I notice who actually puts his heart and soul into students and that's what I hope to do.

Not only were Indigenous men important as mentors, Native women were as important to the men in this study. Sometimes the mentors delivered tough love to the men in order to keep them focused and to develop a toughness that is required for survival. For example, John decided to withdraw from his doctoral program during the second year. He could not handle the stress and fatigue from feeling isolated in his graduate classes. After meeting with his Native mentor, Dr. Stone, he decided to stay and finish his doctoral program. When asked who his greatest mentor was in his graduate journey, John shared the following story of Dr. Stone.

> She's the reason why I didn't send that withdraw letter. I came in to talk to her, and we sat in this office last year, and she said, "Put your big boy panties on." She said, "You get one sympathy Dr. Stone, one sympathetic Dr. Stone in your whole program and today's gonna be that day, but after that" [shakes head] and she just looked at me and said, "You can't leave, I'm not gonna let you leave." She said "Your work is too vital, and you being here is too vital," and she said "All this stuff that we've done for you, and you're just gonna turn your back on everything that people have done to get you this far?" and that put it in perspective for me, and that's what she did. "Put your big boy panties on!" and Christmas, she reminded us, she gave us little cards that said, "Put your big boy and big girl panties on" and gave it all to us. [laughs] I think that was two years ago. But no, if I had to choose one person within the higher ed. journey, it would be Dr. Stone.

William had a Native female mentor give him some directed guidance when he was debating whether to stay at his lucrative job or to go back to graduate school. He said she told him "You're a young person, you're talented, you're hardworking. You will have these opportunities after you get your degree, but you need that degree." He took her advice and found out she was right.

Not all of the Indigenous men in this study had Native mentors in their programs. A few men had mentors and role models who identified as non-Native and served as invaluable people along their journeys. These mentors were in high administrative positions and described as caring and helpful. Neil shares a story how his mentor supported him when he encountered an obstacle in one of his graduate classes.

I also had a really supportive associate dean, Dean Canyon. She became one of my mentors. I mean she really… and it all kind of happened where this was one professor who kind of targeted me and some other students of color with threatening to fail us. And the way that the rigor of our course load was, was it's like we couldn't afford to drop a course, because that would just set you off on your whole trajectory of graduating from the program in two years, and she kind of stepped in at that time. I think it was my second semester; she stepped in and really and helped out with that and really provided me with some other options to ensure that I would graduate on time. I remember one of the things that I had to do because I dropped that course was I had to make up a course in my last semester, and I think I ended up taking like eighteen or nineteen hours my last semester of grad school, because the regular course load was like fifteen,

but we had like three, three-hour courses and then we had one which was called

a PRP, a policy research project, which was like six hours, which was just

dedicated to writing our thesis and doing your research. So that was kind of

unstructured, but there were three courses, but I had to make up an additional

course, so that was like three, six, nine, fifteen, so yeah, I had to take up one

additional course, so that was like eighteen, um, hours and then Dean Canyon

really helped me. She was also my thesis advisor, helping me, you know, draft

my thesis, what I wrote, and really kind of like, she was just really super

supportive.

In addition, Neil described a mentor who used his political connections and

background to open doors that normally would not be available to Indigenous men.

I was very lucky as an undergrad to get as my advisor the dean of my college of

political science and Dean Dakota was his name. He actually had a lot of

background working in legislative work and it was difficult because I went to

school in Utah where a lot of the thought was very conservative, but he was very

open-minded, and he really was respectful. He was respectful of my thoughts,

he was respectful of my intellect, he was respectful of me as a person and my

background and where I was coming from, and he really supported the work that

we did. Because I went to school, also with my brother in the same program.

We both went in political science and he would just bend over backwards for

us… like he would take us up to field trips up to the law school at [non-Native

University] and that's where we were introduced to Lionel Eagle and he took us

to the [non-Native University], and then would push us to different programs

and then would write these really great letters of recommendations for us to get the great internship programs that we were able to get into.

Billy's mentor was the director of his office whom he calls a "Champion to help, not only just me, but everybody else that was in school at the same time." Bill shared the following story about his "Champion" Melanie.

She went through the same program, and she just seems like she has her life together… but she also was there to support you and understand what you're going through and so she would give, she would give very, very good advice, and she genuinely cared, among whether if you were struggling with something at work, or if you were struggling with something in school, or something in your personal life. Like she was there to have that… listening ear and have some sound advice to give you because she had gone through the same program and same experience as you. So, she is still someone that professionally, I look up to her now too and she helped tremendously through my graduate program because she was… and she was my director, so she was always around [laughs]. I was always around *her*, but I think that she is someone who people would identify as a mentor… many people would identify her as a mentor.

Another major source of support for the men was family. Every participant expressed a strong sense of connection and bond for their family members who were often noted as the primary source of support for these men and, in some cases, their greatest inspiration.

Family

For many of the Indigenous men in this study, their families were an integral part of their graduate and professional program experience. This dependence on

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family has been found to be important at all levels of the higher education system (Garcia, 2000; Garvey, 1999; Guillory, 2002; HeavyRunner and DeCelles, 2002; Pavel, 2007; Secatero, 2009; Waterman, 2004). Pavel (2007) states, "For American Indian and Alaskan Native students to be successful in college, it is clear to me that one of the most sacred elements is the support of family. There is a beauty in honoring and including the extended family in the college going experience." (p. 62).

The families of the men in my study often had no experience with higher education and they did not understand the complexities of the men's academic worlds when they were away, but they still were big supporters of them. Often this support came in general support and encouragement, and celebrations for the success of these men. In what Yosso (2005) refers to as *familial capital,* most of the men expressed a sense of balance, renewal, and strength after they visited their families and came back to their universities. First-generation college student Bryan was a transfer doctoral student, miles away from his family who lived on the reservation. He expressed great happiness in describing his visits home and spending quality time with family. He said "I feel like when I'm with my family, I sort of like turn off my scholar brain and just focus on being with my family and joking and laughing and doing things that I used to do before I went off to college. I just immerse myself in my family."

These close bonds to their families extended to their grandparents, uncles and aunts, and their nieces and nephews. The men in this study often described feelings of missing their family and often chose their graduate university based on the

proximity to their families. Family was also listed as a major source of motivation for these men in my study who often spoke of completing their graduate program, so they could share that moment with their families and also as a means to serve as an example to them.

Though many of the men were the first members of their families to attend college, their families provided encouragement, support, and a safe comforting place to return to on their breaks from their programs. Many of the men described feeling renewed, re-centered, and reenergized after they visited their families. In the following story, Billy shared what provided the support he needed to make it through "extremely stressful" times in graduate school.

> I think a lot of visits home to my family. I feel like whenever you're stressed out, or when you feel like you can't handle things, like for me I think that just going home for a weekend kind of like replenishes you. It replenishes your energy. So being able to be so close to home was a big factor I think… this time, because when I was struggling at [large non-Native Ivy League University], phone calls were good, but it wasn't ever enough, and you couldn't ever just go back home, but being like an hour and a half away was a lot different than being like a four-hour plane ride.

Carl shared a similar story about his connection to his family and how visits home from his optometry program helped him cope with the rigor of his classes.

> [Visits home to family] helped me out quite a bit. I really enjoy the fact that I could go back on a weekend whenever I wanted to pretty much, because family is really important to me. Just being able to go to like Anna's basketball games,

and like my family's birthday parties, and stuff like that. It's really important for me to keep that family connection strong. So, I'm not sure if that's a Native thing or what that is, but that's always been really important to me. It's helped me out having that really strong connection. I make that a priority still today.

When I asked what contributed the most to their success in graduate school or professional programs, the frequent answer was their parents. Jeffrey shared how his parents were the main reason he was able to reach that successful point in his life.

I think I get a lot of… energy, heart, and motivation from my mom and dad. Um, … [long pause] I think that… you know I saw them… have grit… growing up and they were, they were nurturing and loving and, … and… we had really good times. We had struggles too just as families do and I saw during those, during those struggles, we hung in there, you know, without going into details, so I think that likely had profound effects on my… life.

In addition to family being a major source of support for the Indigenous females in Shotton's study (2008), she also found that the spouses to these women were also an important component of their support system. The spouses provided them necessary space and time to engage in their studies and offered encouragement. Her findings corroborated findings from Hanna's study (2002), which also indicated that spouses were important sources of strength for American Indian female doctoral recipients. The findings in my study on Indigenous men did not reflect these findings in regard to spousal support. The straight Indigenous men did not mention their partners at all. A few men briefly mentioned their children, but there was not a single mention of their partners for the heterosexual/straight men who were married or had girlfriends.

Although the straight men did not mention their partners, every gay Indigenous man (there were four) in my study mentioned his partner at least once in their stories and recognized their support in their completion of their programs. This support was often in the form of providing space and time for the men to complete their work or in one case, the partner to an Indigenous man assumed all of the household bills so that he could use his finances for his tuition.

Finally, the last source of support came in the form of their communities. The men often identified the supportive members of the communities they formed in their programs as their "family". I share their stories of these powerful support systems in the following section.

Community

Several of the Indigenous men in the study relied on a community of support in their graduate or professional programs. These communities of support were divided into three categories: 1) Peers; 2) Native; and 3) Identity.

Peers

The peers of the Indigenous men were classmates or co-workers who had formed bonds to encourage them on their graduate journeys. These peers in their support networks were referred to as "family" in their stories. In Shotton' s study (2008), the Indigenous women in her study relied heavily on the support from their peers which was centered around their common experiences in their doctoral program and, more importantly, their connections as Native women. This connection was on a cultural level and was stronger than the ones they had with peers of other various cultural backgrounds. For the women in her study, their relationships with their peers filled gaps that were not filled by family and faculty, and these relationships became a central part of their doctoral experience. Several

of the men in my study formed peer relational connections with other students that developed into what they referred to as "family". This "family" component enabled the men to survive the pitfalls of their programs with other students who identified with their cultural background. This type of surrogate community/family is also described in a study of Indigenous undergraduate students by Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron (2007).

Since many of the men were the only Native person in their programs, they relied on their close circle of friends at their institutions to provide support, camaraderie, and a sense of unity in their programs. These peer support networks were often formed organically between students who were struggling with classes and needed academic support to make it through the rigors of their programs. Although Neil was the sole Native student in his graduate class and far from home, he described his group of friends and their support.

> I had a very close circle of friends, because some of the people that came into my graduate program, I knew from that previous year, that summer institute that I went to back the year before. So, there were a handful of people from that summer program who were in, who applied to, and were also attended our graduate program, so I had friends who were previously from before, but they were really kind of across the spectrum. They were Latino, they were Black, you know, there was a really, um, multi-cultural group of people that I really depended on. We kind of became a really close family.

In some instances, the peers were other Native students in their graduate programs who were able to connect and bond, not only on their shared struggles with the classes, but also because they had a shared understanding of what it

was like to be marginalized in the classroom. John described his feelings of loneliness and isolation during his first year of his Ph.D. program. He thought of quitting. However, the following year, he had Native classmates who made his experience enjoyable.

> My first year, I was the only one. My first year, I was all by myself. But I was lucky enough my second year, a good friend of mine, who I knew not only as a mentor, an advisor, when I was in undergrad, but I call her now my sister, who had actually started the program, but had to take a few years away from the program because of personal reasons, actually became active again in the program. And not only did that happen, but we had two more Native students apply and were accepted. One of those Native students was a student who I started my journey with in 2009, and she has stayed and finished her degree, got her masters, and had applied. And another was a gentleman from Arizona, who came in. And so, having those four together, we've built that relationship, and we built that brother-sister connection. And now we've added a fifth one into the program, who just got accepted in this past fall, so now, for the past three years, there have been Native people consistently being accepted into the Ph.D. program. And it, it, just provides us, for me, it provides a setting where I'm not alone finally.

John's family of Indigenous graduate students contributed to helping all of them grow and excel in their graduate program. With this "family" of Indigenous scholars, they were driven to present their research at national conferences in higher education. In the following story, John discussed the bond between his Native classmates and how

each one of them contributed to the strength of their research team of Indigenous scholars.

> Just setting there the past year, having those Natives there, it really does create that, that familial bond, almost to the point where, now we're a research team, in every sense. We just got back from Orlando last week; we presented in [national higher education conference], and that was [laughs], that was one of the things because we work off each other's strengths and weaknesses. That was one of the things we were taking note of when we were in Orlando; we were sitting there talking, talking about future conferences, we were going to present at, and how, how we each work off each other, and I think Bianca said it best, she said "John can get up and he can talk, and he can talk right off of his head and get the audience engaged" and she said "I'm probably the strongest writer, I can write what we need." Bryan is the strategic one, he's the one who's going to be keeping us organized, getting all of our media together, and Brook is the one who keeps us on point who makes sure our proposals online, makes sure she's the task oriented one. And we work off each other and we, that's how we work well together. And for me, that's, if I didn't have those people in that program, I probably would have submitted that withdraw letter.

Bryan was in the same "family" as John, as they were both Indigenous doctoral students at the same non-Native university. He described their close-knit bonds as a major source of support.

> We're not like officially an organization. We're more like family. We've become family. We created our own family and they are my greatest support,

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you know? They're each good at things. Like Bianca; she's good at taking care

of, just speaking directly to me, Bianca is sort of like an older sister. Every

time, I go to her office, she's making sure I'm fed. She's making sure…

[laughs] I tell my mom, 'Every time, I go to Bianca's office, she gives me

clothes because she always has those free shirts and stuff like that. She keeps

me clothed. Brook-Brook is sort of like, she's my bigger sister, but she feels

more of like an aunt role. You know, she's mature, she has a kid, and she's a

caretaker in that sense for me, and I feel like I can talk to her about anything and

get some very solid and sound advice. And John, like I've never had a brother,

so this brotherhood stuff is kinda new and interesting to me, because I only had

two older sisters, so John is a big brother to me, and I love that he's very in tune

with the cultural and the spiritual side of who he is as an Indigenous person,

because he reminds me to also remember and appreciate what my grandparents

taught me cause my grandfather was a medicine man, and you know, like he

taught my family to uphold those spiritual values. So, John reminds me to also

reflect on those for strength when I'm, when I need it, you know? So that cohort

has, or the family has definitely been my strongest support here.

Unlike John and Bryan who created their own support network of Native

classmates, Jeffrey was part of a university-formed Native cohort of students in his law

program. Below Jeffrey described the support of being with his Native peers and

connecting with other Native students from across the United States.

[Having a Native cohort] definitely made it better because these other Native

students. There were maybe, maybe six or seven of us at a class of maybe 150,

and it seems small but there were Natives in the older classes, and I learned a lot

from them. You know growing up in Oklahoma, this is just my experience, I

didn't really know much of the tribes beyond Oklahoma and the 567 of them,

federally recognized anyway. And I met people from Rosebud, I met people

from some of the tribes in California, from Alaska, and that enriched the

experience significantly. Because it was funny because whenever they would

talk about their experience, the location was different, some of the details were

different, but it was still distinctly…there's something Native about their home

that I could relate to, right?

Carl had a small class in his Optometry program which he thought was

beneficial for him since they formed a close bond and helped one another to succeed.

The vast hours of studying were rigorous, and Carl thought with his class as study

partners helped him to succeed.

We had to study a lot and we had to spend a lot of time practicing our skills on

each other and just learning and everything so a lot of it is just focused around

that and because it is such a small group, you spend so much time together that

you do kind of become like a family so… I would say it was pretty fun. There

was a lot of stress, but you're kind of going through it with a friend, so it's just

sort of like an enjoyable experience even though it does take up the majority of

your life, you know? We were all just really trying to help each other out like

we're studying and just trying to [make it] like study partners, and like "Oh, how

do you know about this thing?", and like "Oh, I figured out this" and it was

more like sharing.

These peer groups were not only formed between other Native students, but of all students who shared similar interests and struggles within their programs. One participant had come to rely on his support network of peers who were not only in his graduate program, but also were his coworkers in the office he worked at on campus. Billy found a network of support from his classmates in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion where he worked. He started as a graduate assistant and later was hired on a full-time basis. His fellow classmates in his office became his co-workers support network. Billy described how this network provided him the support he needed to succeed in his graduate program.

> Within my graduate assistantship in the office of diversity and inclusion, I met and was able to network with so many different people that are focused on the success of minority and diverse populations so that was, I think a big key. A big stake in my success, was because there were so many people around me and knowing that there was this many individuals on the campus that were rooting for diverse populations that I knew that, that I had the support there… to succeed. I think it helped that a lot of my co-workers were also a lot of my classmates, um, so like my admin. assistant was in my classes. Some of my graduate assistants were also in my classes too, so we had these layers. Not only could you rely on them for work support, but you could rely on them for your personal support too. Because I feel like our office is, our office has a family setting, so we really rely on each other for that.

The Indigenous men in my study had a strong sense of their Native identities that provided the men confidence, strength, and a desire to complete their programs. Often times, the men spoke of how their strong cultural bonds to their Native

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communities played a major role in their success. I will share those stories in the following section.

Native

In Shotton's (2008) study, she recognized that her participants had described community/tribal support in the form of encouragement that they received from tribal members, elders, and community members which gave them strength and fueled their motivation to complete their programs. This support from tribal communities was also evident in the experiences of the Indigenous men in my study as several of the men shared stories of the support they received from their tribal communities, which served as major sources of their support networks and instilled strength, pride, and resiliency. Although some men joined the local tribal communities where their institutions were located, the majority of men were away from their home tribal communities. Even though these men were sometimes thousands of miles away from their homes, they still felt encouragement and strength from their connection to their home base which provided them strength and validation on their journeys.

This empowerment and support was instilled in these men from their years growing up within their tribal communities, and this provided each of them comfort and a sense of resilience in maneuvering through their programs because they held a deep inner strength in knowing that their families and tribal communities were not only counting on them, but they were proud and happy for their success as well. Neil shared a touching story of realizing he would "be okay" away from his reservation yet seeing his family and tribal members when he was living on the East Coast was a powerful moment.

Well, I think one of the lessons that I realized that I could do, was I didn't know that I could be so far away from home and be okay. Because I was in [a major city in Texas], which is like three or four hours from Western Oklahoma and about eight hours from [my reservation], and that was the farthest I've ever been from home, you know? Well, I always realized that during that time away, that I could still, you know, still have a close connection to home and still be connected culturally and still be, you know, away. I remember when I lived in New York, I went up to the Pequot Pow-wow up in Connecticut. And when I got there, one of the dance groups from back home, the fire dancers were up there, and it was one of my relatives, who… it was Sam, Sam Thunder. I don't know if you know ever knew him, but his dance group [was there], and I remember seeing them and I remember being *so* happy! I was like 'Oh my God!' and I remember seeing them and I was like so happy and like 'Oh my God, people from home!' and I went up to them and Sam the lead singer of this group… it was just so matter of fact, whenever he saw me, he's like "Hey, it's good that you're here. You can help us sing!" and like, I was like "Alright" so I went up there and sang with the men and the Gaan dancers danced, and it was just like… and I remember seeing all these people that I had been avoiding and dodging at the powwow, in and out, like in shock seeing me, I guess, like in a cultural light. Um, and they were just people who were just random Native people from everywhere else, like they're not my home community. They're not people who know me my whole life, and to me, that was a really strong juxtaposition. I feel like that I always, was always aware of that there were

always politics within the broader Indian community, but what always helped me to kind of always transcend that kind of stuff was understanding that I was loved and appreciated back home. And that I belonged somewhere, and that was always really important to me. I feel like back home, there's always a level of appreciation for me, which I feel very fortunate and lucky to have.

Legus knew his university work community was a contributing factor to his success. However, he knew his tribal community played a major role as well. Legus described his appreciation for both communities in the following story.

The [University] community really contributed to my success. It takes a community to support people and I think that's what I had-my tribal community and my University community-both of them were very supportive of my educational career. And whether it's encouraging me through prayer, or encouraging me through recognition, like you know "He's working on his master's degree. One of these days he's going to graduate." Just pride, just being prideful and "Hey, I am going to graduate!" You know, I had to get to that point. It really helped; I think that's what really kind of [helped] was my foundation-my tribal community and my University community.

In his law program, Jeffrey was part of the Native American Law Student Association. The number of Native lawyers was small therefore this group of Indigenous future lawyers became a major support system for Jeffrey and allowed him to make those early connections which has helped him in his career.

The Native American Law Student Association [NALSA]-it's a national organization made up of chapters, and we had our local chapter… and it was an

important part of my… time.   Because I got to meet other students and we got to talk about issues. We got to meet students from other schools and these are people that I work with to this day. You know, I think that was one thing that in law school, you go to events, and see other students from other schools and these are people that you're going to see for the rest of your career, so, it's helpful to have those networks. It was helpful because I established relationships early on that allowed me to help form relationships with colleagues and [are] relationships that I engage in today, you know? A lot of these people that I met I'm either friends with or got to know and I work with them… whether they're inside the federal government or outside. It gave me… the NALSA early, was helpful, establishing those relationships.

Although most of the men relied on support networks that were related to their academics and culture, some men found incredible strength and encouragement from groups related to their identities. I share their stories in the following section.

Identity

Two Indigenous men in the study relied heavily on communities of support that were affiliated with their identities. These identities were in relation to their gender, race, and their sexual orientation as gay men. The stories shared by the men exhibited a strong connection and bonds to other men in the support networks which in turn, empowered these men to persist in their programs despite the obstacles they encountered. These sources of support provided a space for these men to bond over their shared hardships of navigating through their programs and allowed a space to get away from the rigorous daily routines of their graduate or professional degree lives.

These bonds of support were formed out of a need to connect with peers who looked and identified with the same struggles and challenges that they were facing in their programs or in their lives outside of academia. These sources of support not only provided a space for these men to bond over their shared obstacles, but also allowed an outlet to be free from the rigors of their graduate school lives. These connections of support shared between these men and their communities were often described as the most vital to their success in advancing through their programs.

John shared how his Native fraternity was his greatest support system and how his brotherhood allowed him to advance to his doctoral program:

That support system I got through [my fraternity] … they're a major part of why I finished. And they're also a major part of why I chose the area that I'm researching, and the area that I chose going into. I see it different from my mentors because with my mentors, there's a formal relationship there. Even now, even though I'm in a Ph.D. program, there's still, even like with me and Dr. Stone, there's still…I call her 'Aunty' I call her my Aunty and she calls me 'son' but there's still that formality there that I acknowledge that she has paved the way for me. With my brothers, we were all equal playing ground. We had to have each other's back, we had to look out for each other. When one fell, we had to pick each other up. Because I mean I know I was there for brothers when they fell, and I know they were there for me when I fell. And for me, that, that *is* a different kind of support system. I think it goes back to when I think about I don't have any biological brothers of my own. I have all sisters. I have some cousins, that I treat like brothers, and I call my brothers, and growing up, we had to have each other's back. I think for me and my brothers, that's what it's about,

you know? I think [those were]my most, happiest moments when I was in grad school. Those were some of the happiest moments- really just hanging out with them. Just being there and knowing that [pause] they were going through the same thing I was going through, you know, tests, life, work, relationships, and they just…they knew. We all knew when someone needed to talk. We all knew when we all needed to let aggression out. We knew what we needed for each other. And that was that support system that really got me through those formative years of my undergrad and that really stuck with me in the grad program. Because even though now, we're not constant, because there's a new generation of brothers now. And we're here, and now there's that mentor relationship that I have with Dr. Stone, but with my generation. We don't see each other as often as we like, we're not with each other on a daily basis, but there's still that support system.

The findings of this research, confirm that peers who connect on a cultural and identity level are able to provide a stronger relationship and reinforces Ballew's (1996) argument that contact with other American Indians helps reinforce cultural identity. Clearly, support from a network of resources, mentors, and friends is crucial to the success of Indigenous males. This is not surprising because Indigenous people have long been communal and relied on the support of everyone in their tribal communities to be successful. With the arrival of European settlers, the colonial and patriarchal views of domination and competition disrupted our traditional views and today's institutions of higher education still maintain these dominant values.

Billy, who identified as a gay Native man, was a player on a traveling national LGBT softball league team. For Billy, the team was a source of "self-care" and encouragement for him while he endured the stresses of graduate school and his full-time job in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. He shared his story about his support system.

I think having this network of softball, with the LGBT softball league, this outlet of support, like it's a very big self-care, cause like it's very easy to like, when you're frustrated, to go and hit some softballs and feel better about yourself. [laughs] But more importantly, it's like this group of people, whom you've met outside of professional world acknowledging how they're proud of your success, and how much that you've been struggling is worth it. Like hearing that from an outside perspective, was something that has really helped me I think. Even like going, like I said, I travel across country for softball, but like, having friends like at tournaments, being like I see you doing big things. Like that's something that was super encouraging to even be like "Man, I'm tired and I'm tired of doing this" but then hearing that and you're like "Well, now it's worth it." That, I would say softball is big for that.

Although Jeffrey did not have a group of Native men who identified as gay, he did form a friendship with another gay Native male in his law program. He stated he "never really had that before" and forming this new friendship with someone whom he shared many commonalities with and who grew up on an Indian reservation and had the same intersecting identities was a "new feeling of relatability." Jeffrey stated they "were really easy friends" and remain close today.

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All three of the systems of support that these men relied upon made huge impacts on their graduate program experiences. In the following section, I will describe another major theme that emerged from all eleven of the men's stories-warrior mentality.

Warrior Mentality

While listening to the Indigenous men share their stories and reviewing the interview transcriptions of how they navigated through their non-Native institutions, I recognized multiple instances where the men relied on their inner strength in times of distress, battles through adversity, and circumstances that required these men to think quickly on their feet. As I listened to their stories and revisited their journeys within my memos and transcriptions, I began to analyze the stories of their personal victories and the moments when these men conquered a task they had set for themselves.

It was also at this time during my writing that I saw the Marvel comic movie Black Panther, which had a profound impact on me. This movie was the first time that I had seen persons (male and female) of color portrayed as super heroes. The fictional land of Wakanda, in which the movie is set, portrayed a communal society that held Black males and females as equals with a social balance that was reminiscent of traditional Native complementarity ways of life. In the film, the title character has powers that are tied to the spiritual connection to the land and are inherited from generation to generation in order for him to protect and provide for his people. Throughout this film, I saw many parallels between the warrior societies in the film and Indigenous ways of life which inspired me to portray the Indigenous males in my study in the same powerful role as the super heroes I saw on the screen because these males

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also rely on inherent powers tied to spirituality and ancestors.

As I analyzed the stories of the Indigenous males, I found that all of the men possessed and utilized unique special inherent "powers" throughout their lives, especially in their graduate and professional program experiences, that empowered them to overcome and withstand obstacles they faced. Influenced by the powerful images of the tribal (male and female) warriors in Black Panther, what emerged through the data was this image of a warrior who possesses a unique special ability that I refer to as a "Warrior Mentality". This warrior mentality, which I attribute to their ancestors, is this unique resourceful mental skill to pull from their inner network of multiple inherent powers within them to face and dismantle the obstacles that they face.

Closely related to what I refer to as a Warrior Mentality in my study, this way to overcome obstacles is often referred to as resiliency or cultural resiliency in multiple Indigenous studies on Native students in higher education and is fostered by traditional culture, spirituality, support systems, tribal culture, and internal factors related to their identities as tribal people (Brayboy et al., 2012; HeavyRunner & Morris, 2003; Heionen, 2002; Montgomery et al., 2000; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008; Strand & Peacock, 2002). One of the four major areas in Secatero's (2009) Corn Model is spiritual well-being, and a major component of that is "strong cultural identity". In his study, the participants constantly referred to their tribal cultural identity as a means to complete their educational journeys. In relation to the framework of Tribal CRT (Brayboy, 2006), which acknowledges the fluidity and adaptability of tribal culture as a means for survival, and in Shotton's study where Indigenous women showed an adaptability within themselves related to their tribal culture, I expanded upon this notion of cultural resiliency in which

Indigenous people have the ability to adapt as our ancestors have done for generations. This ability to be resourceful, adaptable, and to be fluid when the situation calls for it-is what I refer to as a Warrior Mentality.

This Warrior Mentality encompasses all of the traits or powers that foster cultural resiliency but provides a term that describes the frame of mind or mentality that an Indigenous person inherently possesses to be present and skillfully operate in two worlds: a colonized world and their traditional one. Having and exercising this mentality empowers an Indigenous person to call upon those special inherent powers when needed for situations that we must rely on our array of powers such as toughness, cultural identity, resourcefulness, and holistic balance. I believe that just as historical trauma has been handed down to us, we also have this warrior mentality because of the genetic makeup of survival in our DNA.

This warrior mentality does not correlate in any way to the stereotypical image and behavior that has been attached to Native men in fictional movies, mascots, and books. A warrior mentality refers to the collective determined mindset that an Indigenous person (male, female or two-spirit) has inherited from our Indigenous ancestors who had to endure years of historical trauma and near genocide for generations.

This ability is not only inherited from their ancestors, but these men have accumulated this ability to be resourceful and adaptable throughout their lifelong journeys as Indigenous men. This inner network of multiple sources is what I refer to as "powers" and includes spirituality, cultural identity, holistic balance, toughness, and resourcefulness. I will discuss each of these powers in the following section beginning with spirituality.

Spirituality

Several of the Indigenous men in my study told stories of how they relied upon their spirituality as a source of power and strength to face and handle obstacles in their journeys through their graduate or professional programs. Their spirituality had been instilled in them from an early age and they relied on this power to provide them strength, peace of mind, balance, and to help them refocus after a setback or disruption on their journeys. This source of power was often instilled in these men from an early age and they used this strength to provide them an inner peace of mind which allowed them to refocus after a hurdle in their lives.

Neil shared a story of how his sense of prayer was what he relied on to bounce back from setbacks that occurred in his program and to maintain his sense of peace and balance in times when he took risks in his graduate journey.

> The thing that I would say is always constant for me was having a sense of prayer and my traditions that I was brought up in. I really feel like a cultural surrounding was always kind of what made it possible for me to-what I was talking about earlier in taking risks and accepting challenge-and be able to go out there and try something even if you might fail, you know? I mean there were *so* many times where I was teetering on the precipice of failure. And sometimes I did fail, but you know, I always grew from an experience or a moment where I took a risk, and there were always a lot of great outcomes. I think also one of the things I learned early on when I was in undergrad, I learned not to get my hopes and my heart set on one thing. Like, I always put out like a variety of things out into the world, into the universe, however you want to call

it and then I would always kind of see what came back and I would always say like "Well, this is what came back, I guess I'm supposed to go this direction" whereas, you know, I had learned and had so much heartbreak in the past of like really setting my goals and hopes and dreams of one decision, one thing, and then it not happening and then just being crushed. So, then I learned to just sprinkle a whole bunch of things out there and try to see what came back and then that would determine the next step forward. So, it's something that I always lived my life by, and also trying to manage disappointment.

Monte described a time in his academic journey in his undergraduate program when he was "lost" and was able to be "revitalized" with a return to his spiritual roots. Monte described this part of his graduate journey.

I think part of my journey through my bachelor's degree program was that I kind of lost my way there. In terms of my spiritualism, but also just being a productive citizen, I guess you could might say. My concerns weren't about being successful or anything along those lines. So, that took a toll on my spiritual side because I was raised in a Christian home and I knew that way. I knew what I needed to do, but I knew I wasn't following it. So, during that time at [his tribal college], I had that transformation in the Spring of 2003. I began taking up the language and the culture and just things didn't matter to me anymore-you know going out partying-that stuff didn't matter to me anymore. What mattered to me was getting this degree, finding my direction and stuff. So, whenever I got back to Oklahoma I was with my family and learning the

language through songs and through culture-that just really revived me spiritually I believe. That was a good point in my life.

William relied on his spirituality and faith on a "higher power" when situations became difficult and he knew that he could not face his problems on his own. When I asked William what he contributed all of his success in his graduate program and in his life to, his powerful response follows:

I think it's a combination of all, or several things. As a [Native] person, you're taught that you take into consideration all of the things around you that have been in support of you. So, your family has been there to support you, your ancestors…if you think about the things that they have gone though, it's true atrocities that Native people have gone through to be where we are today. And, they were strong, strong individuals that came before us, and I carry that with me all the time. But I also understand that there is a higher power-that I can't do things on my own. There's limits to the human body, there's limits to the human psyche and what you can do, and at some point, you just have to give up those things to a higher power to let them take care of that. Because everybody has emotional trauma. There's bad things that happened to us, and then all of that racism, all of that abuse, all of those things still are in our lives, and we carry on those things, but at some point, we have to give that up to our higher power and to let the holy people work that out for us. Because they are sending us the blessings, they're sending us the blessings through our grandparents, and our ancestors. They have sent us blessings through our family and our friends, and we also leave it to them and have some faith. Ultimately, it's not one thing.

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Bryan lost his grandfather when he was in his undergraduate program and his grandmother when he was in graduate school. These familial losses were devastating for Bryan. He had grown up around his grandparents "all of the time" since his mother was a single parent. Bryan described feeling a spiritual connection to his grandparents to this day, and in his story, he shared how he prays directly to them now to help him in his doctoral program.

> So, that's sort of like where my grandparents stepped in as sort of like my second, [pause] I shouldn't say second parents, because they're like grandparents, but sort of like along the same lines as being my parents, as well. So… I owe them a lot, and I'm still repaying them, and this education is one way that I can show my appreciation to them. And, you know, like a lot of the reasons why I am the way that I am, and a lot of the philosophies that I carry, and the work that I do now, can all be tied back to their teachings to me when I was younger. And even though a lot of their teachings didn't make sense until now, at this point in my life, they're some of the strongest lessons, you know? And that's one of the reasons why a lot of what I do is *for* them, and it's *with* them, and I say it's *with* them, because even though they're gone… I don't believe in any Gods, or I don't pray to any deities, or what not-I pray to *them*, so it's sort of like they're on this journey with me.

The men in my study described a profound pride and source of strength in their cultural identities as Indigenous people. Although the men were sometimes the only Indigenous person in their programs, they relied on their cultural identities to empower

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them to continue on their academic paths. I share their stories of cultural identity in the following section.

Cultural Identity

Almost every male in my study described feelings of empowerment and pride when discussing their identities as a Native American male. These males shared stories of how their cultural identity empowered them and enabled them to persevere through their programs when times were difficult. The men relied on their traditional knowledge and culture and attributed their strength to their identities as a Native person. These feelings of power often emerged when these men were dealing with obstacles in their programs or when having to make sense of their lives at that time of their graduate programs. This strong sense of cultural identity was often stated as the reason that the Indigenous men in my study were able to be flexible and adjust to the multiple challenges they faced almost daily in their lives as Native graduate or professional students. Neil shared a story of how he contributes living in two Native communities; one on the reservation, and one off the reservation resulting in his ability to be flexible in multiple arenas of his life.

> I was coming from a very different perspective as well, because most of the people that went to school on the reservation, they weren't mixed, there were probably a handful of us, maybe two, three, four of us, who were mixed tribally or mixed with other ethnicities, but everyone was pretty much full [southwest tribe], *from* [southwest tribe headquarters], and to this day, are still in [southwest tribe headquarters] so um, so I always had, I guess a different outlook on life… because I always had a grandma elsewhere. My grandma was always in Oklahoma, or my family were always going back and forth to Oklahoma, so that

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was part of the, I think transitioning to, going back and forth between, you know, different languages, and different families, and different cultural events, cultural specificity was always something that was always really common and constant, so… I always felt a deep sense of belonging to both places.

Legus discussed his love and appreciation for his Native language. Legus' passion for his language is identical to other Indigenous people who feel that their language is their connection to their identities as Native people. In the following passage, Legus shared how maintaining his language solidified his identity as a Native person and gave him strength.

You know, I think if you maintain or have some knowledge, even just a few words, it does something for your identity as an Indian person. Whereas if you don't know anything, it's really hard to connect with any of your community. My grandfather would sing those songs and he knew all the [Native] songs and he would, you know, play them or sing to us. I retained a lot of that and a lot of the language that was involved in those songs was very important to me. And so, I think that just knowing that and being able to study that a little bit really helped me understand this creation and maintenance of American Identity. My strength was basically based upon my cultural knowledge that my grandparents, and my aunts and uncles had imparted on me, and then that was really just to encourage us to maintain who we are as Indian people and I think that was a true strength to my family and who I was as a person. I really didn't know that, 'til I got out of high school and went to college, and I came here, and you know, I could see that I was, I was strong in who I was as an Indian person. Just like

these Indian people are, you know, I felt like a real kinship to them, you know like, we're all trying to preserve our identity, so I guess that was my strength-knowing who I was… was able to jump in there and do it.

Neil grew up among his mother and father's tribal regions. Therefore, Neil transitioned between two different tribal cultures. This transition with two cultures was an advantage for Neil who learned of his ceremonial ways, language, and culture. In the following story, he shared how he continued to maintain this part of his identity.

I was raised by a lot of other people besides my parents. One of my uncles in [southwest tribe headquarters] was a medicine man and who I learned a lot from, and learned to sing with him as well, and participate in ceremonies in [southwest tribe headquarters], and then my [plains tribe] Grandpa was a chief and we were always embedded in ceremonies, and culture, and language scenarios. And I guess those are kind of the things that really provided me with my sense of self and foundation. And I still hold dear to. A lot of people don't grow up that way anymore.

Closely related to cultural identity, is balance. This balance was often mentioned in the stories by the men in my study. This balance will be explained in the following section.

Balance

As the Indigenous men struggled in their programs, a sense of balance provided them strength to continue on their paths. The challenges and constant struggle to find time to work, spend time with family, study for class, and make it to class was arduous for the men. When faced with adversity, these Indigenous men in my study often

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recalled moments in their journeys when they had to readjust their focus and realign the many events going on in their worlds in order to find a balance that provided them a sense of calmness and strength. This balance in their lives helped center the men and allowed them to focus and refocus on their primary goal of graduating.

With the constant hurdles of their graduate or professional programs and the typical normal life events bringing disruption and fatigue to their lives, the men would depend on balance to provide a stability to their worlds. This balance that several of the men depended upon was in relation to their equal physical, spiritual, social, mental, and sometimes the financial parts of their lives. In the following story, Neil shares how balance played a role in his life when life obstacles occurred and he had to focus his energy on his education.

Oh my God, I was in constant turmoil! That was my twenties! I was tumultuous and there was a lot going on in my life. I think I was just really trying to just seek out some structure and some stability that education kind of provided for me in one way. Because, like you know, my grandmother passed towards the end of my college career in my undergrad, you know, my parents were getting a divorce, and you know, there just seemed to be a lot of disruption in kind of like family stability I guess. So, for me, to really focus on, you know, a process or a goal or trying to really invest my energy into something really helped a lot. And you know, education was one of those things.

After experiencing some tough years as an undergraduate student, Monte rediscovered his spirituality and refocused his energy on his goals of earning his master's degree. When sharing his graduate program journey, Monte became excited

about the time in his life when things were all in balance which he repeatedly referred to as "a good place."

I lived in a small one bedroom all bills paid apartment that was really taken care of by my graduate assistantship and I had a good scholarship. All my hard work had paid off. And. I was just in a good place-financially, socially, you know I was in a good relationship with my family. Because you know, they supported me throughout my downtown whenever I was struggling and wasn't on the right track. Just things like that, you know, and just to be in a good place-spiritually, physically, everything was working really good for me at that time.

John suffered through various challenges in his graduate journey. He learned a lot and in the following section, he shared advice to future Native males who plan to attend graduate programs:

I guarantee you, you're going to have times where you say, 'I'm done', I guarantee you, you're going to have times when you're ready to quit. But when you're at those times, think about the reasons why you started that program. Think about the impact that it's going to have not only in your life, but in your family's life, and your community's life, in your tribe's life. How is it going to impact those things? You've made it to a space that not many Native men have made it. You have a responsibility you have to finish, and it might not be in the time that you think. It might not be in the *way* that you think. But you have a responsibility to finish. But you also have a responsibility to take care of yourself. Find that balance. It's going to be different for each and every person.

Some people are going to thrive in high stress situations, some people are going to shrink in high stress situations. Find your balance, and get it done.

The next power I came across in the men's stories was to be strong and tough when faced with adversity. Each Indigenous man described using this power of toughness when they were in their programs.

Toughness

All of the Indigenous men in my study had a story to share when the combination of one or more of the following obstacles- academic rigor, time management obstacles, feelings of isolation-were bearing down on them and they had to stay resilient regardless how strenuous the circumstances. Although these men encountered moments of hardships, they were able to maneuver their way over the hurdle, and if they were knocked down, they picked themselves up and continue along their paths. This *toughness* was often contributed to their parents or to their cultural identities as Native men.

Toughness is a trait Monte continues to share when he encourages his students at the tribal college where he works. As a role model to his tribal students, he shared that he often tells his own personal story with the students of being tough during those difficult college times as an example for them so they can reflect and continue to persist during times of hardships. Monte said he instructs his students they "just need to keep moving forward. You just keep moving forward and keep making progress."

Jeffrey had to adjust to the rigor of his law school program. When asked to offer any helpful tips to young Native men who are going into graduate programs, his responded below.

I think resilience is key. And that was one thing, I think maybe, in looking back, was the case. What I mean by that is, … different challenges pop up to your goals, right? You want to get that JD, you want to get that graduate degree, and some of those challenges are self-created, some of them are unforeseen, created by other people, other things, but… to me, you have to… it's like resilience and grit! You have to bounce back from these challenges that push you out of the way, and not only bounce back, but you have to hang in there. And I think, I don't know if that's a lesson but it's, it's what I would tell Native students is that you're likely going to have some tough times, you know all students do. I would say most students do, but hang in there, hang in there, hang in there. You know, try to-I don't want to say bounce back. I think that it's sometimes, for some people, hang in there through those tough times.

William was taught by his outspoken parents to stand up for marginalized people who are not being treated fairly. Having learned to be strong in certain situations like this, William had to stand up in front of his entire class when he did not agree with his graduate professor.   William shared his story.

Also, when you get into some of the discussions within classrooms…there was, for example, I had to leave one class because the professor was just ignorant, didn't know anything about perspectives, not just from tribal communities, but communities of color. And so, I had to stand up and say "Hey, I'm not gonna stay in your class. You're ignorant, so I gotta leave!" and I talked to the Dean. The Dean and I were very good friends and so I told him that this professor was not meeting my needs and "I'm paying a shit load of money for this education

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and I'm not gonna stay in this class and I'm expecting you to pay me back for it!" So, I had to do that, and I think it takes a lot of guts, but because I'm a very outspoken person I can do that.

Bryan viewed college as a challenge that will strengthen a person so they can become better future leaders for their tribal nations. Although it was tough at times, Bryan shared the experience was preparation for the future.

I think one important thing that people in college need to know is that college is meant to be hard. It's meant to challenge you, but it's not meant to fail you. And that's something that I have to remind myself when I feel like giving up because college is too hard. Like, ugh! Why is this so hard? And it's like, you're not going to be a next generation leader, if you're not challenged. And that's what college is preparing you for. So that's one lesson that I did learn.

In addition to toughness, the men shared an ability to utilize their powers whenever they encountered situations that required them to adapt to new surroundings, times of adversity, or moments of feeling isolated. This ability of resourcefulness is described in the following section.

Resourcefulness

Many of the Indigenous men in my study shared stories where they had to rely on their ability to be quick thinkers, flexible, and resourceful in a variety of difficult circumstances. In these instances, the men described using their knowledge and skills gained from past life experiences and utilizing these tools for situations that required them. Most often these skills were related to moments in their lives that involved a cultural teaching from their grandparents, or from having a skill or ability that they acquired from their tribal communities

and applied these skills to successfully navigate over a particular obstacle or special task. These situations were often described as "jarring" and challenging, but the men were able to maneuver their way through them and handled these events with resourcefulness that came from their unique traditional upbringings. This power of resourcefulness allowed these Native men to adapt to their environment and rise up when the situation called for it, to speak up when needed, to give it all they could when they felt they had nothing left, and to walk confidently into spaces where no one looked like them.

The stories shared by all the Indigenous men demonstrate a warrior mentality however, one Indigenous male exemplified the power of resourcefulness in his story of growing up between two cultural settings and traditions. In the following segment, Neil described an incident that happened early in his life that would set the stage for future moments when he had to "jump in and go for it" when difficult situations arose.

> I think, you know, because of always having to adapt, always having to adapt to new scenarios and new situations-I think that one of the most challenging adaptations was probably when I was like in the second grade and we moved from the [southern plains] back to [his southwest reservation]. And I remember starting school in the second grade and going on the playground-my first day at school-and everyone on the playground was speaking [their tribal language]. And, that to me, was one of the more jarring situations I had ever been in up until that point. And that's when I realize, I was like "Okay, this is gonna take some figuring out" so I had to, you know, figure it out! [laughs]

Neil shared how he dealt with that childhood situation and how he handled future situations with the same mentality.

> I never felt like I wasn't ever enough for a situation. I was always more to me, I was always like observing, watching, listening, and it was always like, I would almost equate it to like, you know, like you know how them Black girls do the double dutch? [laughs]… The jump rope? And you kinda like have to figure out the rhythm and just jump in and just go for it? Um, so that was always me, and when it came to the language thing, I mean it was almost pretty much total immersion, so you kind of have to sink or swim. And you just figured it out.

Neil remembered when he was asked by his tribal Nation to travel to Washington D.C. to speak to a large corporation on behalf of his tribal Nation. When I asked how his channeled his ability to be brave and speak in situations like that, he had the following response.

> Well, I think it goes back to really, you know like, going onto the playground in second grade and not understanding a word anybody is saying. [laughs] And like 'Oh my God' you know? You have to do it! You have to engage, and I always… I mean language is one thing, and I've always loved languages and my grandparents spoke [my tribal language], and everyone in [his reservation] spoke [his tribal language], and I was always able to vacillate and jump between, you know, different languages and different places, and also, I was always kind of…I think with my grandparents, my [southern Plains tribe] grandparents, and even the situation with the [southwest tribe] and them saying "You're the best person at this point who can do this for us. You're gonna go do

this for us." There was always a lot of trust and support where I was always kind of like, I always had to be the translator for other people, you know? And so, this is kind of this position that my family put me in and, you know, to be the one to speak for everyone, or to be the one to do something for Grandma and Grandpa when we went to the store, or you know, there was always these translation scenarios that I always found myself in, so I always kind of like, was always curious about different places and different worlds.

When I asked Neil who or what served as his source of strength, his answer was his grandma.

I think, well my grandma was one. One person, you know, my [southern plains tribe] grandma who just really taught me a lot and, um, [pause] I think probably her, just the way that she navigated the world, because she was… her second language was English. She was fluent reader and writer of [her] language. I remember she had a [southern plains tribe] Bible that she always used to read, and she was multi-lingual and multi-literate, although she only went through eighth grade in her own educational career, but I always just thought that she was just one of the most smartest, amazing women. And I just always, I just always *loved* being around her. When I was in high school, because we moved to this small farming town from the rez, and they hated Indians and whenever I wasn't at school or at home, I was always at my grandma's house. And then if I didn't come home at night or at weekends, my parents always knew that I was at grandma's house, you know? So, there was just like a great sense of strength and faith that she really instilled in me.

Throughout his story, Neil demonstrated the warrior mentality components that emerged from the findings. Above all, Neil showed that he was resourceful as he shared examples and experiences that demonstrated he could be tough and withstand diversity in his life from an incident that occurred early in his life by utilizing his powers. He continued to use this strength in future stages during his navigational journey with his degree and his career. Neil established his Native identity growing up in a cultural home in two different tribal areas that provided the cultural teachings and values that empowered him to work and give back to his people (tribal nation building) when they asked him to be their spokesperson. Finally, Neil derived his strength from his grandmother which enforced the idea that his cultural identity and spirituality was vital to his self-determination and resilience. From a young age to present, Neil was resourceful in utilizing the powers of his warrior mentality when he needed them. This ability to maintain his cultural identity and rely upon his traditional knowledge is a skill set that very few people have. In the following section, I will discuss another major theme that emerged from the stories. This is tribal nation building.

Tribal Nation Building

The desire to return to their tribal nations and give back to their communities was shared by ten out of the eleven Indigenous males in my study. This need to reciprocate back to their tribal communities was a major factor in their drive to succeed in their graduate and professional programs. A few of the men mentioned that they had hopes of working for their tribes when they graduated from high school but decided to attend college instead in the hopes that they would return to their tribes with new knowledge and skills after they completed their college programs. Their desire to give back was not just for their own tribal communities; a

few men shared that they felt they had to give back to "the world" and to Native people in general. A desire to serve as a role model for younger Native men and other students of color appeared as a reason to complete their programs, to influence and guide future generations of men to serve their communities.

Often times, this desire to serve as a role model was the primary reason why they sought acceptance and continued in their graduate or professional programs. Four of the men wanted to return home to their families and reciprocate for everything their families had sacrificed for their education. These four men (Neil, Billy, Bryan, and Jeffrey) share their stories.

Neil

Well, I guess it's just like somewhere along the way, I just really… I learned that we all have to, we all have to contribute something to the world. All of this, the cultural teachings, even the Western based education that I received, and kind of going this path, I always feel that I'm supposed to contribute something and that's kind of what makes me want to do what I do. And even today now in my work, I get to work with artists and I get to help nurture their careers. I get to help nurture their projects, their stories, their characters. It's all about kind of giving something to Native people in some way and to the world. I guess that's where my commitment to excellence comes.

Billy

I'm not doing it for myself… I'm doing it for the future. Because to me, it's so important that students see someone like them and see that they matter, and they are valued. And they need that from someone that is similar to them, in ethnicity, and any type of identity, and ability and disability… they need to see

that they have that support or advocate. So, for me, it's more than myself, it's for my whole community. I think that that's something that I can value even more so now that I'm out of school. Because I now have such an impact on students, like that's something that I didn't really realize until I finished grad school. That's something I'm excited about, but also nervous about. I think I've always had this concept of 'It's not about me. It's about the future and it's about the community' but I guess I never realized that. For me, the community is like all students who are coming, or all people that I interact with. Like, to me, I never realized how much of like a servant leader I am, I guess. I genuinely care for every student that I come across, but I think, it's more important for me to work with students from diverse populations and also our Native students. Just because they don't, I don't think they see this enough. I don't think they see, or hear, that they *can* be good enough. I don't think you hear it in school, because I think school is definitely something that is a White history and you don't even realize that until you go to college. But I think that I didn't realize that how important it is to have this Native person, telling you this, and *keep* telling you this [chuckles] because I tell my students in my first-year course every class period, that they matter, and it's important for them to succeed. Like it's not just for me, but for our people, and I was like "We are doing something that is like way bigger than us" and I tell them that "You are going to be the future" and that "You're going to be successful" and I think that they need to hear that more.

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Bryan

I think this goes back to lessons that I learned. I would definitely remind [Indigenous males] that it's definitely not going to be easy. It's meant to challenge you, but despite the challenges, persistence is essential because we need more Native people who are educated at the graduate and professional level. Our tribal nations need more lawyers; we need more doctors. We need more teachers. We need more administrators for nation building, we need to maintain our tribal sovereignty. We need to maintain our self-determination. We need to do so because all of this can easily be undone, but maintaining it is where the hard work lies. And that's really what current and future generations need to work towards, is making sure that sovereignty, self-determination, and the things that make Indigenous people communal are not undone. And that's essential for our livelihood, and you know, like it may seem, at times, that we're on this road separately, there are others, hundreds, thousands going through the same thing, experiencing the same stresses, but it's all manageable and yeah… Pretty much, we need you and Indian country needs you.

Jeffrey

I viewed law school as a way to (long pause) place me in a position that could really, I benefit my community. You know by my legal degree, that would… expose me to opportunities to do maybe policy work, to do government work for the tribes, or for the federal government to… be an advocate. And so that's some of the thoughts going through my head as this, it's ultimately what I wanted to do because, just go into tribal affairs whether that was through law or

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policy, or advocacy, and so… that was in the background when I was in my mid-twenties. And I knew that, well I wanted to go to law school soon before I turned thirty, in my head, and I wanted to get out before I, before thirty, and so that's what, partially why I applied at 26 and got in and law school is three years, so I got out at 29, and that was the motivating factor was I wanted to do advocacy, I wanted to do policy, I wanted to do government work… law school would be a good way to do that. I feel this… pressure to be, not pressure, but this motivation to do really well because it's … kind of how I viewed those professors. I want to show people that we *can* do… we *can* do whatever job, and we can do it really excellently, and that it hopefully will, like, change perspectives. I viewed this as a shot-law school and my career-as a shot to, not only help me in my life, but more importantly, in my extended family, in my community.

The previous three sections: *reliance on support networks*, *a warrior mentality*, and *a commitment to tribal nation building* demonstrate the ways in which the Indigenous males in my study were able to navigate through their graduate and professional programs to find success. These three areas illustrate worthy traits of a modern warrior, however, in the following and last theme of my study, I discuss a significant finding that emerged from the stories that describes a larger theme of patriarchal masculinities and the need for Indigenous men to reclaim Indigenous masculinities.

Reclaiming Indigenous Masculinities

One overarching theme that emerged from this study on Indigenous men was the lasting effect of colonial patriarchal attitudes on the males. What began

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when white settlers destroyed and disrupted our Indigenous communal ways of living, continues with today's Indigenous men who have been colonized with normative notions of masculinity. Upon deeper analyzation of the major themes, the reluctance to seek help expanded into a broader theme. As I will discuss in more detail below, the Indigenous men in my study were reluctant to seek help, recognize and share stories about their roles as fathers, acknowledge the support from their partners (except the gay men), and did not exhibit any feelings of self-doubt in their stories. These are traits and exhibits of what is termed patriarchal masculinities.

As discussed in Chapter II, patriarchal masculinity is the collection of attitudes, values and characteristics that constitute an ideal of what it means to be a man. Pollack (1999) explains *the boy code* and specifies boys are socially compelled to act tough, not admit emotionality, and dismiss the pain of others and themselves. Furthermore, Kimmel (2008) mapped what he refers to as "Guyland" which illustrates a collection of attitudes, values, and characteristics that constitute what it means to be a man which includes: boys don't cry; it's better to be mad than sad; don't get mad, get even; take it like a man; size matters; I don't stop to ask for directions; nice guys finish last; and it's all good.

These western concepts of masculinity often emphasize the importance of being tough, or strong and silent in the face of challenges and avoiding displays of emotion which can be perceived as weakness. Often males see their educational pathway as being forged only by themselves as a way to prove their sense of masculinity.

These patriarchal masculinities are part of a larger patriarchal culture that insists "real men" must prove their manhood by idealizing aloneness and disconnection, restricting emotionality, self-reliance, homophobia, avoiding femininity, and having a strong desire to seek achievement and status in their

lives (hooks, 2008). hooks (2008) states "The power of patriarchy has been made to make maleness feared and to make men feel that it is better to be feared than to be loved (p. 120).

When males internalize western masculinity concepts, they may keep fear bottled up and can inhibit help-seeking behaviors (Saenz & Bukoski, 2014). Just as Latino males placed the blame for not seeking help on being machismo and responded that they were "too proud," "too stubborn," or "too dismissive" to use institutional resources, Native males also shared these same responses (Saenz & Bukoski, 2014).

Research findings with regard to the patriarchal masculinity of Indigenous males from this study, exposed an area unexplored among Indigenous men and needs further research which may influence future practice and research. I will share a few of these examples of patriarchal masculinity now starting with the reluctance to seek help.

Reluctance to Seek Help

Almost every Native man in my study refused or was reluctant to seek help in their academic journeys. Their stories reveal that these men were too prideful to ask for help, or they would be more comfortable asking another Native person for help. A few of the men shared that they were just not used to asking for help and that they had lived their entire lives in that manner and were accustomed to doing things on their own. A few of the men shared that they often sought help after it was too late or when they no longer needed assistance. When asked to describe the reasoning why a man would not ask for help, the men shared that men were taught from a young age to be "the pillars of strength" in their communities, and that asking for help would make them appear "weak".

From the early interviews, I encountered stories of the men describing challenging ordeals and situations that they had encountered in their programs,

and I often asked a follow up question about how they managed to overcome the obstacle and the answer was almost always "I had to figure it out on my own" or "I just let it go". This response amazed me. One question I began to ask in my interviews was "Did you seek help in your graduate or professional program?" This question seemed like it would have an oblivious answer of "yes", but this was not the case. Almost every Indigenous man in my study either refused help, did not actively seek or request help, or they waited too long and the issues either resolved or became beyond their control.

Although this phenomenon has not been explored within Indigenous men, it has been studied within young Latino men and other men of color. Studies on marginalized groups of men found that the Latino men did not want to appear weak or compromise their appearance of confidence and had a desire to maintain pride in fulfilling their family's expectations without help (Saenz & Bukoski, 2014). The traditional concepts of masculinity, and in this case-machismo-emphasize the importance of remaining tough in the face of challenges and avoiding displays of emotion that could be perceived as weakness or overly feminine. For these reasons, young male college students often translate this into avoiding seeking help (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull & Villegas, 2009; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). This desire to hold on to pride is exemplified in a story shared by one of the Indigenous males in my study, when John shared an experience in his undergraduate program when his funding had not been processed and he was homeless living in his vehicle and yet, he refused to ask for help.

It's almost like asking for help somehow weakens you. That was a mentality I had when I started undergrad-Don't ask for help. You figure it out. Don't ask. Like for me, it affected me, especially in my undergrad. You know, there was, even with my own fraternity brothers, even when I'm asking for help from

another man, it was hard. I go back to my sophomore year and I was homeless

for about two or three weeks. There was a mix up with my funding, and it

didn't get here until almost September and I was living out of my truck. A lot of

people didn't know it, there were a few of my fraternity brothers that knew it,

the ones that I would go, and they would try to get me to stay at their house or

their apartments, and you know, I was too proud. I wouldn't ask for help. I

would go into shower, I would go to their place to shower and stuff like that and

do that kind of stuff, but I didn't ask for help. It was about two and a half, three

weeks that I just lived out of my truck. I would just drive around and park in

different parts of campus and sit in the truck and then go into shower and then

go to class, and do what, no one really knew. And then there was another time, I

had no money for food and I was literally eating, you look at me, you would

never know now [laughs] but I was eating a half pack of Ramen a day and I

didn't want to ask for help. And there were a few of my fraternity brothers who

knew, and I think one of them ratted me out honestly because I got called to Dr.

Stone's office. And I went up there and this is what I said, "I heard through the

grapevine that you wanted to see me?" This is when we were still in Eagle Hall,

and she said "Yeah, come in" and I came in sat down and she closed the door

and she asked me "When was the last time you ate?" I lied and said, "This

morning" but at that time, I think I hadn't eaten in like a day or so. And she

said, "When was the last time you ate?" and I said, "This morning" and she said,

"What'd you eat?" and I said "Cereal" and she said, "I know you're lying." And

she didn't tell me who, but she said, "I already know that you haven't had food",

and from behind her desk, she pulled out a couple of bags and a cooler, and it

was full of luncheon meat, bread, snacks, drinks, and she handed it to me and

she said, "I don't ever want to hear that you don't have money to eat again."

She said, "If you need something, you ask for help." I think that was really the

turning point for me because I realized it's okay to ask for help. That

sophomore year really kind of turned it, cause, after I, after my convincing, I

came to housing. And that's where I found out that I could get a University

apartment, and I didn't have to pay by month. I didn't know that I could pay by

semester, so I could have been getting, I could have been living in an apartment

and paid it off before my money got here. I assumed that I just had to pay by

month and so I spent two and a half weeks living out of my truck… until they

finally convinced me, you know? And they practically dragged me into

housing, cause someone said, "Go over there and apply, ask them" and one of

my brothers went with me. And they said "No, we can get you into an

apartment today" and I literally walked in and walked out with a key, and you

know, it was a couple days later that Dr. Stone had found out that's why I think

there were talks going on behind my back, but she had found out and she had

called me in. From there, I learned, it's okay to ask for help because you're not

gonna know what you don't know.

For a few men, their pride got in the way of them seeking help. Bryan shared

the following regarding how his pride kept him from asking for help.

It wasn't so much that I didn't ask for help, but me persuading myself that I

didn't need it, that I could get through it myself. I didn't really ask for help,

probably until it was too late or until it wasn't needed anymore. I guess I'm just a prideful person. I guess it all comes back to that.

Billy shared how a reluctance to ask for help is impacted by a men's belief that it would damage the image of their masculinity. Billy began to ask for help later in his academic journey but understands the issues men face when they need help but refuse to ask for it. He shares his story here.

I think that often times, we as men, we as Native men, think that we have to be perfect, and so I don't think that's necessarily the case. I think that we, that it's okay to have difficulties, but it's more important to be able to know that it's okay to reach out for support. There's so many people there for support, you just need to… they just don't know how to support you if you don't tell them. So, I think that, laying down kind of that sense of pride men have, saying "We don't need help"-I think getting past that, once you get past that then you're going to be so successful. I mean that's engrained from society, like we have this, if you think of this box of what a man is then you think of 'breadwinner', 'smart', 'no feelings' and if you get anywhere outside of that box, then you're going to be labeled like a 'sissy' or a 'wuss' or 'fag' or things like that so you're kind of like engrained to be like "He can't ask for help" and you can't be emotional and so once you realize you can, and that's one hundred times easier to ask for help. Like it's always with the stereotype that men can't ask for, or *don't* ask for directions because they can figure it out for themselves. Sometimes or often times, you can't figure it out yourself so the quicker you learn that you can ask for help and it's okay-the better.

For one Indigenous man in my study, he did not seek help because there was not another Native person to provide help when he needed it. Carl shared he was "a private person" and he did not seek help. As the only Native person in his graduate program played a significant role in this decision to not seek help. Carl shares the following story:

For the most part, I would just do it myself. I think I've always kinda been like that. I guess that is just by my nature, I tend to be a more private person, and there was more isolation from that, and maybe if there were some more Natives around then it wouldn't have been like that. I can't really think of many examples [of seeking help], but yeah, I think so. I'm not sure if that's a good thing though, because I do think that you can gain knowledge from other people's experiences though. So, I've been trying to change that as I've been going through my life. Like, I'll just be more open to asking more [questions] like, 'Ok, what do you think of this?' or just kind of sharing more of myself and it's been working really well.

Carl continued that he did not seek help because he felt he had to be "self-reliant" because he was the only Native man in his program. When I asked the question if seeking help was an issue with all males, he responded with the following:

I think that it is a male thing for sure, and then it is kind of different when you're like Native and like there's nobody else that's Native, because you're kind of [the only Native male] and I think you have to be more self-reliant in that sense. But definitely for males, because you know males? One thing is that they can't be perceived or seen as weak, and they can't ask questions, they can't seek

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advice. They have to do things themselves. That's just sort of a cultural thing so that kind of adds into it. But, I mean, once you kind of realize that's the case, then you're like I don't really care what other people think, I just wanna improve myself, you know?

In his last story, Carl shared an important point about Indigenous males in non-Native institutions of higher education. The lack of Indigenous role models that look like the men in my study may cause some Native men to turn away from seeking the help they need. The stories shared in this section provide evidence that not seeking help is often tied to toxic masculinity ideas and traits, but this issue is also tied to a lack of Indigenous role models in graduate and professional programs. All of these findings are extremely important for Indigenous males, Indigenous communities, and the non-Native institutions that our Indigenous students attend. Another area that was related to patriarchal masculinities was a reluctance of the males in my study to show vulnerability and share stories of their roles as fathers.

Indigenous Fatherhood

Although the number of Indigenous men in my study with children was limited, there was little, if any, insight or stories from the men in their role as a father. The work of our Indigenous sister scholars (Shotton, 2008; Tachine, 2017) share amazing stories of Indigenous mothers' ability to balance the obstacles in their roles as Indigenous women in the academy with their home lives as a mother and wife. The women often speak of their children as their sole reason behind their tenacity to perform and succeed in a world that is filled with the challenges brought upon by the intersectionality of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sometimes their sexual preference.

Shotton's study (2008) provides numerous examples of the way the

women in her study often had to go through extreme circumstances to provide for their children and maintain their status as a doctoral student. I expected to hear stories of examples of the same sacrifices and determination by Indigenous men with their children, but this topic was briefly mentioned. The men in my study did not share stories of their roles as fathers and having to balance their lives, raising a family and attending graduate classes. In contrast to the Indigenous women who felt a strong sense of pride in serving their dual role as a mother and a student, the men did not share these sentiments or any insights into their role as a father. In another example of how Indigenous men are often (in)visible in society, further research of Indigenous men and their roles as fathers needs to be further explored.

Partner Support

In Shotton's study (2008), the female Indigenous doctoral students recognized the supportive role that their male spouses held during their doctoral programs. Often this support was in the form of providing time, space and encouragement. The women shared that their spouses understood their experiences and provided support with academic feedback and insight. These findings from Shotton's study were contrary to the Indigenous men in my study who identified as straight. This area of partner support was not mentioned by straight men, in which five of these men had partners. The family support of the Indigenous men in my study was a primary source of strength, but the family members who were mentioned included their parents, grandparents, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles. In fact, there was only one instance in the entire study that the word "wife" was noted and this was a brief mention.

On the other hand, every Indigenous male in my study who identified as gay or two-spirit mentioned their partners (and one husband) in their stories.

These men spoke of the support they received from their partners during their graduate or professional programs and acknowledged and expressed gratitude for them. This form of support varied from financial support to daily encouragement while working on their degrees. Even though one Indigenous man shared the circumstances of a break-up with his partner during his graduate program, he still acknowledged him and the support he received from him. In addition, one participant shared a story of how he "came out" to his university community by acknowledging his partner at his graduation ceremonies. These stories by the gay Indigenous men in my study and their expressed appreciation for their partners showed a stark contrast to their straight counterparts. These examples warrant further research into the support that Indigenous men receive from their partners, and also why Indigenous men do not acknowledge support or their partners when describing their experiences in their graduate programs.

Self-Doubt

One significant finding in Shotton's (2008) study was that the Indigenous women all experienced some level of self-doubt in their doctoral programs. They questioned their academic abilities, whether they belonged, or if they would complete their programs. For these women in her study, their self-doubt was often viewed in the context of feeling intimidated by white students, who they believed were better prepared for doctoral work.

The Indigenous men in my study did not express similar self-doubt. They did share stories of obstacles and hurdles in their way, but they did not view themselves as unworthy, unprepared, or demonstrate self-esteem issues. Their challenges were often attributed to other persons, the institutional system, their faculty, or peers in their programs. Although they shared humbling stories of success in their programs, they did not express any intrinsic issues or feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, or unpreparedness. This is a trait of patriarchal

masculinity that relates to having pride and not showing weakness or vulnerability. This western concept of masculinity emphasizes the importance of remaining tough or silent when faced with challenges and avoiding displays of emotion which can be perceived as a sign of weakness.

In traditional Indigenous ways of knowing, there is a central core belief that the survival of our communities is more important than any individual (Brayboy et. al, 2012). However, because patriarchal culture and beliefs have dominated the lives of our Indigenous men since colonization, this has become the culture that they were born within and have been socialized to accept. This patriarchal culture socializes our Indigenous males to believe that without their roles as patriarchs they will have no reason for being and that at the core of their identity is a will to dominate and control, to avoid femininity, withhold their emotions, and be self-reliant as they seek individual achievement and status in a dominant patriarchal world where competition is valued. Furthermore, patriarchal masculinity insists that real men must prove their manhood by being alone and disconnected (hooks, 2004). All of these patriarchal traits and behaviors are in direct contrast to our traditional roles and values as Indigenous males.

Reclaiming Traditional Masculinities

These colonial patriarchal views of masculinity do not have a place in our Indigenous ways of being. Indigenous men need to reclaim their traditional Indigenous masculinities to restore social balance for our tribal nations to continue to survive and for nation building to continue. Reclaiming our traditional Indigenous masculinities is not a demand to surrender manhood or maleness. Instead, it is reframing the meaning of what it is to be an Indigenous man and the roles we play. A traditional Indigenous masculinity culture is when men are not held hostage to patriarchal domination and instead value

inter-being and interdependency in their lives and communities. For it has always been understood in our traditional ways of knowing that no person can operate successfully on their own.

When a traditional culture replaces a patriarchal culture, Indigenous men can be emotional, they can connect with others, they can parent, and they can be fully capable of complementing their Indigenous female counterparts for the continued success of our Nations. In returning to traditional masculinities, our Indigenous men could understand that seeking help is not a sign of weakness. If men were allowed to be viewed as vulnerable, this could foster a change in other men to understand that seeking help is not a weakness and that receiving support and guidance is necessary for their survival.

In relation to tribal nation building and support networks, a return to traditional Indigenous masculinities would promote the importance of partnership and communal relationships for the strength of our Indigenous people. In this direction, Indigenous men could be valued as empathetic and strong, and could hold and fully express this responsibility to not only themselves, but also their families, tribes, and communities.

This last section provided further in-depth insight on Indigenous masculinities and how Indigenous males have adapted certain patriarchal masculinities which affects their views and roles in society and, most importantly, their higher education experience. This insight provides a more holistic view of Indigenous males and the complexities they face in their roles and can hopefully lead to better understanding of this marginalized group for their success in the future.

In the following section, I will provide the answer to the research question: What model (if any) can be created to help future generations of Indigenous men find success in graduate or professional degree programs?

To answer this question, I present the *Modern Warrior Model* that emerged from the stories of the Indigenous men in my study which illustrate guiding navigational tools for future Indigenous males to find success in their graduate or professional programs.

The Modern Warrior Model

Figure 2.0. Modern Warrior Model

Tribal Nation Building

Mentors
Family
Community

Family
Tribal Community
Tribal Nation

Support Networks

Warrior Mentality

Asking for Help
Being Connected
Emotional Awareness
Self-Love

Balance
Toughness
Spirituality
Resourcefulness
Cultural Identity

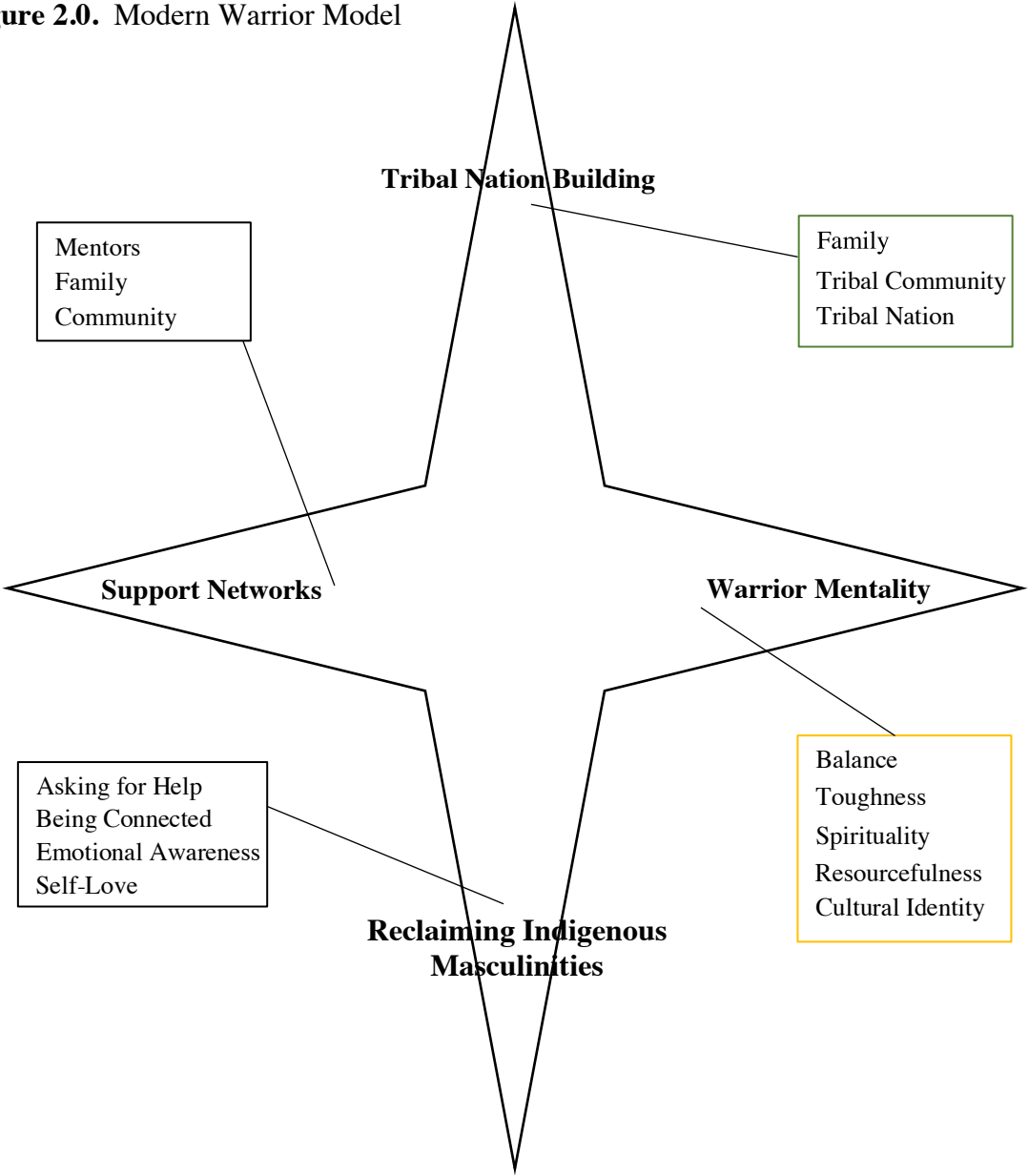**Reclaiming Indigenous Masculinities**

Figure 3. Modern Warrior Model for Indigenous Males. The four-pointed Apache Star is a symbol for the Apache Nations and serves as the center focus of the Modern Warrior Model which defines the navigational tools for an Indigenous male to find success in his graduate or professional program.

There are four major components located on each of the four directional points which identify the four major tools that Indigenous men follow to be successful: at Northern point: Tribal Nation Building; at the Eastern point: Warrior Mentality; at the Southern point: Reclaiming Indigenous Masculinities; and at the Western point: Communities of Support.

The background symbol of the model is an Apache Star to represent my tribal identity as an Apache man. The four-pointed Apache Star is an important symbol to Apache people and is symbolic of the sacred four directions, the four mountain spirits in our ceremonial dances, and the number of nights we dance in our ceremonies. The colors of the four boxes also represent traditional Apache colors: yellow, green, black and white.

The Modern Warrior Model is based on the four main themes that emerged from the stories shared by the Indigenous men in my study. Collectively, the model illustrates the four major directives that successful Indigenous men follow in order to navigate through graduate or professional programs. In keeping with the anti-deficit approach that frames my study, I designed the Modern Warrior Model to emphasize the aspects that work to *embolden* Indigenous male success, compared to the aspects that *limit* their advancement. The hope is that by implementing this model into their lives, Indigenous men will be able to better navigate through their graduate or professional programs to achieve success.

In relation to Indigenous ways of knowing, our sense of place in our world is

very important including our relation and balance to all things in our world. For these reasons, I explain each major theme in terms of a direction as it relates to the Modern Warrior Model. The Northern point represents Tribal Nation Building: the desire to give back to Native communities. The Eastern point represents Warrior Mentality: the ability to use our inherent powers needed to be successful: balance, spirituality, resourcefulness, cultural identity, and toughness. The Southern point represents Reclaiming Indigenous Masculinities: understanding that in order to be successful, Indigenous males must reclaim their traditional Indigenous masculinities. The Western point represents Support Networks: the three major categories (Mentors, Family, and Community) that Indigenous men utilize in order to be successful in their programs. In the following section, I discuss the findings in relation to the three theoretical frameworks of my study.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the following section, I discuss how each of the three theoretical frameworks of my study relate to the findings. I begin with Tribal Nation Building, continue with Tribal Critical Race Theory, and conclude with Cultural Resilience.

Tribal Nation Building

Although the first theoretical framework for my study was Tribal Nation Building (Brayboy et al., 2014), the males in my study shared multiple stories of giving back to their communities and their families; this is why this term is used again in my findings. Tribal nation building is the concept of Indigenous peoples building capacity among their own people to meet all their needs; health, cultural, political, economic, and educational. This concept is based on traditional Indigenous knowledge systems

that assume the health and well-being of the tribal nation is more important than individual achievement (Brayboy et al., 2014; Coffey & Tsosie, 2001). Previous studies indicate that Indigenous graduate students show a desire to give back to their tribal communities as a chief motivator in their completion of a doctoral or graduate program (Moon, 2003; Henning, 1999; Secatero, 2009; Shotton, 2008). This desire to give back to their Indigenous communities is a philosophy that is at the very core of tribal nation building (Brayboy et al., 2014) and was evident with the Indigenous men in my study. The men shared through their stories that they were motivated to work for their tribal nations even before they started college or their graduate programs. The men also discussed serving their tribal communities and Indians across the United States as the primary reason that they were completing their graduate or professional degree programs.

An important point to focus on with tribal nation building is that its primary goal is to create strong tribal nations with strong Indigenous citizens. In relation to the issue of the lack of Indigenous men obtaining graduate and professional degrees, a strong tribal nation cannot thrive without the support and existence of both men and women. It is important to remember that education is essential to the economic, health, environmental, systemic, and community dynamics of the Indigenous nations and a decline in Natives obtaining a graduate education can be problematic for the future of tribal nations. As the eleven Indigenous men proved, Indigenous men can find success and give back to their communities but navigating institutions that were not designed for them can be challenging.

The concept of tribal nation building argues for the need of graduate programs

of non-Native institutions to adopt an institutional orientation of tribal nation building and self-education so that they may re-envision their work to be more aligned with tribal nation building goals. Brayboy et al. (2014) view this not only as an opportunity but as a responsibility of the United States government based on past treaties and executive orders. Brayboy et al. (2014) believe that there are three main connections between what graduate institutions can offer and tribal nation building. The first of these is the institutional orientation to recruit and invest in students who have the desire to engage in tribal nation building. Second, a tribal nation building institutional orientation reflects a program in which the tribal nations and their leaders work with the institution to focus on issues that affect their communities and offer insight on how the issues might be addressed. And finally, "the educational goals of indigenous peoples should coincide with the strategic political and economic objectives of their communities" (Brayboy et al., 2014, p. 591).

When graduate institutions make an effort to understand the tribal nation building philosophy and adopt an orientation of this concept, there is greater potential for Indigenous nations to thrive and continue to do so for future generations to come. The men in this study and their success in their programs illuminate the potential of the tribal nation building concept and how this it could be very rewarding for Native graduate students at non-Native institutions and for their tribal nations.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

By framing the findings from this study within Brayboy's (2006) Tribal CRT, one is able to view the experiences of these eleven Indigenous male perspectives from a theoretical lens that acknowledges the unique dual status and ontologies and epistemologies of their Native culture as it is applied to higher education. Tribal CRT provides nine tenets, but the basic tenet in Tribal CRT

emphasizes that colonization is endemic to society (Brayboy, 2006).

In the first tenet, Brayboy (2006) maintains that colonization is the domination of European American thought, knowledge, and power structures in American society. He explains that "the goal, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, of interactions between the dominant U.S. Society and American Indians has been to change ("colonize" or "civilize") us to be more like those who hold power in dominant society" (p. 430). Furthermore, colonization inhibits the abilities of Indigenous people to "express ourselves in ways that may challenge dominant society's ideas about who and what we are supposed to be, how we are supposed to behave, and what we are supposed to be within the larger population" (p. 431).

In alignment with Brayboy's Tribal CRT concept, the men in this study experienced the effects of the deep roots of colonization in these non-Native institutions that they were never meant to succeed in. Although they were able to complete their programs, the Indigenous men in my study faced obstacles of racism, marginalization, microaggressions and were silenced or discouraged for expressing their cultural identity, and for having views that went against the norms of the academy. The men in this study were able to maintain their cultural integrity and hold on to the beliefs, traditions, ceremonies, and language they valued as tribal people which enabled them to assert their status and place in the academy.

The second tenet of Tribal CRT recognizes that the policies of the United States towards American Indians are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain (Brayboy, 2006). Tribal CRT argues that the notion of White supremacy is upheld in institutions of higher education where the dominant culture prevails through the curriculum because it is viewed as "natural and legitimate" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 432). In this study, White supremacy is displayed when the Indigenous methodologies proposed for a research paper were deemed

illegitimate by the instructor. In another instance, Native literature authors were viewed as unequal and not as important compared to the other authors of the dominant culture. These experiences hold a common thread that Indigenous perspectives are inferior to the dominant culture.

In the fifth tenet of Tribal CRT, the western concepts of culture, knowledge, and power are viewed through an Indigenous lens and culture is viewed as both fluid or dynamic, and fixed or stable (Brayboy, 2006). Tribal CRT acknowledges three forms of knowledge: cultural knowledge, knowledge of survival, and academic knowledge. Brayboy (2006) explains that these various forms of knowledge complement each other and must integrate with one another for survival of American Indians.

The stories shared by these Indigenous men confirm this tenet of Tribal CRT and powerfully demonstrate that these men were able to successfully combine the academic knowledge they gained in their higher education institutions and their cultural knowledge in order to foster their success in their graduate and professional degree programs. In relation to warrior mentality, these men were able to utilize their cultural knowledge, toughness, and resourcefulness to persevere throughout the many obstacles in their journeys. The combination of these three types of knowledge empowered the men to effectively navigate strategies to successfully continue on their trajectories in their institutions.

The seventh tenet of Tribal CRT emphasizes the importance of Indigenous philosophies, beliefs, traditions, and customs. Brayboy (2006) argues that these tools must serve as a foundation to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous people. This tenet values the unique perspective of Indigenous people and understands the importance of viewing Native experiences through an Indigenous lens. Findings from this overall study affirm this tenet. The experiences of these Indigenous men were reflected through an Indigenous lens by an Indigenous

researcher which gave a perspective that demonstrated the importance of the interconnectedness of shared cultural beliefs and ideologies. In the more dominant culture perspective, the concepts of resilience, isolation, support systems, and motivation may have been approached differently.

And last, the eight tenet of Tribal CRT places value on traditional stories among Indigenous people. Tribal CRT argues that scientifically-based research is not the only legitimate form of research and furthermore that there is no separation from theory and story (Brayboy, 2006). Great value is placed on American Indian stories for they transmit culture and knowledge and are "the foundation on which Indigenous communities are built" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 439).

Throughout this study, stories played a major role in describing the experiences of the Indigenous men on their journeys through their graduate and professional programs. Their stories acknowledged the value and the validity of using oral traditions in conducting research in Indigenous people. The findings from this study affirm that stories and oral traditions are not only legitimate forms of data but provide an additional way to reclaim Indigenous researchers place in the academy.

Cultural Resilience

The last theoretical framework I used in my study was Cultural Resilience (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003). Cultural Resilience acknowledges and places emphasis on the protective factors of Native students in higher education. These seven protective factors include spirituality, family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks. Cultural Resilience posits a promising future with hope for Indigenous students. However, the term "resilience" implies a deficit perspective and refers to negative events that have happened in the past that one

had to overcome. In line with my anti-deficit approach to my study, I suggested the term "Warrior Mentality" which illuminates our inherent Indigenous powers and strengths and focuses on the future, is a positive and proactive perspectives. The Indigenous males each shared personal stories of how they used their warrior mentality to overcome obstacles and challenges in their journeys.

Summary

In this chapter, I first introduced each of the eleven Indigenous males. Next, I presented an overview of the major obstacles that the men encountered in their journeys to provide a more holistic framework for the major themes that emerged in the study. I provided an overview and description of the four major themes that emerged on eleven Indigenous male students in their graduate or professional degree programs. These four themes included reliance on support networks, a warrior mentality, a commitment to tribal nation building and, reclaiming Indigenous masculinities. I then provided the Modern Warrior Model and a description of how the four major directors of the model illustrate the tools for navigating through graduate and professional degree programs. Finally, I explained the findings in relation to the three theoretical frameworks of my study. I will provide a discussion of these findings, implications, and recommendations for further research and practice in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

This final chapter provides an overview of the study to include a discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations for future research and practice, and the limitations of the study. Indigenous scholars in the academy have provided an in-depth, but still limited, understanding of Indigenous students in higher education within recent years. Most of the research is centered around undergraduate students and there remains a dearth of knowledge on Indigenous students in graduate and professional degree programs. Indigenous females outnumber their male counterparts at a ratio of nearly two-to-one in completion and graduation rates at the graduate and doctoral levels. Little is understood about the experiences of the minute fraction of Native American males who successfully navigate through their graduate and professional programs. By applying an anti-deficit approach, this study explored how Indigenous men navigated their journeys in their non-Native institutions to better understand the environments, conditions, and resources that facilitated their success. Thoughout my study, I shared stories from the perspectives and voices of multiple Indigenous males including those of my big brothers at the preface of my dissertation. Brayboy (2004) posits that visibility can be activism and is a viable tool for making the presence of Natives felt in the academy. As an act of resistance to the dominant structures that view us as invisible, telling the stories of my Indigenous brothers was a way to reclaim our power over our experiences and allow other Natives to see themselves in spaces of higher education.

Discussion

The significant research findings revealed the current state of non-Native institutions of higher education, the (in)visibility of Indigenous males in scholarly research, and the conflict facing Indigenous masculinities. After I explore these

three major findings, I will discuss the need for further research on Indigenous males, and finally, transforming traditional norms of patriarchy in Indigenous males.

Non-Native Institutions

This study revealed the obstacles faced by the Indigenous men; racism, isolation, lack of role models, and financial issues. The obstacles the Indigenous men faced as graduate and doctoral students compares accordingly with studies regarding the obstacles faced by undergraduate Native students and by their female Native graduate and doctoral students (Brayboy et al., 2012; Guillory, 2002; Shotton, 2008; Waterman, 2007).

The underlying theme behind the findings in my study and the research regarding Native students across all levels of higher education, reveals and continues to reinforce the historical fact that non-Native institutions were established for the dominant society, or more particularly, for wealthy white males, and have not attempted to distance themselves from their colonial and patriarchal beginnings. The history of non-Native institutions of higher education until contemporary times demonstrate that these institutions continue to not meet the overall educational needs of Native American students in higher education, regardless of their gender or their classification.

Institutions of higher learning have the potential to transform our Indigenous communities by playing a significantly larger role in the pathway of tribal nation building. However, as long as these institutional systems continue to uphold their colonial and patriarchal roots, the history of oppression, racism, and social inequalities will continue for Indigenous students, and all students of color.

(In)visibility of Indigenous Males

James (1995) states "gender differences have rarely been examined in studies of Indian education." (p. 183), and this statement was profound when

conducting the literature review searching for studies, any studies for that matter, that focused solely on Indigenous males. Literally, less than five are in existence, and those few focus on Indigenous males at the undergraduate level. A few studies examined the graduate and doctoral experiences of Indigenous women in higher education (Ballew, 1996; Shotton, 2008; Hannah, 2002) and one study with mixed gender participants (Buckley, 1997; Garvey, 1999; Heionen, 2002; Henning, 1999; Moon, 2003; Mullan, 2002; Secatero, 2009), but no research studies focused on graduate Native males, none.

Although there are journal articles and books related to the plight of Black and Latino males in higher education (Dancy, 2012; Harper & Harris III, 2010; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; McGowan, Palmer, Wood, & Hibbler, 2016), the literature focusing on Indigenous males was virtually non-existent. The bleak reality is this underreported, marginalized group of men are (in)visible and overlooked in higher education. The declining numbers of Indigenous males in higher education provide evidence of an urgent need for more recruitment and retention efforts to ensure that our Indigenous males can succeed.

This study provided timely insight into the perspectives of Indigenous males in graduate and professional programs. By focusing on Indigenous males and sharing their stories, I provided a voice to these males who have been (in)visible in the academy for far too long. My study provided a limited view into the plight of Indigenous males in their graduate and professional programs, but there needs to be more research. Hopefully, my study will bring about further discussion and future research that will also illuminate the plight of Indigenous males in higher education in order to complement our Indigenous sisters and restore balance in our tribal nations.

Indigenous Masculinities

One unexpected and significant finding was the role that colonization played in the lives of the Indigenous males I interviewed. These males repeatedly spoke of the empowerment that they received from their cultural identities and their ties to their Indigenous communities, but in regard to their traditional roles as Indigenous males, the majority of them demonstrated patriarchal masculinity traits and behaviors that do not follow along with the traditional Indigenous roles of maleness. It appears that Indigenous males have maintained many of our traditional customs and beliefs, but the influence of patriarchal colonialism still holds a large influence in their behaviors and views as Indigenous males. Although these patriarchal masculinities are engrained in our lives that they are considered typical male behaviors and traits, it is important to note that colonial patriarchal attitudes and behaviors are *not* a part of our traditional Indigenous ways of being, where social balance and complementarity were predominantly practiced (see discussion in Chapter II).

The patriarchal traits identified in many of the males of my study relate to a deeper underlying factor related to the low numbers of Indigenous males succeeding in higher education. Gordon and Henerey (2014) illustrate how the effects of patriarchy intersect with racism, economic inequality, and heteronormative orientations in the crisis affecting Black men, we can correlate how these patriarchal norms impact Indigenous males. Patriarchal values such as dominance, control, hierarchical competition, and subservice has configured gender roles and expectations for Indigenous males and this impact has affected their decisions to pursue education and hampered their ability to succeed in higher education.

Although not all Indigenous males hold patriarchal values and beliefs,

many do and this will continue to affect our Indigenous communities and our numbers in higher education until we reclaim our Indigenous masculinities and reframe our views of what maleness looks like.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

The ninth tenet of Brayboy's (2006) Tribal Critical Race Theory challenges and encourages scholars to expose and debunk structural inequalities and work to create structures that address the current and future issues facing tribal people. It is imperative scholars examine this unique population's experiences to determine additional navigational tools for them to find success in higher education. It is vital that scholars continue to explore Native males in higher education to improve our recruitment, retention and graduation rates, in order to hopefully produce more Indigenous male faculty into the academic pathway. Although my study provided a glimpse into the lives and experiences of Indigenous males, there remains a dearth of information on this marginalized group of males that needs to be understood. In this section, I provide eight major areas that need further exploration.

In my study, all of the gay Indigenous males acknowledged, and shared stories of the support received from their partners; the straight Indigenous males did not. Furthermore, the Indigenous males who identified as gay merge another intersecting identity component that adds to the complexities of their unique experiences in graduate programs compared to their straight counterparts. Further investigations need to be completed on gay Indigenous men to provide valuable insight, identify common themes and differences across sexual identities in Indigenous men.

These examples warrant further research into the support that Indigenous men receive from their partners, and also how Indigenous men view or

experience support from their partners when describing their experiences in their graduate programs.

Indigenous males did not mention their children in comparison to Indigenous women in previous research. The Indigenous fathers separated their roles as a father from their role as a graduate or professional student. They did not view these roles as unified as one as the Indigenous mothers did in Shotton's study (2008). Indigenous fatherhood is an area that needs to be better understood and warrants future investigation especially in advocating for higher education.

Throughout my study, the Indigenous males often shared stories that described a strong connection to their grandmothers and the impact they had on their lives. Often times, the males told stories where their grandmother held a special place in their lives as a teacher, comforter, spiritual source, provider, and a role model. The role of the grandmother and other maternal roles of influence is an area that needs further research.

As noted in the study, two males in my study had lived on a reservation, with the majority of my participants growing up non-reservation urban communities or cities. The males living on reservations possess unique experiences and perspectives that warrants further research.

Two of the males knew each other and relied on their support communities that were related to their identities. For these two males, these two sources of support were vital for their success and they expressed a strong connection to other males in their communities who shared the same identities as they did. Further research into support communities that are tied to identity for Indigenous males would be valuable to our greater understanding of support networks in higher education.

This study reflected the stories of Indigenous males who were successful in completing their graduate and professional degree programs. However, there are Indigenous males who were not successful. The study revealed the major tools that Indigenous males used to succeed, but it would be as important to identify the factors and/or experiences that impeded success among Indigenous males. No research on attrition among Indigenous male graduates has been conducted. An examination of the lived experiences and perspectives of the Indigenous males who did not complete their graduate or professional degree programs would provide valuable insight for future practice.

The phenomenon of refusal to ask for help has not been explored with Indigenous males, though research findings with regard to the patriarchal masculinity of Indigenous participants from this study exposed an area unexplored among Indigenous men and needs further research which may influence future practice and research. Further exploration on this (in)visible group of males may lead to practices and initiatives that would foster an environment that would eliminate the stigma of seeking help.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Through sharing our lived experiences from an Indigenous lens, this study has the potential to inform practice and policies related to the inclusion of marginalized populations in graduate and professional degree programs. In the following section, I share several tactics that institutional leaders and policy makers can incorporate to increase and promote the success of Native males in graduate and professional programs. I address these recommendations for practice in relation to the four major themes of the Modern Warrior Model.

Non-native institutions, especially those institutions located in states that have tribal nations and reservations, need to review internal policy standards and current issues that are related to retention, recruitment, graduation rates, and the

overall campus climate for their Native students. One way to minimize the experience of feeling like an outsider would for institutions to develop targeted recruitment strategies that increase Indigenous males within the student body and faculty.

It is important that these institutions assess what the experiences are like for Indigenous students and how they can adjust their policies, programs, and related initiatives in order to improve upon the success of these marginalized students.

It is recommended that graduate or professional programs establish a support culture of community, connection and relationship building. Although a few non-Native institutions have recognized the value of communal support networks, the establishment of additional programs, initiatives and policies that reinforce and promote support networks among Indigenous students is warranted. Findings from this study suggest that peer support was a major component of the Indigenous men's experiences in their graduate and professional programs, particularly the support from other Indigenous graduate students.

Development of structured Indigenous peer support systems for Indigenous students would help foster the success and social networking systems that create spaces where Indigenous men can connect is vital to their success. These systems of support would address the issue of isolation and cultural alienation but would also provide a more open safe space for Indigenous males to seek the advice and support they need without the stigma of appearing weak. These support systems could also be used as an orientation center for new graduate students to help familiarize them with the processes and additional support resources available to graduate students on campus.

As recent studies focus on *what* contributes to the success of Indigenous students in higher education, the powerful role of family cannot be overlooked in the

success of Indigenous students across age, gender, and classification. Family is an Indigenous cultural value that is integral to our survival, especially when we are placed in institutions that were not designed for our values. Institutions need to redirect their policies and programs to place an emphasis on the family support of their Indigenous students.

The powers that contribute to a warrior mentality can be utilized when Indigenous men are faced with the obstacles that several of the men experienced. These obstacles included microaggressions and institutional racism. The Indigenous men reported feeling marginalized as tokens forced to speak on behalf of all Tribal nations. This lack of understanding(sensitivity) creates hostile spaces and can lead to Indigenous students feeling depressed and fatigued. It is recommended that institutions of higher education provide professional development courses and trainings that would educate the faculty, administration, and their peers on Indigenous cultures, history, and current issues. This type of training would facilitate a better understanding among the institution in order to alleviate racist behaviors and would allow Native students to express themselves in class and in research projects without fear of feeling inadequate or (in)visible.

As the research demonstrates, the use of Indigenous methodologies was not considered as a valid and legitimate tool for research. Several Indigenous men in my study experienced the lack of understanding and unacceptance of Indigenous methodologies in the academy. The awareness and inclusion of multiple perspectives at the graduate level is vital to the Indigenous students who plan to use Indigenous ways of knowing and methodologies to complete their research and to reclaim their place in the academy. Professors of all

students need to be accepting, knowledgeable, and committed to the cultures and ways of knowing of their students, and not only the dominant cultures. When non-Native institutions develop programs based on Indigenous research studies that focus on the evidence-based solutions to the challenges Indigenous students face then these students are better equipped to succeed in these institutions.

Universities should strengthen their recruitment initiatives to hire Indigenous faculty who could serve as role models and provide systems of support for Indigenous males who struggle with seeking help. If increases in the representation of Native American faculty in non-Native institutions of higher education were to occur, this would provide more sources of support and guidance for our Indigenous graduate and professional students.

Institutions can also focus their curriculum on assignments and projects that relate to the tribal nation building process that encourage and empower Indigenous students to apply their commitment to their Nations in the classrooms.

Limitations

This study set out to focus on Indigenous males who had earned their graduate or professional degrees. However, existing research on high-achieving post-graduate Indigenous males is limited. I am concerned that scholars and practitioners will make broad generalizations about the Indigenous male graduate experience. With over 500 federally recognized tribes in the United States, I tried to gather a broad selection of Indigenous males. I located representation from 11 tribes. Despite the limited number of participants, the rich narratives and findings will contribute to future research.

Summary

The goal of my study was to explore ways Indigenous males found success in their graduate and professional programs through their own stories and an Indigenous lens. Brayboy (2014) states that "survival should not be marked as simply 'hanging on.' Instead survival should be viewed through a lens of possibility, building on and strengthening local capacity and revitalization." In sharing this view, I believe our Indigenous males can and will succeed, but as Indigenous scholars, we must continue to reclaim our space in the academy, for it is vital we continue to highlight our Indigenous brothers and sisters who often go unnoticed and (in)visible not only in our society, but in research. Indigenous students at the graduate and professional level represent a slight percentage in the total numbers of all graduates and our understanding of the experiences of these Indigenous graduate students is very limited.

As our Indigenous communities continue to face obstacles in their non-native institutions, and uphill battles of sovereignty in relation to our treaty, land, and water rights, it is imperative that we have educated modern warriors to serve as leaders with both the academic and cultural knowledge to lead, protect and serve our tribal peoples. Although the numbers of Indigenous females in graduate programs is still dismal, they have exceeded Indigenous males by almost double in number. In order to maintain the balance in our tribal communities and produce future modern warriors to protect and serve our Indigenous people, it is crucial we have a deeper understanding of the graduate and professional experience of this population.

Increasing the number of Indigenous males and females in graduate and professional degree program levels ensures our Indigenous ways of life to continue as it has for thousands of years. These Indigenous graduates are crucial to our survival as Indigenous people because they have the skills,

knowledge, and leadership to best serve our Nations and navigate through society. To support future Indigenous leaders and modern warriors, we must understand the ways these Indigenous males achieved success in graduate and professional programs. The stories shared by the Indigenous males in this study provided invaluable insight into this underreported group of students. The knowledge and insight provided by this study will contribute to the body of knowledge that can help to understand this underrepresented and (in)visible group of men.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me your story about how you came to receive your graduate or professional degree?

2. What contributed to your decision to attend graduate school?

3. What was going on in your life at that time?

4. How would you describe yourself as a person back then?

5. As you look back on your graduate school days, who, if anyone was involved or played an important role in mentoring/helping you during this time?

6. During this time of graduate work, are there any positive events that stand out in your mind? How did these events affect you as a person?

7. Are there any negative events that stand out in your mind? How did these events affect you as a person?

8. Did you seek help when you faced obstacles or challenges in your graduate or professional program?

9. Can you describe the most important lessons you learned through your graduate /professional program experience?

10. Has any organization been helpful? What did this organization help you with? How has it been supportive?

11. What do you think are the most important ways to persist and succeed in graduate/professional school? How did you discover these?

12. Tell me about the strengths that you discovered or developed through graduate/professional school.

13. After having these experiences in graduate/professional school, what advice would you give to someone who has just been accepted into a graduate/professional school program?

14. Is there something that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

15. Is there something else you think I should know to understand your story better?

16. Is there anything you would like to ask me?