ISSUES OF PERSISTENCE FOR NINE SEMINOLE NATION OF OKLAHOMA STUDENTS IN AN OKLAHOMA PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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CHAPTER I

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The number of minority enrollments in higher education institutions has continued to increase over the past decade (Tierney, 1992). However there is still little parity between the baccalaureate graduation rates of minority and those of white students (Wright & Tierney, 1991). There is a need to recognize that since minorities will represent an increasing proportion of the U.S. population, and almost one-third of all new jobs created by 2000 will require a four-year college degree, the completion of baccalaureate degrees by minorities is a preeminent issue of our times (Brown, 1993; Darden, Bagaka, Armstrong & Payne, 1994; Hudson Institute, 1987).

The American Council on Education (ACE) 1993 "Eleventh Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education" reconfirmed, that while the number of minority students in higher education continues to increase, there continues to be a disproportional number of minority students enrolling in two-year colleges and not completing a four-year degree. The ACE report acknowledged that this trend has been especially true for Native Americans enrolling into two-year tribal schools. Therefore, it is clear that minorities as a whole, and Native Americans in particular, are not completing four-year higher education degrees in sufficient numbers to meet the future needs of our country or world (Hudson Institute, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

Native Americans must complete baccalaureate degrees in order to compete in the present and future job markets (Darden et al., 1994). Further, a principal goal in higher education is to provide institutional structures that are designed to attract and retain all students, including Native Americans (Boland, Stanatakos & Rogers, 1994; Tierney, 1992). These institutional structures are programs of intervention designed to supplement for student need (Kors, 1993).

Studies indicate Native Americans are not completing baccalaureate programs at four-year higher education universities in sufficient numbers and institutional structures are not successful in the retention of minorities, especially Native Americans (Tierney, 1992; Wright & Tierney, 1991).

Thus while there is a need for Native Americans to complete baccalaureate degrees, there is indication that, in many cases, they do not. These two notions coexist for several possible reasons. One consideration is some institutions create structures that in turn are not responsive to the Native American culture (Darden et al., 1994). Another consideration is some campuses do not provide an environment nurturing to minority cultures (National Task Force for Minority Achievement in Higher Education, 1990). This perspective has been reported as being especially true for Native Americans students (Eberhard, 1989; Wright, 1985). There may be a difference in the perceived value of institutional structures by the Native American students who choose to persist in their college enrollment and by the Native American students who do not choose to persist in their college enrollment.

Mary Douglas (1992) maintains that the source of personal choice can be found in the context of human social and cultural experience, and an individual's choices are influenced greatly by their culture. She contends that the cultural bias of an individual is a powerful predictor of whether he or she remains in or withdraws from a particular situation such as a college. Thus, Douglas's (1992) cultural typology provides a framework to explore why Native Americans make certain choices about their college education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this research was to explore the reasons Native Americans of the Seminole Nation who enroll into higher education chose to either remain enrolled or to withdraw. This study also explored student descriptions of the impact that their Native American culture and the institutional structures of the university had on their retention. This goal was accomplished by focusing on one specific tribe at one specific university. Information was collected through McCracken's (1988) long interview method from two groups of Seminole students. One group was made up of persisting students, those who had remained continually enrolled in higher education after completing at least one year of study. The second group was non-persisting students, those who did not remain enrolled after completing at least one year of study.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to focus this study:

Question 1: How do Seminole students who remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe their reasons for persisting in their college education?

Question 2: How do Seminole students who do not remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe their reason for not persisting in their college education?

Theoretical Framework

Student service professionals use the term "institutional structures" to refer to programs of intervention that are specifically intended to enhance the developmental gains of all students (Kors, 1993). However, many times these programs have a cultural bias that favor the majority culture (Darden et al., 1994). The development of institutional structures from a paradigmatic perspective of majority students may not produce a campus ethos nurturing to non-mainstream students.

During the past decade research has indicated that there has been a gradual increase in the total number of Native Americans enrolling into higher education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1995). However, the majority of this growth can be directly attributed to the creation of two-year colleges on reservations under the control of tribal governance (Wright, 1990). While tribal colleges have resulted in a substantial increase in the number of Native Americans entering higher education, there has not been a significant increase in the percentage of Native Americans attending public four-year universities or completing baccalaureate degrees (Tierney, 1992).

Mary Douglas (1982/1992) has developed a typology that allows the exploration of cultural perspectives. Her premise is that culture can be interpreted and explained through the concepts of grid and group. Grid is the measure of the degree of strength in the structure that is imposed on an individual by their social environment.

Group is a measure of the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit. These two dimensions are mutually interacting and interdependent. The simultaneous consideration of high and low grid and group provides a description of Douglas's (1982/1992) four distinct social environments: Individualist is low-grid, low group; Isolates is High-grid, low group; Corporate is high-grid, high-group; and, Collectivist is low-grid, high-group. In addition Douglas (1992) states that each cultural type embraces a particular way of viewing the world. This "cultural bias" is defined by Harris (1995b) as "social values, preferences, and assumptions about the world and life that are generated from and essential to a particular social environment" (p. 3). Therefore, consideration of the cultural bias for each of the cultural types identified in this study provided a way to explore the perspectives of how given individuals made choices about persisting or not persisting in their education.

Procedures

Researcher Biographical Data

The researcher was born and raised in Oklahoma. He is of Native American ancestry. His father was of Choctaw/Chickasaw origin and attended both Haskell Institute (now Haskell Indian Junior College) in Lawrence, Kansas and Oklahoma A & M (now Oklahoma State University). He did not graduate from either institution. When the researcher was age eight, his father died and the cultural orientation of the family became almost exclusively white. While the researcher has never been fully immersed in the Native American culture, he has maintained an active interest and

involvement in minority and Native American activities since the early 1970s. As an undergraduate at Oklahoma State University, the researcher was a member of the Native American Club and received educational assistance funds from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Most of his professional life, the researcher has lived in Oklahoma and has had direct and indirect associations with minority education programs. For the past eight years the researcher has worked in higher educational administrative positions that involved contacts with Native American and minority assistance programs. Currently the researcher is director of institutional assessment operations at a small, rural, two-year state college. This college is within 20 miles of the Seminole Nation tribal headquarters. The researcher has a masters degree and has been a doctoral student for five years.

Data Needs

This research required data that described the responses of Seminole students who had completed at least one year of study at an Oklahoma four-year institution. A focus was on the importance the student placed on the institutional structures of the college. This required that data be gathered from two distinct groups of students, those who continued in higher education after one year and those who did not return to college after their first year.

Respondents

McCracken (1989) states that the selection of respondents is a critical step in the interview process. The source for the participants in this study was Native Americans from the Seminole Nation who had completed at least one year of study at a Oklahoma public higher education institution. The selection began at the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office (SNHEO). The office manager readily agreed to send out letters to specific members of the Seminole nation who verified that they had completed at least one year of Oklahoma higher education and who were thought to be potentially interested in participating in the study. The researcher supplied the education office with an introductory letter to explain the requirements of the respondents (See Appendix A). The researcher's letter was enclosed with one from the SNHEO stating their support of the project. The letters advised the students that the education office would release their names and phone numbers to the researcher unless the students contacted the education office to indicate they did not want to participate.

The researcher then reviewed the list of potential respondents with the Seminole Higher Education Office to select two base groups of ten Seminoles each, one of persisters and one of non-persisters. The group of persisters were Seminoles currently attending in a specific Oklahoma public higher education institution and who have remained continuously enrolled after having completed a year of college studies. The non-persisting group was made up of Seminoles who have attended a specific public higher education institution and have completed at least one year of college, but have not maintained a continuous enrollment.

The actual number of respondents interviewed was determined during the study and was decided by examining the variance and replication in the interview data as it was collected. For the purpose of this study the terms Native American, American Indian and Indian were regarded as being synonymous. Individuals who were identified as Seminoles were accepted as being Native American as the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office had designated them as persons who were eligible to receive tribal funds to assist in their college education. No additional attempt was made to determine a respondent's degree of Indian blood or other verification of ethnic origin.

Data Collection

Student Selection Procedure. The Native Americans participating in this study were volunteers who had been identified through a process that involved the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office. The SNHEO manager reviewed the files of recent Seminole students in Oklahoma public higher education and selected an initial list of students. It then contacted the students to determine if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once this list was established, the SNHEO indicated the individuals whom they felt would be of particular help to the researcher.

These potential respondents were contacted by the researcher to determine if they were indeed interested in participating in the study. Once this had been confirmed, a time and place for the interview was established. An effort was made to conduct interviews with a representative number of male and female respondents.

Institutional Criteria. The study focused on individuals who had completed at least one year of study at an Oklahoma public higher education institution. Oklahoma

higher education is deemed a suitable site as the state has nine public institutions with Native American enrollments in excess of a thousand students. These nine institutions are twice the number of any other state's public higher education institutions with at least a thousand Native Americans enrolled (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1992). Public higher education was selected as it constitutes the largest percentage of American Indians in post-secondary institutions (OSRHE, 1995).

For the purpose of this study, institutional structures are defined as agencies, services, personnel, programs or systems, both academic or non-academic, that are intended to enhance the developmental gains of students. Examples of academic institutional structures are: libraries, enrollment counseling services, peer tutoring centers, mentoring programs, and retention systems. Examples of non-academic institutional structures are: student health services, marital counseling services, financial aid offices, residence hall programs, and student service operations.

Interview Procedures. McCracken (1989) maintains that no instrument of inquiry is more revealing for certain types of descriptive and analytic purposes than the long interview. The long interview utilizes a questionnaire to structure a set of "open-ended questions designed to give the investigator a highly efficient, productive, stream-lined instrument of inquiry" (McCracken, 1989, p. 7). This interview process was used to identify cultural categories and shared meanings. The interviews were conducted during the spring 1996 academic term.

The student volunteers who were selected to participate in the study were contacted and an interview appointment was scheduled. The interview was conducted at a neural location selected by the respondent. The length of time that was required to

conduct a "long interview" varied from one to two hours. Students were asked to discuss to what degree institutional structures and their native culture have contributed to their retention or attrition. All student interviews were audiotaped and then verbatim transcripts were created.

Data Analysis

Long interview procedures lend themselves to a natural blending of collecting and analyzing data. This process demanded that the researcher be constantly aware of where a respondent interview was going, as well as keeping a perspective on the direction of the overall project. Marshall and Rossman (1995) maintain that "data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to a mass of collected data" (p. 111). Analyzing qualitative data is an organized search for general statements that can be made about relationships that exist among identified categories. The process requires the researcher to use the preliminary research questions, information collected from the related literature review, and the data collected during the interview process to develop a rich descriptive set of material to describe the elements of the study.

In analyzing the data that was collected during the long interview process, McCracken (1989) proposes that there are five stages that should be involved. This first stage of analysis comprises combining the original transcript with any observations made by the researcher regarding respondents behaviors that occur in conjunction with the interview.

During the second stage of the process the researcher should review the combined pieces of data that have been obtained from interview. These observations are

then compared to those that have already been made doing the initial stage. During this stage the researcher is particularly interested in identifying similarities and dissimilarities that exist in each interview.

The third stage of McCracken's procedure involves culling the transcripts to eliminate parts that have not provoked repeated observations. This process of data reduction is intended to concentrate the information into relevant and manageable chunks. By following this process, the researcher identifies the meanings and insights that are found in the patterns and themes in the transcripts. It is through this method that the researcher is enabled to gain a better understanding of the context and content of the interviews.

In McCracken's fourth stage, the researcher must pass judgement on the data. The information must be reviewed critically to create an accurate representation of the prominent themes that have emerged from the preceding stages.

In the fifth stage the researcher focuses on any interrelationships among interviews. This step requires the consideration of all of the interviews, with the goal being to identify mutual themes. This leads to the formation of "conclusions" and interpretations of the data. However, it is an essential aspect of any qualitative research design to allow for a considerable amount of flexibility to be built into the actual analysis process. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that flexibility is important to the process as it allows the research to ". . . unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge" (p. 210). The use of the Douglas grid-group theory (1986) was not imposed as *an priori* model to pre-judge the data as it was collected, but rather was used in the fifth stage of analysis to illuminate major aspects of the study.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped this study provides an important step for schools to use in developing systems aimed at improving the graduation rates of Native Americans. This study was an attempt to explore the importance of factors that previously have not been adequately considered when evaluating the needs of Native Americans in public higher education programs. If there is to be a new paradigm that will positively impact American Indian achievement in higher education, it must be one that embraces the Native American culture.

Quantitative studies are designed to yield generalizations in their findings. The qualitative counterpart is transferability. Institutions having Native American populations similar to those in this study may be able to make use of the findings of this study. The study may also provide information useful for tribal offices interested in exploring ways to evaluate the educational settings their tribal members are attending. An important addition to the body is the theoretical concepts of Douglas's typology. Cultural theory may bring some answers to important questions pertaining to why some persist and others do not.

Summary

The purpose for this research was to explore the reasons Native Americans of the Seminole Nation who enroll into higher education chose to either remain enrolled or to withdraw. A long interview technique was used to collect the data. Douglas's cultural theory was proposed to describe the interrelations of these two concerns.

Reporting Overview

Chapter II contains a review of the related literature. Chapter III presents the procedures used in the study. Chapter IV is a presentation of the research results and interpretation of the data. Chapter V offers the summary, implications and commentary.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is divided into seven sections. The first section is an introduction to general concerns of minority participation in American higher education. The second section is a historical perspective of educational programs for Native Americans. Section three is the research that pertains to the impact of the Native American culture on the educational process. The purpose of section four is to examine how institutional structures of colleges affect the success of American Indian students. The fifth section examines Mary Douglas's cultural theory. Section six is the justification of Oklahoma as a study site. The final section summarizes the data presented.

The Need For Changes In Minority Higher Education Programs

United States Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell, writing for the majority opinion in the landmark 1978 Bakke decision, stated, ". . . the nation's future depends upon leaders trained through a wide exposure to the ideas and mores of students as diverse as this nation of many peoples" (University of California Regents v. Bakke, 1978, p. 319). In matters of minority representation in higher education, the Bakke decision stands as the landmark case. While there have been many challenges to substantive parts

of the Bakke decision, the essential aspect that addresses the basic rights of minority members to have equal access to enter and participate in public higher education programs has remained uncontested.

Astin (1982) identified two of the benefits of diversity as being an increase in the pool of qualified candidates for employment in various fields and the opportunity to educate non-minorities to appreciate cultural and ethnic differences in values and attitudes of other races. Regarding Astin's first point, a 1995 report by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) estimates that currently about 20% of all available jobs require four or more years of college, however this percentage is expected to increase to 27% by the year 2000. A report by Hudson Institute (1987) also noted two dramatic shifts are continuing to occur in the demographic profile of the nation: 1) an ever larger portion of the college-aged population is made up of minority members, and 2) concurrently, there has been a decline in the overall college-aged population. Therefore, college campuses can expect to have smaller enrollments with an increasing minority presence.

In a 1985 study, Astin examined "flagship" universities in the United States and determined that minorities were under-represented in New York, Texas, California, and most of the southern states, including Oklahoma. By Astin's estimates, minority enrollments would need to increase 200 to 600 percent to have proportional representation. The study also found that states with the largest minority populations were also more likely to have a greater minority under-representation in their higher education programs. Astin concluded that minorities are not entering four-year systems in proportional numbers, particularly in states with large minority populations.

In the Bakke decision (1978), Justice Powell stated that a diverse student body promotes "an atmosphere of speculation, experience and creation that is so essential to the quality of higher education." Astin (1985) argues that institutions of excellence must provide all students the opportunity to learn from multi-cultural environments. Whitehorse, Berg, and Dershiwsky (1992) contend that, while education may have become more available for Native Americans and other minorities, it has not become more equally distributed and, as a result, higher education has not provided social mobility so much as it has continued to reproduced inequality from generation to generation. A 1993 American Council on Education (ACE) report suggested that many universities have developed into systems that work well for the majority race and, while allowing an increased level of access for minorities, have shown a remarkable resistance to assisting them once they arrive. Native Americans were found to be especially under-represented in receiving a significant proportion the of baccalaureate and advanced degrees awarded during the 1990s (NCES, 1995).

The absence of minority degree obtainment creates a situation that carries extreme implications when higher education contemplates Astin's (1985) second point: the need for the nation to have adequate quantities of competent completions to maintain the country's productivity and international competitiveness. Yet the need for minority degree completions is not relative; it is absolute. The National Task Force of Minority Achievement in Higher Education (1990) warned that, by the year 2000: 1) more than one third of the workers entering the work force will be minorities; 2) a majority of all new jobs that are created during this time period will require post-secondary education; and 3) that as late as 1987, minority students received only 12 percent of the

baccalaureate degrees awarded in the United States. It is estimated that, by the turn of the century, only 15% of the new entrants to the U.S. workforce will be native-born white males, compared to 47% in 1987 (ACE, 1988; Johnson and Lashley, 1987).

A need exists to reduce the gap between the marketable skills being developed by minorities today and society's technological demands of tomorrow (Hudson Institute, 1987). An illustration of this point is that Native Americans attend college at a rate half that of their Anglo counterparts (NCES, 1995). Consideration must be given as to the problems the country will face if minorities do not improve their rates of completing quality higher education programs. The graduates of today are the high school teachers, the elected officials, and the responsible voters of the future. Unlocking the educational door is not good enough, society must be willing to open it.

An Historical Review Of Native American Education In Literature

If higher education institutions are to be effective in opening the doors of education to Native Americans, colleges need to understand and appreciate that to encourage diversity in part depends on an ability to demonstrate a knowledge of the culture, history, values, and beliefs of the American Indian students on their campus.

1492 to 1789: Education by Discoverers

The perspective of many Native Americans is that since the invasion of Christopher Columbus, they have been engaged in an on-going fight to protect their natural rights (Jacobs, 1993). Attempts to "educate" Native Americans have spanned a

period of history that precedes even the founding of the United States. Research by Adams (1971) explained that primarily three nations vied to provide the educational needs of the "savages" who lived on the American shores.

Spanish efforts to educate the Indian were primarily through missionaries who established schools as early as 1538 (The University of Santo Domingo). There were three principal objectives for creating these schools: to develop a means of communicating with the tribes, to convert the Indians to Catholicism, and to provide a method of training native workers to serve the needs of their conquerors. Therefore, Spain's interests were essentially self-serving.

The French education involvement with the Indians in the New World was pragmatic, focusing mainly on their attempts to develop a lucrative fur trade. The initial efforts at education were by the proprietors of trading posts, who trained natives in the use of metal traps and other trade goods in their hunting and trapping. Considerable effort was later made to educate the Indians to the various advantages of being French allies in times of conflict with the English.

England initiated a variety of religious and academic undertakings with the "noble savage," with some Indians being sent to the mother country for exhibition and education. Most Indians viewed the English propensity of establishing townsites as an encroachment. Therefore, local efforts at educating the Indians also served a peacekeeping function. The colleges of William and Mary and Harvard are known to have admitted Indians as early as 1654, with the first Indian graduate, Caleb, completing a degree from Harvard in 1665 (Wright & Tierney, 1991).

The educational programs undertaken by these three European powers were for different purposes. While the Spanish missionaries emphasized religious aspects more than the French, the education of the Indian was viewed by both countries as a matter of economic necessity for furthering their interests in America. However, to the English invaders, educating the Indian was purely an incidental aspect in their goals of expansionism and colonization.

The results of the educational efforts by these three nations had on the Indians were mixed. As a consequence of their contacts with these countries, some Indians became literate, a few were converted, and entire tribes were wiped out by infections for which the Indians had no natural immunity (Jacobs, 1993). "Estimates about the proportion of Native Americans who were killed by European diseased run as high as 95%" (Bohannon, 1995, p. 123).

An early colonial creation, an "Indian Oxford" at Harvard, was abandoned when students who enrolled either died or left from lack of interest (Ranbon & Lynch, 1988/1989, p. 16). When Dartmouth was founded prior to the American Revolution, a primary goal of its mission was, "to educate and instruct the Indian" (Wright & Tierney, 1991, p. 13). While some Indians did stay in attendance at the college until 1893, Dartmouth had only three Indian graduates during the 18th century and only eight more during the 19th century (Wright & Tierney, 1991).

1789 to 1870: Initial Governmental Involvement

The United States government Indian education policy began with President Washington's administration dealings with the Seneca Nation in 1792, when

Congressional approval was given to undertake programs to civilize the American Indians (U. S. Department of Education, 1991). Thus, with the emergence of the new government, a new era of Indian relations and education began. Historically the attempts by the United States government to provide for the educational needs of Native Americans can be best characterized as a record that demonstrates the attitudes of major dominance, paternalism, religious evangelism, and neglect (O'Brien, 1989; Pevar, 1992).

During the fledgling years of the government, Congress underwrote several existing Indian missionary school programs, primarily to aid on-going peacekeeping efforts. Adams (1971) reported by 1793 that the U. S. government had undertaken to provide Indians with training programs to make them more self-reliant. From 1794 to 1871, Congress made over 120 treaty agreements with Indian tribes; most stipulated some type of educational provision (Debo, 1940).

In 1819, appropriations for the creation of an Indian Civilization Fund were established to provide agricultural materials and training at missionary schools for friendly tribes on the frontier. Passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1839 forced the mass relocation of Indians to lands west of the Mississippi. This action was an attempt to resolve the Indian problem, by decreasing Indian conflicts with white interests by relocating the Native Americans onto lands believed beyond the interests of civilized white people (Adams, 1971). Understandably, this upheaval put the existing education system for Indians into shambles. On the heels of this chaos came the 1848 acquisition of California, the discovery of gold in 1849, the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1862, and the Homestead Act of 1862. Once again, Indians were placed on a collision course with western expansionists who viewed the rights and lands guaranteed

to the Indian tribes as impediments to progress (La Farge, 1942). The fires of encroachment were once more fanned, this time for the Plains Indians, resulting in the last of the major Indian uprisings.

The United States Peace Commission (1868) reported that the hostilities of this period were largely the result of the government not abiding with treaty commitments and of the provocations of greedy landseekers. For the American Indian, it was a time of total disruption of established schools, a period of mental and physical disorientation, and an era in which the extinction of an estimated one-third of the Indian population occurred (Ranbon and Lynch, 1987/88). The spin of the news about the Indian wars during this period caused a hardening of the public's view about the Redman. One of the consequences of this changed American attitude was that educational assistance became rationed like the food and medicines that were being dispensed to an insolent hord of savages (Adams, 1971).

1870 to 1930: Direct Governmental Control

The legacy of the previous decades was the passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887, an outright assault by the federal government on the tribal system of the American Indian. Under the General Allotment Act tribal governments were disbanded and tribal lands were parceled out to individuals, both actions directly undermining the centralizing force of the tribes (O'Brien, 1989). The inability of Native Americans to comprehend the idea of individual land ownership had devastating effects, of the 1.7 million acres of lands held by the tribes in 1866, less than 200,000 acres were still owned by Native Americans in 1890 (Gittinger, 1917). Indian education began to be regulated

by Federal policy in 1889, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Commission of Indian Affairs (1897) established the policy that the government was not responsible for providing higher education to its wards. At that point Indian education programs began to de-emphasize academics and stressed vocational "manual" training.

Federal Indian policy of this period was marked by civilization and citizenship efforts to assimilate the Indians into white society. Compulsory education was believed the best way for this absorption to be accomplished (U.S. Department of Interior, 1928). Parents who did not send their children to schools were subject to having rations and annuities withheld. When these punitive actions failed to achieve the desired attendance results in the reservation day school programs, the government decided to create off-reservation boarding schools. Boarding schools were seen as the logical means of removing the children from the culture, the family, and the way of life believed to be holding back the assimilation of the Indian into American society.

The total disregard for the interests of the Indians involved, as well as for their culture, is demonstrated by the fact that, although Native Americans since 1744 had argued against removing children from their family, governmental policy decided the removal was the best policy (Wright, 1991). Native Americans were treated as a conquered people, given no voice and little choice: essentially, cooperation or starvation. The Native American children required to attend boarding schools were frequently subjected to a myriad of humiliating experiences, tyrannical hostility, and open contempt at the hands of white administrators (Debo, 1940; Horse Capture, 1994).

La Belle and Ward (1994) and Lutz (1980) agree that the premiere Indian boarding school of the period (1879-1920) was the Carlisle Indian School in

Pennsylvania. During its initial twenty-five years, retired military captain Richard Henry Pratt served as the administrator. The main premise of the School was that Indian youth were essentially inferior persons from an inferior culture who could be expected to need only a limited education (La Belle & Ward, 1994).

The belief was that it was necessary to take away the "Indian-ness" to save the human being (Wescott, 1991, p. 45). Pratt referred to his program as an attempt to "Kill the Indian, and save the man" (Lutz, 1980, p. 5). The School's goals were to civilize the Indians through education and to afford them the privileges of citizenship.

The education from Pratt's boarding school program failed miserably to prepare Indians for college or little else besides lives as farmers, mechanics, or housewives (Wright & Tierney, 1991). A victim of his times, Pratt was a misguided humanist who understood and cared about the plight of the Indian but who never developed an appreciation of Indian culture (Wescott, 1991). The lack of success of this federal education program and its endurance stand as monuments to governmental management of Indian affairs (Chavers, 1991).

Assimilation, the driving concept behind boarding schools, continued to be the primary goal of Indian educational programs from colonial times until early twentieth century (Ellis, 1994). The main problem with assimilationist thinking was the misconception of Indians as tablets on which a culture could be readily erased in o order to make room for the inscription of a new one (Sowell, 1994). The demise of the boarding school program was not from a near virtual absence of desirable accomplishments from the system. Rather the change resulted from Congressional

disapproval over the escalating operational costs being passed onto the government (Debo, 1940).

Congress began seeking alternative ways to deal with the nagging Indian education program. Promise was found in a Commission of Indian Affairs report (1897) which stated,

> Strong inducements must be placed before the public schools to reach out and gather in the prospective Indians, and by educating them on an equal plane with the white people, better fit them for assuming in the future duties and responsibilities of citizens (p. 5).

As a consequence, in 1910 the U. S. government began experimenting with a process of contracting with public school districts to provide educational services. Surprisingly several school districts that previously had indicated little or no Indian presence suddenly reported large and impressive numbers of Indian students within their boundaries. The increase was such that, in 1913, the supervisor of schools for U. S. Indian Service reported that 78.3% of all Indian children were attending school. Thomas Moffett, a missionary educator during the period, opened his book, The American Indian on a New Trail (1914) with the following statement.

> Two main ideas have prevailed as to the best way of making 'good Indians'. The first is to kill them, . . . The other is to convert them. Redeeming the redman is a more hopeful and also a more interesting process than rifling him (p. xi).

Truly, the history of Indian education, especially in this period, must be viewed as a dismal record of attempted assimilation and eventual failure (Tierney & Kidwell, 1991).

The stop-and-start system of educational services for Indians offered by federal, public, private, and religious organizations did little except confuse the Indians as to what their future would hold. Countless cases exist in which federal schools, services or programs for Indians stopped after a short period as a result of the non-availability of the federal government's ever dwindling "civilization funds" (Commission of Indian Affairs, 1897, p. 13). As funds ran low, schools were forced to chose between continuing to stay in existence on nominal budgets that provided inadequate facilities and supplies or accepting the closure of their doors. Historically it is difficult to report which of these two choices would have been better for the Native Americans who were affected (Szasz, 1977). Dippie (1982) reported that, in 1928, only 8% of all Native American children were at or ahead of their appropriate grade level and 27% were 5 or more years behind.

Intrusted with the overall well-being of the American Indians, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) became an agency of the Department of the Interior (BIA, 1928). The BIA undoubtedly served the Indian's best and worst interests. The agency kept the Indian presence alive in Washington D. C., but also it did little to secure aid needed by the tribes. At a time when the United States was a world leader in the services desperately needed by Indians, such as health, education, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, the BIA was able to ignore the Indian people's need for all of them (Szasz, 1977).

The severity of the impact that generations of neglect has had on Indian achievement may be factually impossible to measure. However, educational obtainment can be measured, and, as late as 1932, only 385 Indians were enrolled in colleges

nationally and only 52 Indian college graduates could be identified (Wright & Tierney, 1991).

1930 to 1970: New Deal Education Reforms

The Merian Report of 1928 helped to alter the federal approach to Indian education. Rather than continuing to blame the culture as the reason why Indians were not progressing educationally as hoped, the report described the problems associated with the operations of boarding schools. The response of Congress was to shift the focus from off-reservation boarding schools to the expansion of the public day school programs for Indians. This shift away from boarding school program also signaled an end to the federal anti-tribal policy (Adams, 1971). In 1943 the success of this approach bore fruit: For the first time in American history, more Indian children were enrolled in public education programs than were attending government schools.

The 1930s brought much needed government support for Indian education. In 1931, Congress began annual appropriations earmarked for Indian education, and in 1934 it passed the Indian Reorganization Act. These events, combined with the availability of GI Bill money (1944) for Indian veterans returning from World War II, legitimized Indian access to higher education. An improving picture was also seen in the common schools in 1946, as 38% of Indian children were at or above their grade level in school, and only 4% were five or more years behind (Dippie, 1982). Still, La Farge (1942) reported that no more than 10% of the all Navajo people could speak English, and of those who did, most had only a limited use of the language.

Nationally the persistence of Native Americans in higher education remained extremely low. In 1961, only a total of 66 American Indian students earned a Bachelor's degree. In 1968, only one percent of the American Indian population was enrolled in college, but the number of college graduates increased to 186 (Szasz, 1977). Passage of the Amendments to the Title III Indian Higher Education Act of 1965 marked the beginning of a new era in the government's position by advocating that tribal authorities should be placed in positions of control in determining how best to serve the educational needs of their people. In 1969, the growth of Native American education was shown in the founding of the first intertribal education association.

Since 1970: Indian Self-Determinism

The American Council on Education (ACE, 1988) and Fries (1987) noted that the number of college-aged American Indians more than doubled during the 1970s. However, the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES, 1988) still reported that college attendance rates of American Indians remained the lowest of all minority groups. Only 38.6% of the American Indians who entered college in 1971 had completed a baccalaureate degree by 1980. Native Americans were only 6% of the total number of college graduates for the decade versus 15% for Blacks (Astin, 1982). Fries (1987) found that by 1980 only 60% of college aged Native Americans had graduated from high school, and only 8% had completed a college degree.

Tribal colleges were founded in the 1970s as a natural outgrowth of the unsuccessful educational experiences American Indians on mainstream campuses (Wright, 1990). Tribal colleges address a basic need often overlooked for Indians in

public higher education: The ability to respond to specific cultural background of their students. As a whole tribal colleges have proven themselves to be more community based, more respectful of the cultural traditions and the values of the region, and involve themselves in the overall development of their area (Mooney, 1988). The creation of BIA educational initiatives, passage of the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, and the Tribal Control Community College Assistance Act of 1978, each greatly enhanced the tribal control over education. Each of these actions serves as an example of rights granted Indians, rights Native Americans had been seeking for nearly two centuries. Many of these are same rights that Anglos as well as other non-Indian minorities have enjoyed for generations (Whiteman, 1978).

The 1980, U. S. Census figures placed the total population of American Indians at just over two million people with more than half being age 14 or under. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990) reported the matriculation for Indians during this time was only 27% with half leaving before finishing one year of college. Wilson and Justiz (1987/1988) reported that, in contrast to Native Americans, whites were one and half times more likely to graduate from high school, two times more likely to enter college, and four times more likely to complete a college degree. These data seems to agree with Astin's (1982) findings that, while the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded nationally increased by 23% for whites and 12% for blacks, there was only a 6% increase in the Native Americans graduation rate during the 1970s.

The success of tribal colleges during the 1970s and 1980s was indicated by the fact that of the seven four-year higher education institutions nationally with enrollments

of 500 or more Native Americans, most were tribally controlled colleges (Tierney, 1991). This imbalance of American Indian enrollments existed despite the fact that until 1983 no tribal college was accredited (Brown, 1993). ACE and the Education Commission of the States (1988) reported that the students enrolled in Indian-operated schools in Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma, and South Dakota felt these schools were more responsive to the needs of Indian students (Sawyer, 1981).

The largest number of tribal schools are on reservations and have proven to be a significant source of educational opportunity for these Indians. While continually under-funded, tribal schools have proven to be successful because they provide a supportive climate that not only allows but stresses the importance of students maintaining their cultural/community base (Mooney, 1989; Wright, 1990). The tribal-college movement is a commitment by American Indians to reclaim their cultural heritage through their own curriculum and distinctive campus ethos. However, a need exists to provide educational services for non-reservation Native Americans. Indeed as Debo (1970) reported, nobody is sure how many Indians live in urban environments.

Wright (1985) projected that less than ten percent of American Indian college freshmen in 1980 would complete their baccalaureate degree. In the Southwest, the area of the country with the largest concentration of Native Americans, attrition rates at some four-year colleges are 75% to 85% (Pottinger, 1987). Red Horse (1986) found that tribal leaders in Arizona estimate that 65% of their tribal members do not complete their first year in college. Nationally, the first-year retention rate for Native Americans is 47% to 50% (Carnegie Foundation, 1990; Wells, 1989).

Native American undergraduate enrollments in peaked 1982 at 87,700 (NCES, 1988). However, in 1984, 35% of American post-secondary institutions reported no Native Americans enrollments. In 1981, of 19,165 Master's and Doctoral degrees that were earned in the United States, American Indians received only 14. The largest number of Ph.D.'s in one year to Native Americans was 116 in 1987 (ACE, 1989). The collective cost to the nation in lost lifetime earnings and foregone taxes from a single year's dropouts from schools has been estimated at 200 billion dollars (BIA, 1988).

A 1994 study by the United States Department of Education that looked at Native Americans who graduated from high school in 1980 found that, by 1986, only 39% had attended college, and only 11% had completed at least a Bachelor's degree. While the number of Indians entering college increased by 11% between 1988 and 1990, American Indians only accounted for 0.8% of the total number of the college enrollments nationally (ACE, 1993; Evangelauf, 1992a).

The 1990 U. S. Census figures on the educational attainment for Native Americans age 20 and older indicate that only 9% of all Native Americans have completed at least a Bachelor's degree while fifty percent of the American Indians age 30 and over have not completed high school (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1992). During the same year, American Indians were awarded only 0.4 percent of the Bachelor's degrees conferred. Wright (1991) contends the underrepresentation of Native American college enrollments is a widespread pattern. While the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded to minorities continued to increase during the 1980s, the percentage of gain for all other minority groups far exceeded the modest 1.8% achieved by Native Americans (ACE, 1990).

Nel (1994) found that, of all minority groups, the condition of educational achievement and participation was the worst for Native Americans. Higher education and Native Americans must come to grips with the statistics that, of all racial/ethnic groups, Indians continue to have the highest percentage of high-school dropouts (U. S. Department of Education, 1991) and the lowest percentage of college educated adults (NCES, 1995). James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards and Oetting (1995) indicates the school dropout rate among Native Americans is currently 36% to 50%.

The Current Perspectives On Native American Education

Only 55% to 60% of the American Indians enrolled in the ninth grade are expected to graduate from high school; of those, between 21% to 40% are expected to enter college, with less than 15% of those persisting to the completion of a four-year degree, for an overall college graduation rate of less than 5% versus 16% for the general population (Fries, 1987; Tierney, 1992). These statistics are consistent with those from the ACE (1991) which found American Indians attend college at a rate less than half that achieved by their Anglo counterparts.

Since Native Americans are less than one percent of the national college population, they are almost never represented in sufficent numbers in national educational studies to permit reliable and valid generalization about their characteristics (NCES, 1995). Tierney and Kidwell (1991) termed this situation a "quiet crisis" (p. 4). for Native Americans. Since Indians are rarely more than two percent of the enrollment in most colleges, Indians have been and remain a group higher education finds easy to

ignore. In the past decade, a time when other minority groups have shown significant growth in their proportion of the national higher education enrollment, Native American participation has remained relatively constant (NCES, 1995).

Moffett's (1914) mentality is still common, "Give the Indian time to think white - to catch the incentives and achieve the goals which the paleface prizes, and he will make good" (p. 12). Higher education schools wanting to increase their diversity must first decide if integration means assimilating other cultures or if integration means learning to appreciate and value the differences of other cultures. Malinowski (1944) argues, ". . . our culture must not be imposed on others by force of arms, the power of wealth, or the stringency of law" (p. 218). Spang (1971) noted that the greatest problem American Indians have with non-Indians is the latter's total failure to accept, understand, and to treat the Indian's culture as equal to their own. Consequently, Indians who cherished traditional values and beliefs of their culture but who also wanted to succeed in school have had to learn to suppress their regard for their culture or risk a social rejection by the college community. Tierney (1992) relates that the institution a student attends is directly related to persistence, arguing that it is essential that a fit exists between the student and the school.

The American Indian has remained one of the least educated racial minority groups in the United States (Wright, 1991). Since 1980, the number of Native American college enrollments has increased (Fries,1987; Red Horse, 1986). However, the U. S. Department of Education (1994) reported, that while the percentage of minority students entering higher education between 1975 and 1992 increased by more than 7%, the percentage for Native American students remained relatively constant. The raw numbers

of Native Americans entering higher education from 1976 and 1980 grew about one percent annually. While nationally colleges are projecting minorities to be an increasing percentage of the two million students forecast to be enrolled in the year 2002 (Evangelauf, 1992a), Native Americans are expected to be the ethnic group with the smallest annual percentage increase (Evangelauf, 1992b).

The Impact of Culture on Native American Education

Tierney (1992) writes, "To speak of culture is to speak of change and evolution" (p. 50). Certainly, the educational experiences of Native Americans over the past centuries have been ones filled with change and evolutionary attempts. Still, the level of educational achievement obtained by Native Americans is at best abominable. McLaren (1989) describes culture as, ". . . the particular ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its 'given' circumstances and conditions of life" (p. 171). Bohannon (1995) maintains that, "A culture that can not change is a dead culture" (p. 61). Therefore a question exists as to what aspects of being Native American may be present that are obstructing the educational obtainment of Indians. An understanding of these obstruction is important, for as Maynard (1980) reported, "Those who differ from the majority are considered different, difficult and even defiant" (p. 399).

History has shown whites generally have great difficulty appreciating the importance that Native Americans place on their culture (Eberhard, 1989; Ellis, 1994; Whitehorse et al., 1992). How significant the long term effects are of educational systems having given little importance to the values of the Indian cultural remains

difficult to determine as research about American Indian persistence and retention in higher education is a fairly recent phenomenon (Whitehorse et al., 1992). The variety of educational concerns that have and continue to confront Indians is almost immeasurable (Bedford & Durkee, 1989; Fries, 1987; Ellis, 1994; Wright & Tierney, 1991).

Research suggests there is a common cultural background for American Indians. Indians certainly have a shared set of historical experiences and imposed political ideology, but there are also racial and cultural similarities (Aponte, Rivers, & Wohl, 1995). A case in point is that Native Americans and higher education today differs little from the past. In confrontations with white interests, Indians wanting to maintain their culture must be willing to continue in an on-going struggle to protect their traditional rights, values and beliefs (Jacobs, 1993; Nel, 1994).

Jenks (1993) notes the term culture embraces a range of topics and processes, differences and even paradoxes that defy an easy definition. Bohannon (1995) suggests that culture is adaptive, and can be studied by examining the processes used to adjust to the environment. Bohannon calls this adjustment "recontexting", the act of lifting something out of one context and depositing it in to another. Educationally for Native Americans this can be conceptualized as how well students are able to take the information from the school setting and apply it to the real world.

Research indicates that when evaluating cultural factors, Native Americans are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to be more educationally "at risk" when measured by such factors as academic preparation, single parent households, low parent education, limited English proficiency, sibling dropout rates, and low family income (Hawkins, 1992; James et al., 1995).

School Setting

The setting of the college preparatory school system for Native Americans is one that frequently lacks necessary lab facilities, is inadequately staffed and is typically underfunded (Hawkins, 1992; Kidwell, 1991; Tijernia & Biemer, 1987/1988). Hill (1991) noted that a principal reason for these conditions is that high proportion of Indian children attend elementary and secondary schools on reservations or in rural areas. Hill , maintains that problems of inadequate college preparatory programs are magnified even more for Indian students who attended rural reservation schools.

Even in instances where Native Americans do not live on a reservation, they typically live in rural or small town areas (NCES, 1995; OSRHE, 1991). Pottinger (1987) found that Indian graduates of non-reservation high schools were half as likely as their Anglo counterparts of the same high school ranking, to meet the minimum academic admission standards of four-year institutions. For Native Americans an inadequate preparation for college translates into required, non-credit courses that must be taken, making a difficult educational journey even longer.

Parental Factors

Several factors about parents have been linked to how students perform in the classroom. Lightfoot (1978) noted that parents frequently have preconceived and sometimes bias views of the usefulness of schooling and education in general. The educational achievement of parents has also been cited as a predictor of student success (ACE, 1991). The educational history of the mother and the father has also been tied to

family income as a factor in student success (Cohen & Brawer, 1991; National Task Force for Minority Achievement in Higher Education, 1990). These studies appear to verify Zwerling's (1976) observation: The educational success of students is related more to the family's income and the educational obtainment level of the parents than any other factors.

NCES (1995) reported that minority students whose parents have higher incomes and are better educated are more likely to remain in college than those whose parents have lower income or are less educated. Knowing the abysmal record of Indians in higher education (Tijerina & Biemer, 1987/1988) and that Native Americans are among the poorest of the poor (Wright & Tierney, 1991) there is little surprise in finding that American Indians are not succeeding in college.

Family

Family and kinship relations are vital aspects of the Native American culture (Glau, 1990). Tierney (1991) states that, "Family obligations are paramount for most Indian students" (p. 36). For Native Americans, a concept of family often includes a number of non-blood kinship relations to tribal members that are collectives termed "clans". The importance of clans is demonstrated that in many tribes clans are the principle sub-unit of the tribe. In some instances clan relations have been found to even supersede those of blood relations (Harry, 1992). Clans' attitudes have been shown to influence language preferences, religious beliefs and educational expectations.

Horton (1989) found that the majority of American Indians in higher education are typically first-generation college students, and that any previous family members who

have gone to college generally did not persist to the completion of a degree. Few Native American students have the benefit of college-educated parents who can adequately advise them as to probable situations that they will encounter in their pursuit of a college education (Kidwell, 1991). This absence of positive college experiences within the family units to use as a reference creates situations where Native Americans are entering higher education with unrealistic educational expectations and only a limited understanding of what is required for them to become effective students (Glau, 1990).

The retention of Indian students is undoubtedly facilitated by the degree of encouragement and support demonstrated by their family and their community (Falk & Aitken, 1984). When the family influence is negative attitudes towards the public system of white higher education in general, it is easy to appreciate why tribal college enrollments now account for nearly 15% of American Indians enrolled in colleges (Marriott, 1992). These results are a tribute to the value of the family to Native Americans. How deeply the effects of a negative family perception actually has on an individual student's academic performance can only be imagined (Wright, 1985).

Tribal Community

Tribal colleges, particularly those on reservations, reinforce a student's connection to his parents, community and tribe. Tijernia and Biemer (1987/1988) maintain that "tribalism" (p. 88) is the common thread that exists for American Indians. This sense of affiliation can result in Indian students going to college with the desire to return and to serve their tribe. Red Horse (1986) says the traditional Indian view of wealth is not be defined in terms of material possessions, but rather in terms of one's

cultural knowledge and of their role in the tribe. Black Elk, an Ogala Lakota holy man, said, "A person who is following the bad road is one who is distracted, who is ruled by his own senses, and who lives for himself rather than for his people" (Brown, 1971, p. 122). Research suggests that for many Native American students the desire to be able to benefit their tribe provides an important motivation for them to seek a college degree (Harry, 1992).

Brown (1993) reports Indian students in mainstream colleges report being frustrated with the requirements for a degree that are not seen as relevant to their specific goal, or to their perceptions of the professional expertise needed by their community. In addition, if the student does not acquire skills needed by the tribe, achieving a college degree may provide them with little or no increased employment opportunity when they return to their community (Tijernia and Biemer, 1987/1988). The demands for higher education are clear. Institutions wanting to provide effective programs for Native Americans must have curriculums that are responsive to the issues and concerns that are relevant to the students, the tribal leaders and the needs of the Native American community they serve (Beaulieu, 1991).

Economics

Finances and financial aid are first order concerns of all minorities in higher education (Cibik & Chambers, 1991). Minorities disproportionately represent those who apply for and qualify for financial assistance (ACE, 1991). One problem facing Native Americans is since 1980 tuition has risen twice as fast as inflation, but tribal and BIA scholarships and federal loans have all dropped (Collison, 1992; Tijerina & Biemer,

1987/1988). Native Americans are the only minority group of lower-socioeconomic status who do not receive a disproportionately high amount of financial aid (NCES, 1995).

The percentage of Indians living below the poverty line is three times the national average, and is coupled with unemployment rates on some reservations that often approach 80% (Wright & Tierney, 1991). The Carnegie Foundation report (1990) found that, "Even in Indian communities considered to be affluent, unemployment runs more than 50%" (p. 29). Nor does this picture seem to be changing, Aponte et al. (1995) related that the per capita income for Native Americans is less than 50% of that for whites, and Indians have more than three times the poverty rate of white (12.5% vs 38.8%). This extreme level of poverty has been found to be especially true for Indians under age 18 (Tijernia & Biemer, 1987/1988).

Financial problems are frequently tied to Native Americans coming from communities that have the highest poverty rates in the country (Wright, 1991). Pevar (1992) stated, "The redman continues to be the most poverty stricken and economically disadvantaged segment of our population, a people whose plight dwarfs the situation of any other American, even those in the worst big city ghettos" (p. 12). Cohen (1988) contends there is a direct correlation between income and education achievement, proposing that as income goes down, the predictability of not achieving academic success goes up. However, Sowell (1994) reported that even when American Indian students came from homes with incomes of $50,000 and above, American Indian students still did not score as well on the quantitative portions of their SAT exam as did white students whose families had considerably lesser income.

At a time when college costs are a major deterrent for students begin their higher education (Collison, 1992), the people most in need of financial assistance (Native Americans) are having increasing difficulty in locating financial assistance (Wilson & Justy, 1987/1988). Frequently, the non-availability of the $2,000 to $3,000 needed for out-of-pocket expenses required to attend a four-year institution is beyond the means to American Indian families. The absence of family assistance coupled with the under-funding of tribal colleges presents a gloomy education perspective for Native Americans (Mooney, 1989).

Cultural Integrity

A key factor in the failure of Native American in higher education efforts has been due to value conflicts that resulted from imposing "white" behavior expectations (Carnegie Foundation, 1989). This is the legacy of the government's assimilation efforts (Malinowski, 1944). Jenks (1993) presents one reason that these value conflicts still persist, contending that it is essential for the "invaded" culture to become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. The required acceptance of inferiority simply has not happened (Horse Capture, 1994).

Darden, Bagaka, Armstrong and Payne (1994) maintain that the effective education of Native Americans in mainstream institutions requires colleges to demonstrate an appreciation for cultural diversity by providing more multicultural programs, curriculum and strong student support services for Native Americans. This is an important step in establishing a college environment that allows minority cultures to celebrate their experiences and individual differences (Sowell, 1994).

Many of the problems that Indian students encounter in college arise from clashes between their traditional cultural values and the values embraced by the public education setting (Sanders, 1987; Spang, 1971). While the total of Native Americans entering higher education over the past two-and-a-half decades has increased, this figure can be directly linked to the number of students who are enrolling in the more cultural supportive tribal-colleges (Hawkins, 1992). While the overall number of American Indians in higher education increased over the past 25 years, the percentage of Indian graduates from four-year colleges has not. This seems to indicate that the choice of where Native Americans begin college remains as it does for most minorities, not really being a choice between a two-year college and a senior residential institution, but more typically being between a two-year college or nothing (Cohen & Brawer, 1991; Zwerling, 1976).

Tribal colleges were established and have flourished because of the perceived lack of sensitivity Native Americans felt was present in mainstream institutions (Hawkins, 1992; Marriott, 1992; Mooney, 1988). Tribal colleges have achieved a transfer record that is superior to that of Native Americans attending traditional two-year public colleges (Carnegie Foundation, 1989). Native American culture traditionally values less the obtaining of specific skills or factual knowledge, and instead values the learning of how to be a spiritual human being (Brown, 1971). However, as a generation of graduates who were taught in the more culturally nurturing tribal-college setting have begun to bring needed skills back to their communities, the perceptions of tribal elders about the value of a college education may be beginning to change (Glau, 1990).

The Impact of Institutional Structures on Native American Education

Nel (1994) argues that minority students are "disabled" or "empowered" (p. 170) as a direct result of their interactions with school personnel and programs. Higher education institutions are acutely aware that virtually all students experience concerns of varying degrees while attending college. As a result, institutions typically provide numerous services, programs, and organizations to assist students. These services by necessity must be processes that are designed to serve the needs of a variety of students (Boland et al., 1994; McLaren, 1989). But as Bohannan (1995) says, "The schools have been invaded by assumptions from other cultural realms with demands that do not fit their organization" (p. 178). While there is an abundance of research identifying specific concerns of Indian students, Maynard (1980) contends, the problem for Indian students in many cases is that the institutional structures that are in place at many colleges are usually generic in nature and typically geared for the needs of majority students. The apparent mentality of this style of institutional structures is that one size fits all (Kos, 1993). However, the needs of Native Americans are frequently not the same as the needs of whites.

As Tierney and Kidwell (1991) report, perhaps it has simply been the easiest path for colleges to just ignore the needs of a minority group that nationally is quite small. However, in many cases college services that are currently available to all students are the same ones that are desperately needed by Native Americans (Eberhard, 1989).

Interested institutions must take the next step and adapt some of their programs to fit the precise needs of Native American students.

Pottinger (1989) points out, "While recognizing the importance of cultural traditions, few individuals [Native Americans] wish to be handicapped by inadequate preparation for the real world, a real world which demands skills relevant to the latest technology" (p. 327). A dilemma that may exist for some college campuses is a lack in understanding of how the needs of Native American students relate to their institutional structures (McQuiston & Brod, 1985). Schubert (1986) presents a useful conceptualization to examine the four principal aspects of college structures: teachers, learners, subject matter, and milieu.

Faculty

Of the American Indians employed full-time by colleges, only 19% are faculty members (Fries, 1987). Therefore the faculty presence on campuses nationally is the same one percent under-representation that is found in student enrollments (U. S. Department of Education, 1991). This situation exists despite studies that indicate the presence of minority members in significant faculty and administrative roles is an important factor in the success in recruiting and retaining minority students (Astin, 1982; Hornett, 1989; Little Soldier, 1990; Mahan & Rains, 1990). However the absence of qualified Native American applicants in the job pool is also a significant factor in the under-representation of Indians in faculty positions (Livingston & Stewart, 1987).

A study conducted by the American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States (1988) found that Indian preference in teacher hiring was rare

even in school settings having a relatively large Native American population. Livingston and Stewart (1987) report that there is an unwillingness of many majority faculties at some public postsecondary institutions to recruit, fairly evaluate, hire and retain minorities. These short-sighted actions are amplified by studies showing minority faculty members help their white counterparts gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for different cultural heritages (Linthicum, 1989). In short, American Indian faculty should help promote both Astin's (1985) call for institutions to seek excellence, as well as addressing the responsibility of equity (Fries, 1987).

Mentors and Role Models

Many college studies have stressed the importance of role models and mentors in college settings for minorities (Cohen, 1988; Hornett, 1989; Mahan & Rains, 1990; Schubert, 1986). The majority, as much as 60%, of American Indians who are employed full-time in colleges work in support occupations. Only 6% of the American Indians employed full-time in higher education are in an executive, an administrative or a managerial position (Fries, 1987). While the proportion of Native American who are full-time college workers did increase from 18% to 20% between the years of 1979 to 1989 (U. S. Department of Education, 1991), Indians were also twice as likely to be hired for a non-faculty and non-managerial jobs than were whites who were hired during the same period (ACE, 1990).

A mentor need not be Native American to be effective with Indians, but as Mahan (1987) maintains that it is extremely important for mentors to be knowledgeable and comfortable with the cultures of the Indian tribes they will be working. Red Horse

(1986) reported that faculty/staff interactions with Native American students have a notable influence on retention. One of the best opportunities to learn about the Native American culture would be through interactions with Native American colleagues (Linthicum, 1989). However since there is a near absence of Indians in senior faculty roles in higher education, interactions of this type are not happening (Green, 1989).

Academic Enhancements

Sawyer (1981) cited the need for academic enhancement programs for Indian students beginning college. Studies on academic concerns indicate that Native Americans, more than other minority group, need both college preparation courses and on-going campus academic support services (Cohen, 1988; Hawkins, 1992; Little Soldier, 1989). Academic needs are particularly important for Indians as they often approach the campus with unrealistic expectations about their academic abilities, poor study habits and a different time-space sense (Glau, 1990; Tierney, 1992).

McQuiston and Brod (1985) reported that American Indians tend to disdain the formal delegation of education as a structured group concept, as traditional lecture methods. Instead Native Americans favor designs that are based on individual experiences and interests. Little Soldier (1989) stated that to be effective with Native Americans, ". . . (their) education must have a personal meaning for the students" (p. 162). The importance of this is illustrated in a study by (Newman, Mason, Chase & Abaugh, 1991) that asked tribal members what factors they attributed to successful individuals. The consensus was that successful individuals are people who play a constructive role in their family and society and who are not the cause of preventable

problems. Therefore, Native Americans would benefit from learning situations that allow them to see a connection between the process and their own goals and desires. Thus the educational objective should remain the same, but the means of achieving them must be matched to the learning styles and social communication patterns and interests of the Indian students.

Research says that faculty feel a hospitable environment is a key factor in minority student persistence and retention (Bedford & Durkee, 1989; Mahan & Rains, 1990). One application for this research would be to attempt to reverse Mahan's (1987) findings that most administrators and teachers working with Native American populations typically receive little or no instruction relative to the educational, economical resources, needs, aspirations or culture of their student populations. A consequence of this lack of Native American knowledge by faculty is that many Indian students develop a sense of disenchantment with the educational process (Mahan & Rains, 1990).

Green (1989) found that colleges that established classrooms conducive to learning and who employ Native American faculty members, had retention rates as much as 50% better than comparable ones without such emphasis. Chavers (1991) reached a similar thought: courses made relevant to Native Americans contribute to Indian student success and retention. However, Tijernia and Biemer (1987/1988) found that many colleges developed programs in the 1970s and 1980s for the recruitment and retention of Indians but have not continued to adequately fund these programs.

Academic Preparation

Cibik and Chambers (1991) reported that on self-reports of students entering college, American Indians rate themselves the of lowest of all ethnic groups in their preparation for college. Numerous studies have demonstrated there is a direct relationship between the level of academic preparation that students receive in high school and their success in post-secondary education (ACE, 1989; Tierney, 1992). Nel (1994) found that at least 75% of the Native Americans in high school programs were at least one grade level behind. This lack of adequate academic preparation for college-level course work remains the most frequently cited factor in Native American college attrition studies (Newman et al., 1991; Tierney,1992; Wells, 1989; Wright & Tierney, 1991).

Hill (1991) reported Indian students from reservation or rural area schools systems have high instances of inadequate science and/or math preparation for college. Lawrenz and McCreath (1988) found that frequently rural school systems did not have formal science classes below the sixth grade level. Hill (1991) noted that many rural high schools require only one year of science or math for graduation. As a result of such factors many authors have found that Indian math and science grades, high school grade point average and/or ACT scores have been highly related to their potential for success in their first year of college (Eberhard, 1989; Little Soldier, 1990).

Counseling Services

Colleges offer a wide range of counseling programs. Native Americans arrive with a variety of personal, academic and cultural problems (Falk & Aitken, 1984). However, the majority of Indians are first-generation students with little understanding of what college resources are available, how to use them, or even a sense if the programs available will benefit them (Cibik & Chamber, 1991; Tierney, 1991). For American Indians to receive the counseling services needed will require institutions to undertake a concerted effort to make the process and the student connect.

Nel (1994) reported that advising and counseling services providing a rationale behind mainstream college expectations of students resulted in an increased student confidence and a sense of control. Understandably these types of experiences are critical for Native American students to enable them to develop coping strategies to use in the school setting. Beaulieu (1991) and Johnson and Lashley (1987) contend that academic and student support services must be sensitive to the differences in learning styles and needs of Indian students. This may be especially challenging for institutions that do not have counselors who are Native American, for as Darden et al. (1994) noted it can be difficult for non-Indians to understand and appreciate differences in Indian students.

Native American students often report facing problems stemming from cultural conflicts over issues of harmony and pride (Edgewater, 1981; Tierney, 1991; Wright, 1985; Wright & Tierney, 1991). These conflicts have unquestionably had an adverse effect on the college adjustment of American Indians. Levitan and Hetrick (1971) identified that tribal members who placed a greater value on retaining the use of their

native language and their traditional life style tended to be less successful in school. Therefore counselors must be sensitive to cultural conflicts otherwise neither they nor and the students will be effective.

Research indicates that the lack of adequate counseling services contributes to the high dropout rate of American Indians (Glau, 1990). Levitan and Hetrick (1971) report that for Indians the confusion over cultural identity can lead to interpersonal problems such as jealousy, suspicion of others and alcoholism. Alcoholism and low self esteem are common factors contributing to Indian students not adjusting to a college environment. As a result, of these types of conflicts, Scott (1986) found that the Native Americans in his study had developed four basic responses they employed to negative institutional evaluations: 1) become less Indian (a mobility orientation); 2) change the criteria (a challenge orientation); 3) accept the devaluation (a defeated orientation); or, 4) withdraw from the institution (an escape orientation). Scott maintains Indian students, committed to observing traditional ways and customs, frequently feel they are given little other choice than escape. Without effective counseling, many Native American students will simply disappear.

Cultural Centers

Many researchers believe that the cause of minority concerns in higher education is in reality an ethos problem. There is a pressing urgency for universities to recognize the need to have new social devices that can be used to educate people of all ages, to replace the traditional educational structures that no longer work (Bohannon, 1995). The notion is that a campus atmosphere that provides a supportive and understanding

atmosphere of minority interests is critical (Bedford & Durkee, 1989; Lawrenz & McCreath, 1988). Glau (1990) joined a growing opinion that minority enrollment in colleges is enhanced by the creation of a campus climate that is culturally diverse and supportive. The origin of cultural centers was to address such problems. Darden et al. (1994) maintains that colleges with cultural centers provide American Indian students with a means to maintain their culture. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990) concluded: "Given the chance to study in an environment that respects their culture and provides extra support, and given adequate financial aid, Native American students can succeed" (p. 30). Studies with American Indians in college frequently report that students report feeling they can not be academically successful and keep their cultural identity (La Belle & Ward, 1994). The price of such a dilemma is commonly resolved by choosing to leave college (Scott, 1986).

Edgewater (1981) reported that frequently the goals that American Indians bring to college are significantly different from those held by majority students at mainstream institutions. Cultural centers can also serve as a springboard for programs to acquaint majority students and campus personnel with a variety of cultures. These centers furnish a focus point for the process of educating students, and training mentors and providing cultural awareness activities for the campus in general. Cultural centers provide a means where, instead of trying to only integrate the student into the culture of the mainstream, the institution also can become better oriented to the cultures of students. Bohannon (1995) argues that for both minority and majority peoples this structures provide an opportunity to reduce conflicts stemming from the cultural cognitive dissonance of two or more differing cultures living in proximity of each other.

There is considerable research that maintains that the better students are integrated into the college, the more likely they are to remain at that institution (Eberhard, 1989; Sanders, 1987; Scott, 1986; Tinto, 1987). Tierney (1992) maintains these researchers are not taking into consideration the cultural discontinuities that arise for Native Americans. Whitehorse et al., (1992) indicated that Native Americans who have, and maintain, a strong cultural identity while attending college have demonstrated an increased incidence of academic persistence. In either instance, an argument is clearly made that students from either group can be served through a campus cultural center.

Campus Environment

As with all students, consideration must be given to determining if a particular college environment provides a match between the student's needs and the college's structures provided in order to reasonably predict the chances of student success (Eberhard, 1989; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Tierney, 1992). The principal issue is to insure a fit occurs between the cultural and social orientation of students and the campus in order to avoid predictable attrition problems (Nel, 1994; Tierney, 1992). To create such an ethos requires utilizing a wide variety of institutional structures, if a college intends to meaningfully address the needs of Native Americans. It is a challenge for student service operations to insure that the differences in the student's style and/or performances do not reflect negatively on a student's skill level and preparation (Beaulieu, 1991).

Scott (1986) reported that social integration may be second only to high school grade point average as a predictor of academic success for American Indians in higher education. Social integration can be especially difficult for Native Americans as they

frequently tend to be less socially involved (Cibik & Chambers, 1991). Many studies relate the importance of students needing to become involved with the college beyond their classroom obligations (Hawkins, 1992; Livingston & Stewart, 1987; Tinto, 1987; Whitehorse et al., 1992). Being an active member of a campus organization provides a sense of affiliation to an institution, the absence of affiliation is frequently linked to feelings of alienation and eventual attrition (Green, 1989; Wells, 1989).

It is not unusual for American Indian students to be aware that some majority students view their contractual benefits as being equivalent to receiving welfare or give-aways. It is also not uncommon for Native Americans to be incorrectly accused of getting a free education and of not having to pay taxes (Tijerina & Biemer, 1987/1988). For some Native Americans these harsh accusations can indeed be difficult to handle. Understandably, when Native American students feel unwelcome or alienated from the campus mainstream, they are much more likely to be unsuccessful (Green, 1989). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1989) reported Native Americans in higher education often indicate having feelings of isolation and discouragement. Tierney (1992) argues these feelings are the result of mainstream universities reflecting the social and cultural values of the majority culture. Native American students therefore often confront cultural dissonance when they elect to attend mainstream universities. Wells (1989) maintains that this sense of alienation is a prominent factor influencing American Indian attrition.

Douglas's Cultural Theory

The decision to study institutional structures and culture in relation to the persistence of Seminole Indian students was based on the contention that attrition and retention decisions were the product of a choice reached by these students. The intent of the study was to explore the influence of either their culture or the institutional structures had on that choice. Mary Douglas (1982) takes the position that the source of personal choice is found in the context of human social and cultural experience. As a consequence Douglas has developed a typology that was used to interpret and compare the choices made by the persisting and non-persisting student subgroups.

Grid and Group

At the heart of Douglas's theory are the concepts of "group" and "grid." Douglas (1982) explained, "I use 'grid' for a dimension of individuation, and 'group' for a dimension of social incorporation" (p. 190). According to Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky (1990), "group refers to the extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units," and, "grid denotes the degree to which an individual's life is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions" (p. 5).

In his use of Douglas's theory in the study of political cultures, Ellis (1993) provides an expanded definition of group as being the "restrictions on individual autonomy that can be measured by determining whether the life support a group gives to its members is complete or partial" (p. 3). In effect, group is the level of importance that an individual places on retaining membership in a specific organization. Group is

measured by the relative strength that the organizations have in establishing the boundaries used to identify and separate group members from non-members. However the determination of group strength is only a one dimensional perspective, and, as Ellis (1993) has reported, "knowing the strength of group allegiance gives us only a partial picture of the extent of autonomy enjoyed by individuals, for social environments with similar degrees of group involvement can differ in the degree to which they are open to individual negotiation" (p. 3). Thus, Douglas (1982) also embraced the concept of grid, to refer to the degree to which an individual's choices are restricted within a social setting as a result of the established orders of operation that are in place, such as, role expectations, rules, and procedures. The more binding and extensive the scope of these prescriptions, the less life that is open to individual negotiation. Grid, therefore, represents the degree of structure that is imposed on a given individual.

The measurement of group can be placed on a continuum that ranges from high to low, strong to weak. In high-group (strong) settings the needs of the group can and do supersede the needs of the individual. This can be demonstrated by the importance that the members place on the perpetuation of the group's existence in deference to concerns about individual goals. In contrast members of low-group (weak) settings are relatively indifferent about collective concerns, and the significance of group activities becomes incidental, tending to be short-term needs of the organization. Allegiance to the organization is weak as on-going membership is determined on the basis of the benefits that the individuals perceive will be derived from a continued association.

The measurement of grid can also be placed on a high to low continuum. Individuals in high-grid settings are dominated by roles and rules that permeate all social

interactions and personal decision making process (Harris, 1995a). Thus, high-grid settings are rigidly structured environments that are prohibitive to the development of individual initiatives. As one moves down the continuum, roles become more achieved, less ascribed, and individuals are expected to assume an increasing level of responsibility for their own lives. In low-grid settings individual roles become less distinctive and behavior and character are valued over role status. Douglas (1982) maintains that grid strength is indicated by the amount of control an individual can exercise over the use of their own time and goods, and how free they are to take advantage of opportunities. Harris (1995b) states that high-grid settings tend to constrain personal freedoms of choice; where as low-grid settings tend to promote individual liberty. Lingenfelter (1992) explains, "The idea of grid, then, focuses on how a social system sorts and constrains individuals by distinctive role categories" (p. 26).

Douglas (1982) states that to determine group strength, "The investigator needs to consider how much of the individual's life is absorbed in and sustained by group membership" (p. 202). Therefore, a group rating is the combined effect of the number of groups one is affiliated to and level of importance attributed to that organization. Douglas (1982) explains, "Grid is much more difficult [to calculate]." The grid dimension has been constructed with four components" (p. 202). The four components are autonomy, control, competition and insulation. Autonomy is the degree of independence an individual is able to exercise. Harris (1995b) explains that control and competition are closely related: "Where roles are primarily ascribed, grid control are high, classificatory distinction are valued, and there is little or no competition for status. Where roles are primarily achieved, grid constants are low and individuals may strive for

rewards and status in an open and competitive environment" (p. 621). Insulation refers to the degree inherent structures in the environment obstruct the individual's social interactions (Harris, 1995b).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted using a Douglas's cultural theory to explore a variety of social environments. Spickard (1989) notes that Christian scholars and sociologists have found the grid and groups useful "for correlating beliefs with concrete social life" (p. 151). Ellis (1993) and Thompson et al. (1990) have identified grid/group conceptions as being especially beneficial in dispensing with the notion of a single national culture. Lingenfelter (1992) has applied Douglas's approach in the evaluation of differences in economic and social relationships. Thompson et al. (1990) valued grid/group as a means to explain "the different perceptual screens through which people interpret or make sense of their world" (p. xiii). Douglas (1992) has used the process to investigate "whether the environmental movement is likely to muster enough support to change the consumption habits of the industrial nations" (p. 463).

Cultural Typologies and Social Environments

Ellis (1993) explains that Douglas's (1982) theory provides a means to identify the types of social constrains within a society. Social constraint is directly related to the degree an individual's choices are restricted by the demands of the group demands and the inherent structure or rules that are imposed (Thompson et al., 1990). To this point Harris (1995) elucidates that the concepts of grid and group are inherently and interactively present within any social setting. Douglas (1982) maintains grid and group must be simultaneously considered in identifying the typology of cultures and social

environments. Lingenfelter (1992) has shown that cultural social environments regularly interact with each other and generally adjust to the presence of each other over time.

Ellis (1993) agrees with Douglas in that value systems are both shareable and livable can be usefully grouped into types. Lingenfelter (1993) argued the usefulness of "the elaboration of the four distinctive social environments as they affect economic and power relationships in a social environment" (p. 203). Douglas (1992) identifies these four cultural types as: Individualists, a low-grid, low-group environment; Isolates, a high-grid, low-group environment; Hierachists, a high-grid, high-group environment; and, Dissenting Groups, a low-grid, high-group environment (see Figure 1). All of these categories can be placed in relations to each other with respect to the degree of group involvement and the degree of social prescription (Thompson et al., 1990).

Individualists have a minimum of formal rules and roles, with status and rewards linked to competitive and changing standards. There is little distinction made between non-members and members of the organization. Long-term collective commitments are minimal, and there is a strong commitment for individual negotiation (Douglas, 1992).

Isolates have little autonomy present being highly constrained in what they do. These are structured environments that place a significant value in ascribed roles. Membership in formal organizations is not desired nor sought. Douglas (1992) notes that, "An isolate thinks idiosyncratically, the more isolated the more eccentric the train of ideas" (p. 479).

Hierachists environments have and maintain distinct boundaries established to classify members and social relationships. Individual behavior is expressly restricted in deference to group interactions. The setting is an extremely defined and structured for

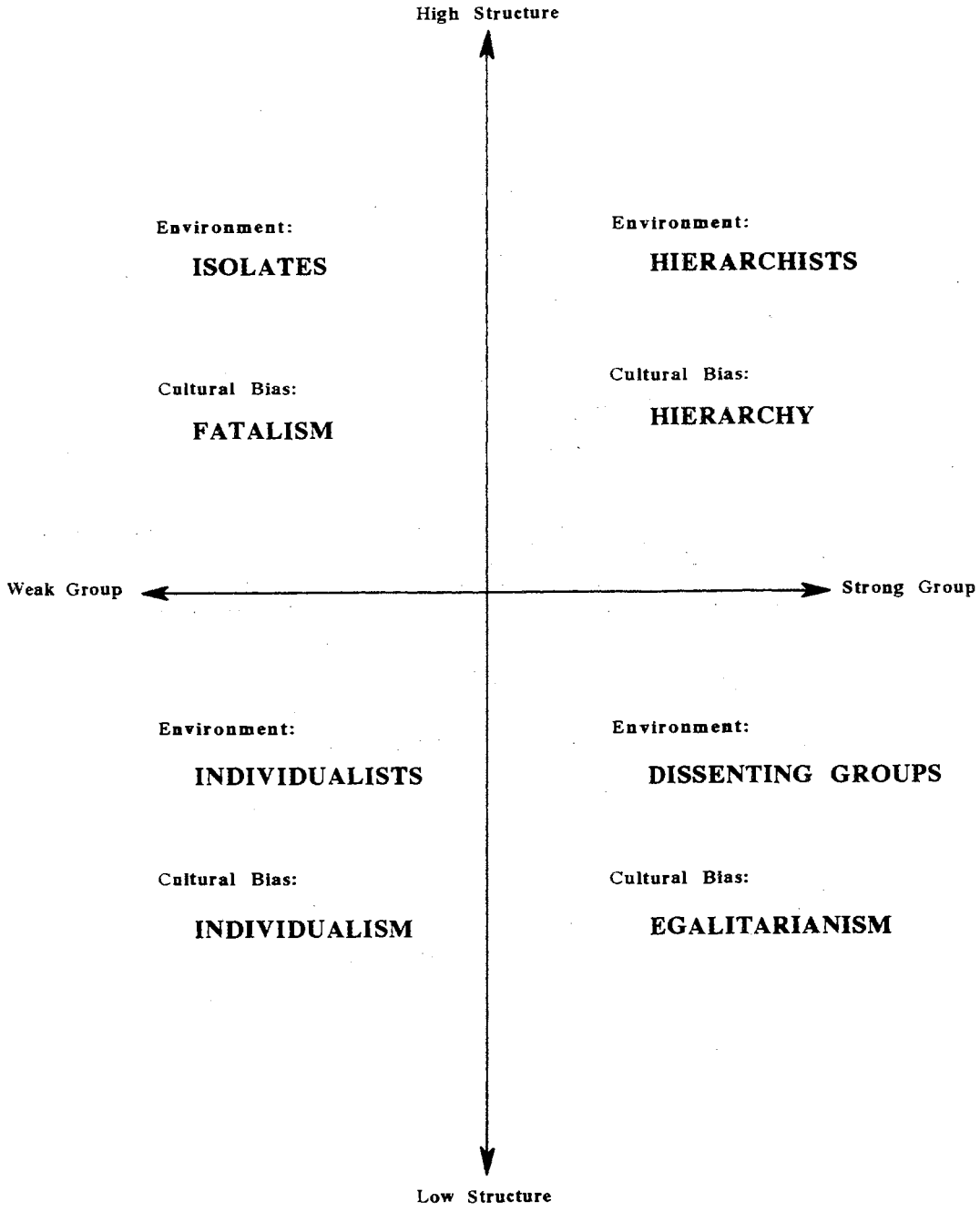

Figure 1. Social Environments and Cultural Bias

members of all status levels. Group survival and perpetuation of traditions are of the utmost importance (Harris, 1995a)

Dissenting Groups settings value competitive roles, yet the rules for status and placement are reasonably stable due to the strong group influence. Status and placement are generally constant, and shared organizational goals are valued. There is an emphasis placed on the importance of the group ideals.

Douglas (1992) used grid / group theory as a means to explain how social environments interact with each other. Lingenfelter (1993) maintains,

> Any given society may have one or more of the social environments described above. Christian college faculty may participate in more than one social environment: some work daily in the Bureaucratic [Isolates] environment of the college, but belong to a Corporate [Heirarchist] church. Others may belong to Collectivist [Dissenting Groups] or Bureaucratic churches. The metropolitan area surrounding the college is so complex that it offers individuals options to participate in any of the four social environments (p. 41).

Similarly Ellis (1993) has argued for the use of Douglas's theory to be used as a benchmark for alternative theories opposed to consensus theories that have used by other theorists of American political cultures. Lingenfelter (1993) has also found Douglas's approach useful in the examination of religion and culture.

Cultural Bias

Harris (1995a) has defined cultural bias as "Those social values, preferences, and assumptions about the world and life that are generated from and essential to a particular

social environment" (p. 3). Thompson et al. (1990) suggest that much of what we do in everyday life is not done as a result of conscious directed decision-making but instead occurs as a consequence of intrinsic automatic pilot patterns of behavior. These auto-pilot patterns of behavior illustrate the role of cultural bias. "These cultural bias - shared meanings, the common convictions, the moral makers, the rewards, penalties, and expectations common to a way of life - that become so much a part of us are constantly shaping our preferences in ways that even the brightest among us are only dimly aware of" (Thompson et al., 1990, p. 59). Harris (1995b) contends that each of Douglas's cultural types has an identifiable and distinctive cultural bias within the environment (see Figure 1). The influence of cultural bias on the choices made by respondents will serve as a focus concept.

Ellis (1993) identifies the cultural bias for the Individualists cell as being "individualism" characterized by a high commitment to personal autonomy and individual negotiation. The cultural bias of the Isolates cell is "fatalism" typified by an apathetic or victim's attitude towards life in general (Harris, 1995b). The Heirarchists cell has a cultural bias of "hierarchy," demonstrated through excessive authority, extreme loyalty, and the suppression of individuality. The cultural bias "egalitarianism" exists in the Dissenting Groups cell, and is indicated by beliefs of equality in political, economic, social, and civil rights for all. The influence of the cultural bias for each of the cells identified in the study will be used in the analysis of the respondents.

The decision by the researcher to use of this approach was, as Harris (1995) states, that "The Douglas (1982) model provides 'conceptual glasses' through which researchers may discover the expressed and constructed meanings of a given context,

and its inherent dimensions provide a means of contrast and comparison among other contexts" (p. 644). Use of Douglas's cultural conceptual typologies provided the researcher with a means to consider multiple factors in evaluating the impact of culture and institutional structures in student retention. Further the social matrix established a means to identify the cultural bias for the respondents in the study.

Rational For Studying Native Americans In Oklahoma

Numerous factors, beyond being the state of residence of the researcher, make Oklahoma an ideal locale to study Native American higher education. While the 1990 U. S. Census indicates there are nearly two million Native Americans in the United States, much of the research in higher education tends to ignore American Indians because of their relatively small numbers nationally (Lightfoot, 1978). Aponte et al. (1995) reported that 77.3% of the Indians in the United States live in the Southwest (28.7%) or the West (48.6%) regions of the country, 13% in Oklahoma. Native Americans are 41% of Oklahoma's minority population, making them the state's largest minority. Lightfoot (1978) argues due to the small proportion of Native Americans nationally, Oklahoma and other states with sizable Indian populations need state plans to meet the needs of Indian education. Oklahoma's concern for Native Americans is in a 1995 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) report which stated: "Oklahoma must identify and address its problems with Native Americans and education for not only is it important to the well-being of the state as a whole, but Oklahoma could be the key to Native American education for the entire country" (p. xi).

Historical Basis

Indians were the first residents of Oklahoma, as evidenced by the Spiro Burial Mounds dated 500 to 1300 AD (Gittinger, 1917). Her river banks were being tilled and buffalo harvested centuries before America was even "discovered." Coronado's 1514 expedition is the first contact whites had with the Plains Indians (Debo, 1970). Currently there are 68 different tribes in the state, although no more than 6 are indigenous. The "five civilized tribes" were relocated into the region between 1820 and 1860. The Indian heritage has found its way into the names of countless communities, lakes, parks, streets and streams. Even the name of the state "Oklahoma" comes from the Choctaw language, "Okla" meaning people and "homa" meaning red (Debo, 1970).

Statistical Considerations

The 1990 United States Census lists 252,420 as the official Oklahoma American Indian population, and notes Oklahoma has the largest number of Indian households. A 1988 BIA report states that Oklahoma has: 1) the largest Indian population; 2) the second highest proportion of Native Americans in comparison to the total state population; and, 3) the densest concentration of American Indians per square mile. The significance of these figures is demonstrate by a 1995 National Center for Educational Statistics study report, "American Indian students are a particularly small group of undergraduates, because of their sample size, some estimates of participation and all estimates of persistence in post-secondary education could not be made" (p. 10).

Indian enrollments in Oklahoma higher education were only 5.5% of the students statewide in 1991 (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1992). In the same year, Native Americans made up 12.1% of the state secondary school enrollments (Killackey, 1991). Figures for fall 1992 indicate only 4.8% of the total state college enrollment was Native American (OSRHE, 1995). Oklahoma's Indian population remains significantly underrepresented in state higher education.

College Underrepresentation

Oklahoma Native Americans are proportionately under-represented in nearly all state four-year institutions (OSRHE, 1990). Less than half of the state's four-year colleges have a Native American enrollment of at least 5.6 percent. At the same time, less than two percent of the faculty at Oklahoma colleges are Native American.

Two-thirds of the American Indians in Oklahoma live in rural areas, with 73% living on non-tribal lands or in towns of 10,000 or less. In contrast less than 50% of the general population resides in rural areas. Statewide, the Native Americans tend to enroll in colleges close to their home and/or tribal office (OSRHE, 1995). Therefore, Oklahoma Native Americans are in keeping with the national norm of Indians not electing to attend urban based colleges (OSRHE, 1991).

Oklahoma does not have a tribal-college. Indians in the state move from the high school to college at half the rate of the general population. Two-out-three Native American high school graduates eventually enroll in college; one directly after high school, the second delayed (OSRHE, 1990). The progression of Native American

college students for the year 1988-89 to fall 1989 was 8.6% completed their degree, and 31.4% did not complete a degree or return for the next term.

The current status of Native Americans in higher education in Oklahoma is illustrated by recent admissions material from a state comprehensive university. It reported, that since 1985, the Native American enrollment had been nearly doubled to "about 750" Indians attending the campus in 1990-1991. While it is desirable to see an interest in increasing Native American enrollment, this figure is approximately 3.5% of the university's enrollment, and at the same time the Native American secondary education enrollment in Oklahoma was in excess of 12% (Killackey, 1991).

The arguments for selecting Oklahoma as an appropriate test site can be summarized as follows: 1) the state has a long, varied and on-going history with a diverse number of Indian tribes; 2) the state continues have a large identifiable college-aged Native American population; and, 3) the state higher education authority has acknowledged there is a disproportionally underrepresentation of Native Americans in state institutions and reportedly desires to address the situation.

The Seminole Nation Of Oklahoma

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE, 1990) showed that were 8,181 members of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma who resided in the state during 1988. Of that number, 152 Seminoles were enrolled in higher education programs representing the state's sixth largest percentage of tribal enrollments. This was also the fifth largest number of Americans Indians of one tribe registered in Oklahoma

colleges. Eighteen percent of the Seminoles who were enrolled in higher education in 1988 attended the university targeted in the study (OSRHE, 1990).

Seminoles coming to Oklahoma between 1830 and 1849 were a part of a forced removal of the five civilized tribes from the southeastern United States. Foreman (1934) said, "These tribes, the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole, were distinguished by a character and intelligence far above the average aboriginal" (p. xi). However, Seminoles arriving in Oklahoma during these times came as shipments of prisoners from the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). This conflict was documented as the most expensive Indian campaign ever waged by the United States, both in its cost in dollars and in lives of American soldiers (Debo, 1970). The death rate of Seminoles accounts in part for why the Seminole Nation is the smallest of the five civilized tribes.

Summary

A major problem that confronts the American society is the need to promote diversity in higher education. This is not merely a question of society needing to do the right thing, it is a case of economic survival. Of paramount importance is the need to identify programs and aspects of programs that can assist in correcting long standing obstructions to Native American educational obtainment. To this end Harry (1992) maintains that schools must take a final step away from assimilation efforts of the past, and move towards acculturation processes. In this way the two cultures can meet and modify themselves to allow their beliefs and values to adapt to each other.

Since colonial times Native American educational efforts in the United States have been underscored by the neglect, non-acceptance and exploitation of the

government and the majority race. This experience can best be described as a conquered people who have been displaced from their land, had their children forcibly removed from their homes and families, had the roles of the males in their family and community undermined, and had their language spurned and nearly eliminated (Aponte et al., 1995). Indians have suffered from start-and-stop educational programs intended to help them escape their dire poverty. Programs, that from their outset, failed in most cases to take into consideration the interest of the Indians. In understanding Native Americans and education requires one to appreciate that discrimination is not always defacto. Discrimination is sometimes more perceived than actual; not all actual discrimination is readily or accurately perceived, even by those being discriminated against. But, Native Americans have and do suffer from the worst of both kinds. Harry (1992) argues that minority status is based on ethnic/racial considerations and is essentially a question whether one is "white" or not. Mixed origins can not be acknowledged, for a person can not be mixed and still white. Therefore a sense of racial purity is attached to being white that does not apply to any other race.

Schools and governmental institutions alike have, at times, been committed to the notion that Native Americans must give up their culture and become, or at least "act like," members of the dominant culture. This conception, that Indians needed to be "white" in order to be able to receive a good education has been the norm and not the exception. As a result, "Native Americans, their history, and the desire to carry on the traditions of their ancestors have often been ignored or at best given only a passing consideration" (OSRHE, 1990, p. 8). Colleges must ask themselves if they can continue to "stand for" institutional practices that discriminate through indifference.

The situation of Native American education is frequently made more difficult by the misperception that American Indians are a single homogenous group of "Indians", with similar customs, beliefs, and traditions. No conclusion could be more wrong; Americans Indians are very diverse people with widely varied individual and tribal differences (Aponte et al., 1995). As a consequence institutions today are still subjecting themselves and their American Indian students to present day versions of start and stop programs. Lightfoot (1978) suggests instead to treat Native Americans as unique and different group intersections of economics, history sociocultural, priorities and agendas. Therefore, institutions that want to be effective in the retention of Native American students on their campus must be willing to assess and address the specific needs of the students from the American Indian communities they serve.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Perspective

The purpose for this study was to explore the reasons Native Americans of the Seminole Nation who enroll into higher education chose to either remain enrolled or to withdraw. This study also explored student perceptions of the impact that their Native American culture and the institutional structures of the university had on their retention. This task was accomplished by focusing on the attendance of members of one specific Native American tribe at one specific public university. These criteria were used to focus the study, based on research conducted by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) that maintains that this type of purposive sample, termed homogeneous sampling, allows for an increased focus, reduces variations, and simplifies the analysis process.

The reason to utilize a qualitative method was to implement the most useful and powerful approach available designed to discover how respondents viewed the world (McCracken, 1988). Collecting data through the long interview technique would provide the most efficient and the most effective and, hence, the best form for gathering information pertaining to the expressed views that individuals had with regards to

institutionalized norms and statuses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Erlandson et al. (1993) maintain that the interview process helps the researcher to understand better and to put the respondents views into a larger context, allowing a consideration their interpersonal, social, and cultural implications.

Site

All of the individuals involved in this study had attended the same four-year higher education institution and had completed at least one year of college studies. There was only one tribal headquarters for all of the individuals involved in the study; however the home residences of the respondents were quite diverse. Of the nine respondents involved in this study, six resided in different communities and two lived rural home locations outside of a city. The respondents homes were distributed over a four county area.

Respondents

Respondents are the key figures in an interview procedure (Erlandson et al., 1993). Purposive sampling was employed within this study design as all respondents were identified through the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office (SNHEO) as being eligible to receive tribal education funds. The Seminole Nation Higher Education Manager played a direct role in this study in nominating specific individuals who meet the attendance qualifications of the study and who were students believed to be willing and interested in discussing their educational experiences with the researcher. In this

way the manager fulfilled the role of what Erlandson et al. (1993) referred to as a "gatekeeper" (p. 56).

The SNHEO sent all nominated students an initial contact letter from the researcher (see Appendix A) and a letter of endorsement from the SNHEO manager. Students, who responded to the SNHEO indicating they would like to be a participant, were placed on a potential interview list. Students, who do not respond to the SNHEO but who are students the office manager felt were particularly good candidates for the study were placed on a list for follow-up contact. These follow-up contacts were conducted by the researcher, by phone call or home visit. During these contacts the researcher reviewed the basic parameters of the study with the designated individuals, and then asked the students if they would like to be a candidate for the study. The students who indicated they would like to be so considered were added to the potential interview list. This procedure resulted in two subgroups of potential respondents: persisters who continued their education beyond the first year of college, and non-persisters who withdrew from higher education after at least one year and who did not re-enrolled for a period of at least one year.

The decision to conduct the selection of respondents through the Higher Education Office was desirable as it negated any concern over the degree of "Indianness" for a respondent. Each respondent selected was identified by the SNHEO as being an individual who had been eligible to receive educational assistance through tribal funds. This procedure also utilized the gatekeeper's personal knowledge of individual tribal members involvement in higher education and identification of individuals to meet the criteria and were believed to be interested and willing to discuss their educational

experiences. The importance of using the gatekeeper role in this way was very critical for, as Erlandson et al. (1993) suggest, good respondents must be able to express their perspectives on their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the study topic.

For the purpose of confidentiality, respondents selected for inclusion in the study were assigned pseudonyms. Persisting students were given first and last names that began with the letter "P." Non-persisting students were given first names that began with the letter "N" and last names with the letter "P."

An additional measure of respondent confidentiality was maintained as the gatekeeper was not informed as to which individuals were selected for the study. The final selection of respondents was done by the researcher with a direct attempt to vary the members with regards to gender, age and place of residence, in order to aid in facilitating what McCracken (1988) refers to as manufacture of "distance." Through the manufacturing distance, the researcher increases the opportunities to make discoveries about the respondents in the study.

Instrumentation

With the selection of the long interview technique, the principal instrument for the research project became the researcher. McCracken (1988) relates that a researcher can not achieve useful results without utilizing one's experience, imagination and intellect in a variety of unpredictable ways. Erlandson et al. (1993) state, "The human instrument is a wonderful data-processing organism. It is more sensitive to various shades of meaning and more able to appropriately respond to them than the most elaborate non human instruments that might be imagined" (p. 107).

The long interview process provided the researcher with unique insights on the respondents views and a full picture of the respondents realities. Marshall and Rossman (1995) report that the long interview allows the researcher to see and experience the world from the eyes of respondents. This approach stresses the importance of gathering both verbal data of the interview and carefully noting observations of the respondents in order to discern additional information from nonverbal clues. It is important to allow the respondents to tell their own story; however, it is also important to exercise some control over the interview in order to descry all the information the respondent can disclose. For these reasons McCracken (1988) values the long interview technique, "For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing" (p. 9).

Procedures

This study centered on a single tribal group, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, enabling the researcher to utilize only one gatekeeper to gain entry to the site. Using a single gatekeeper approach also expedited the selection of respondents. The determination to select students who meet specific selection criteria required engaging in purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is considered the desired technique when the major research concern is not to achieve a generaliziblity of findings to diverse populations, but is, instead, to discover patterns and problems that occur for a particular group in the context of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). The Seminole Nation was selected as the target tribal group because its total number of higher education enrollments have consistently been among the top five of all tribes in Oklahoma

institutions for the past eight years (OSRHE, 1995). The location of the Seminole Nation tribal headquarters being outside of a college community was also deemed a desirable aspect as this created a situation where the students were forced to make a decision if they were going to commute to college from their home or to reside on campus.

Through the gatekeeper, the researcher developed two pools or subgroups of potential respondents who met the established criteria for being a persisting or a non-persisting student. The initial interviews were conducted with the respondents who had been identified as being persisting students. The second set of interviews were conducted with the respondents who had been identified as non-persisting students. There were five persisting student and four non-persisting students involved in the study. McCracken (1988) states that the "respondents should be few in number, no more than eight" (p. 37). However as Erlandson et al. (1993) says when using purposive sampling, "There are no rules for sample size" (p. 83).

The Interview Process

Step One. The first step of the interview process was a phone call or home visit to arrange an appointment for the interview and to select a mutually agreeable location for the meeting. This first contact was also used to review the general focus of the project with the respondents and to advise the individual that they could contact the SNHEO if they had any questions about the credentials of the researcher.

Step Two. The next step in the process occurred at the first of each interview session. The student and the researcher reviewed the content of the consent form (see

Appendix B) used in the study. The consent form outlined the parameters of the study, noted that the interview will be audiotaped, indicated the student can request the interview and/or the tape recording be stopped, and provided names and phone numbers the respondent can use to express concerns about the study or the researcher. All respondents were given a copy of the consent form.

Step Three. The interview was then conducted. A goal in the long interview process was to create a situation where the event became more of a discussion or conversation. McCracken (1988) maintains that the question is not whether, but how the researcher imposes order and structure on the procedure. For the interview to be effective required the preparation of a set of carefully worded phrases and questions. While conducting the interviews, the researcher used a planned series of questions that directed the respondents' conversations (see Appendix C). The initial items on the questionnaire, the grand tour questions, were used to provide the respondent with an opportunity to become relaxed while talking to the researcher and the recorder, and also collected information on how respondents viewed the general constructs of their culture. The development of the additional questionnaire items was guided by the design of the interview questions that were reported in a similar research project undertaken by Tierney (1991) and by this study's research questions.

The questionnaire was a way to create opportunities for the respondents to express thoughts and feelings about the institutional structures in the campus setting and about their native culture. In addition to the specific questionnaire, items the researcher used techniques outlined by McCracken (1988) such as floating prompts, planned prompts, and context prompts to expand respondents' dialogues. While a written copy

of the questionnaire was available during the interview, the researcher attempted to present most items from memory in an effort to enhance the conversational flow of the interview.

Step Four. The fourth stage occurred after the completion of the interview. Respondents were requested to complete a general background data form (see Appendix D). Information collected from this from allowed the researcher to consider such factors as the respondents' ages, birth orders, and also parental education when analyzing the interview.

Step Five. Immediately following the interview, the researcher recorded any observations and reactions of the respondents from the interview. The purpose of these notes was to provide a record of any impressions from an interview that would not be found in the audio transcript of the session. These notes were also used to record any conversation or comments made by the respondents before or after the formal interview period. A typed copy of these notes was made within 24 hours and included any additional thoughts that occurred to the researcher. A copy of these notes was attached to respondents' transcripts.

Step Six. This step involved transcribing the interview. To insure accuracy of respondents' comments, two audio recordings were made during the interviews. These dual recordings were then used to develop a verbatim transcript of the interview. The transcripts were then used to facilitate, to break down, and to organize the interview data. A file copy of the audio tape and the original transcription was maintained for each respondent. This methodology assumes that in using direct quotes, respondents speak

in a typical conversational language pattern that would not be reflective of the proper English that would be produced if the respondents had made written statements.

Step Seven. Finally, the researcher made a follow-up contact with each respondent to discuss the themes that emerged from their interview. Notations were made of the respondents comments or reactions. These notes were also typed and attached to a transcript of each interview.

The Analysis Process

Erlandson et al. (1993) explain, "In the collection and analysis of data it is sometimes hard to distinguish between when the collecting ends and when the analysis begins, for gathering and analysis are complementary, ongoing, and often simultaneous processes" (p. 85). This dilemma is particularly true for long interviews as data collection and analysis by necessity occur concurrently. During each interview the researcher consciously sought to organize respondents' comments in the categories posed by the study's research questions. The researcher examined the data for reoccurring themes first within individual interviews and then among the other interviews. This operation continued until there was a significant degree of redundancy in the findings, indicating there was no more significant information that could reasonably be expected to emerge.

An example of merging the collection and analysis processes, was the follow-up contacts by the researcher with each respondent. The purpose of this contact was to collect the respondent reactions to the themes found in the interview. The subsequent discussion of these themes sought to collaborate the researcher's findings and to gain

new insights into the respondents' perspectives of these themes. This verification process added validity to the study while providing the researcher with an opportunity to gain clearer understanding of the emerging nature of the data.

McCracken (1988) maintains there are five distinct stages in the process of analysis, with each stage representing a higher level of generality. The focus of McCracken's analysis process is a directed and ongoing progression of viewing the individual specifics of that data from each interview towards seeing the larger mutual themes. This procedure requires a steady movement from an initial emersion into the details of individual respondent transcripts towards the ability to make expanded general observations about variations of reoccurring respondents' themes. Therefore, the emphasis was to build upon each interview progressively until there was a clear composite picture of the participants as a whole.

Stage One. McCracken (1988) maintains the first stage of analysis is to take the statements made by respondents and to break them into their smallest units of complete thought. There is no effort made to search for interrelated themes or to connect one respondent's interview to another. Erlandson et al. (1993) refer to this process as "unitizing data" which involves, ". . . desegregating data into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts in the absence of additional information other than a broad understanding of the context" (p. 117).

Within this study the transcripts of individual interviews were reviewed and identified units were highlighted. The transcripts were placed on a computer disc and the highlighted units were lifted out of the text to aid in viewing them independent and outside of the total interview.

Stage Two. In McCracken's second stage the researcher attempted to expand the units identified in Stage One to include any additional possibilities or implications. To accomplish this McCracken (1988) maintains, "Each observation should be used as a kind of lens with which the transcript can be scanned to see whether any relationship or similarity suggests itself" (p. 45).

At this point in the analysis the researcher integrated the units from Stage One with any observations or impressions that occurred during the interview. After completing this process, the researcher looked for logical relationships in the units regarding their similarity or dissimilarity. The researcher stopped looking at individual units as isolated pieces and sought to generate clusters of related units. Once the observation data had been added to the units found in Stage One, a new list was created. The researcher also color coded the related units that were identified.

Stage Three. McCracken's third stage of analysis is the point where patterns or themes that are within the interview should begin to emerge. Transcript data should no longer be regarded in its independent state, but instead should be viewed in the larger context from which the developing motifs are emerging. Therefore, it is during this time that McCracken (1988) believes the major themes and patterns of the interview should be materializing.

In this study, the clusters that developed from the combined information in Stage Two were reviewed to judge their relative strength. The strength of these emerging themes was indicated by how strongly they were supported by the number of units that were being attributed to them. This appraisal was used to distinguish the prominent themes within the interview.

Stage Four. The fourth stage of McCracken's analysis process is when the researcher must begin to pass judgment on the data. At this point the researcher should be able to determine which potential patterns of clusters have begun to be developed into clear themes. Once this judgment has been reached, the researcher begins to seek themes that are related to other themes in the interview.

For this study the researcher used the findings that had been identified in Stage Three to isolate the dominate themes for each interview. This process placed particular emphasis on searching for themes in the interviews that related to the categories established in the study's research questions. These themes were color-coded.

Stage Five. The final stage of McCracken's analysis process is when the themes and patterns in the individual interviews are viewed in relation to the other interviews. Thus, one has moved from consideration of the smallest units within an individual dialogue towards an overall perspective of all interviews seeking common themes or properties. It is this group of interrelated themes that becomes the essence of the conclusions the researcher will make about the study. In this study the researcher reviewed the themes established in Stage Four to identify the major themes that had been found in interview process.

The Application Of Douglas Cultural Analysis

The application of Douglas's Cultural Theory allowed the researcher to explore the cultural perspectives of the respondents. The initial interest of the researcher was the determination of the cultural bias exhibited by the respondents. The second stage of application was to see what the theory explained and did not explain.

The five interviews conducted with persisters established that they existed within the Isolates cell of Douglas's (1992) typology. The four interviews conducted with the non-persisters established they existed within the Individualists cell of Douglas's typology. Thompson et al, 1990 maintain, "If the relationships are organized into a group pattern, then, no matter which individual you happen to choose to begin your mapping, you will end up with the same pattern of relationship linking the same set of individuals" (p. 11).

Douglas (1992) explains that this is a sound theoretical construct "for investigating the conditions under which commitment to established values flourish" (p. 472). Harris (1995b) maintains that for each social environment of Douglas's typologies there exist a unique cultural bias that is both consistent and distinctive. Understanding the cultural bias for the respondents was critical for this study in gaining an appreciation for the influence that culture that had on life choices. An analysis of the respondents' cultural bias was accomplished by conducting a detailed re-examination of the information that had been collected during the interview process. The focus was to re-examination the cultural categories and identify examples of when the respondents had demonstrated the cultural bias of their social environment. These examples were then examined using the criteria for cultural bias identified by Harris (1995b). The interview data aligned very closely to the Isolates and Individualistic cell (see Figure 2). This procedure was conducted first with the persisters using the Fatalist criteria of the Isolates cell. Then the Individualism criteria form the Individualist cell was applied to the non-persisters.

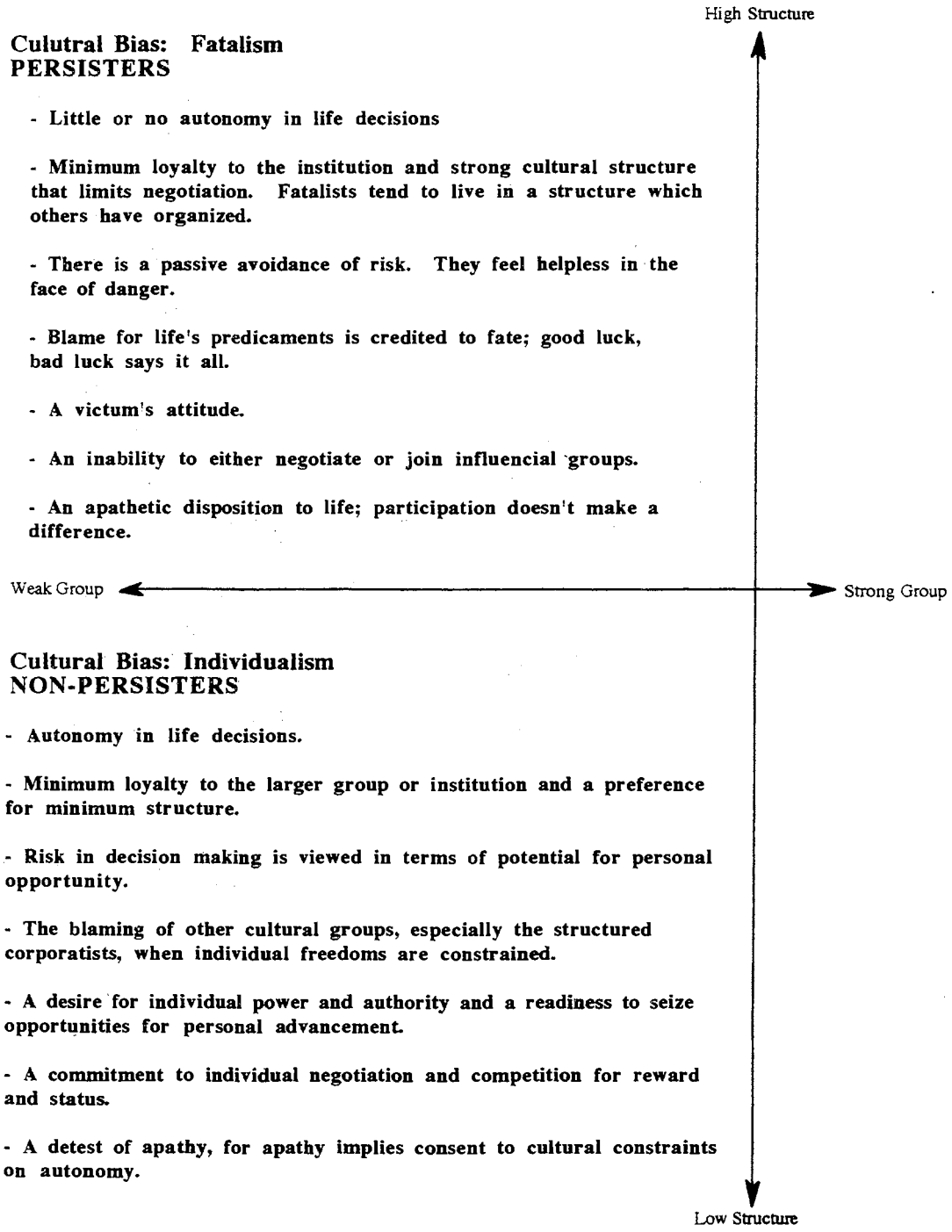

Figure 2. Cultural Bias Characteristics Persisters and Non-Persisters

The culmination of these procedures was the preparation of a summary of each of the research procedures and conclusions. Chapter IV presents the findings from the interview and the analysis procedures.

Summary of The Interview and Analysis Processes

The five stages suggested by McCracken (1988) provided a practical and systematic method to analyze and to integrate data that was collected through the long interview process, while still employing a loosely structured methodology. Marshall and Rossman (1995) argue that this flexibility is an important consideration as, "Tightly structured highly organized data gathering and analyzing schemes often filter out the unusual, the serendipitous - the puzzle that if attended to and pursued, would provide a recasting of the entire research endeavor" (p. 111). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that flexibility allows the research to ". . . unfold, cascade, roll and emerge" (p. 210). The desirability of flexibility is also indicated by Erlandson et al. (1993): "The simultaneous analysis and data collection that occurs in naturalistic studies allows the researcher to direct the data collection phase more productively, as well as develop a data base that is both parsimonious and relevant" (p. 109).

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

The material in this chapter is a presentation of the data and findings from the study. The chapter is divided into two sections to assist the reader. The first section, the organization and presentation of data section, provides a review of the materials that were collected using the procedures outlined by McCracken (1988). The data is presented, as it was collected, beginning with persisters and then continuing with non-persisters. The section details the themes that were identified for each of the subgroups and provides relevant quotations that were taken from the interviews. A summary of the themes for each of subgroups is also presented. The second part of this chapter, the theoretical analysis section, concerns the application of Douglas's (1992) cultural bias to the interview materials. The persisters' interviews are reported first, and then the non-persisters' data is reported. A summary and comparison of the cultural bias findings for the subgroups concludes the section.

Organization and Presentation of Data

McCracken's (1988) long interview technique served as a basis for the collection of the data for this study. The procedures in this interview process involved taking

systematic steps in the collection of the information as well as outlining the concurrent stages used in the analysis. The strategy was to identify the themes that were pertinent to the two subgroups. These operations were conducted separately for each of the subgroups. The persisters were examined first, and were then followed by the non-persisters.

Persisting Students

A purposive sampling was made of Seminole Nation students who were attending a selected university, to be known as "State University," and who had completed at least one-year of college studies. An initial list of the students was created by the manager of the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office, Wewoka, Oklahoma, who verified these individuals had been eligible to receive tribal educational assistance. The identity of the respondents who participated in the study was not disclosed. The names of the persisting respondents were changed to pseudonyms with first and last names beginning with the letter "P" for confidentiality.

Participants

Paula Pittman. Paula Pittman was age 24 and single. She had completed an Associate's degree at a two-year college and was in her final semester of her Bachelor's program. She attended school as a full-time student and maintained a good grade point average (GPA). She commuted approximately forty-five miles daily to attend the university, residing in her parent's home. Both of her parents had attended high school, but only her mother had completed school. Paula's only sister completed high school,

but then, did not attend college. Paula was employed part-time even though 100% of her college expenses were paid by financial aid sources.

Pamela Penman. Pamela Penman was a married female 25 years of age. She had one three year old child. Neither of Pamela's parents had attended college, although both were high school graduates. She had two brothers who had finished high school but neither had enrolled in college. Her husband was self-employed and a college graduate. Pamela was completing her final classes for an Associate's degree while continuing her education at State University. She was enrolled full-time and commuted approximately forty-five minutes daily to attend classes. Pamela was not employed and estimated that 50% of her college expenses were paid by financial aid.

Peter Peterson. Peter Peterson was twenty years of age and single. Peter's parents both completed high school. His father had attended a vocational school, and his mother had attended college for two years. His younger brother and sister were both attending a secondary school in his home town, twenty minutes from the university. Since graduating from high school Peter had been a full-time student for two years at State University. He made passing grades and lived in a residence hall. Financial aid paid for 100% of his college expenses, and he was not employed.

Phyllis Payne. Phyllis Payne was age 46 and married. Her husband was disabled, and one of their three children lived in the home and also required care. Phyllis's mother completed high school, but neither parent attended college. Both of Phyllis's sisters had a four-year degree. Phyllis was a full-time student at the university and commuted thirty-

five miles each day to classes. She had completed an Associate's degree and maintained a high grade point average. Phyllis was not employed and indicated that 100% of her college expenses were paid by financial aid.

Patrick Perkins. Patrick Perkins was a 26 year old married male. His wife had a college degree and was employed as a teacher. They had no children. Their home was near the university community, and he was a full-time student. Both of Patrick's parents were high school graduates but neither had attended college. Patrick had one younger sibling who was also attending college. Patrick had attended State University before and had re-established a passing GPA for the past two semesters. He was employed part-time and financial aid paid for 100% of his school expenses.

Data Categorization

The long interview data generated nine subcategories of common themes. Within these nine subcategories, five boarder themes were identified. The five themes that emerged for the persisters were: Apathetic/Fatalist Mindset Towards Life, A Better Life, Proximity To Home, Non-affiliation To The Institution, and, Nominal Tribal Identity.

Apathetic/Fatalist Mindset Towards Life. Apathetic/Fatalist students generally exercised decision making that required them to experience minimum growth. These students seemed to be accepting, rather than challenging, the events they encountered. An example was Paula Pittman's decision to change her major: "Biology was really hard.

But sign language . . . was easy . . . so I decided to change my major." This style of decision making was typical of the persisters.

Short-term goals and the absence of focus for one persister provided an interesting example of what could be viewed as a planned accident. Phyllis Payne initially enrolled to get a "certificate and perhaps a little knowledge." Instead, after one semester she decided what she really wanted was an Associate's degree. After she completed her AA degree at State University she decided her new goals required her to pursue a Bachelor's degree. In her final undergraduate semester she decided she needed to continue on to graduate school. Her explanation for these events was, "It would have been real depressing for me when I started out if I would have thought I was going to be in school for the next five or six years." She confessed to initial uncertainty of her capability for doing college level work. Phyllis was in her final semester at State University of her baccalaureate degree and was expected to graduate with honors.

A general attitude of "laissez faire" prevailed with most persisters. While students saw their education programs as the way to prepare for the future, their degree was also commonly viewed as an end-in-itself. Paula Pittman's remark was typical, "I'll have an education. Whether I can get a job or not is another thing." Many of the persisters expressed anxiety over their employment opportunities after college, but viewed themselves in a passive role in determining their future. Peter Peterson, talking about where he saw himself after college, said hesitantly, "Hopefully I'll go right into teaching and coaching, but you never know what will happen." Similarly, when discussing with Peter where he would like to be in ten years, he remarked, "It really doesn't matter;

someday I'd like to come back. But, if I had to go somewhere else, that 136 wouldn't bother me."

Students were consistently unspecific in discussing their immediate or future goals. In essence, there was a near absence of systemic and focused thought towards plans or details which could be worked on in the present to help them progressively achieve their future goals. Some students professed established goals, but rarely identified provisions they had made for reaching stated goals. In discussing the goals of her upcoming internship, Paula Pittman shrugged and stated, "I'm really not sure what they do there." When relating her plans for the upcoming year after graduation she conjectured, "I think I would like to go into public schools, maybe junior high or high school, probably something like that." However, there was no indication that she had undertaken any action to determine or secure a job opportunity. Pamela Pinman demonstrated a similar apathetic/fatalist perspective when she remarked, "I hope I can find a job first of all, and then I'd like to try and get my Master's degree within the next few years."

Even students in later stages of their undergraduate programs were also unsure of their goals. For example, Phyllis Payne in her final undergraduate semester noted with some hesitation, "I'm planning on going to graduate school, but I don't know where." She continued to illustrate this theme when discussing her vision for herself in ten years she interjected, "I'd like to be in a job where I could help people, but I'm not really sure what kind of job that will be." Similarly, Patrick Perkins was certain he wanted to continue to be at his present work location in ten years. He then noted with a degree of a lack of specificity, "I would like to see myself moving up into the administration." As

to what position that might be or what steps he will need to undertake in order to achieve his goal , Patrick was nebulous, adding simply, "I want to go as far as I can go."

The Persisters, as a group, presented a fairly apathetic attitude towards making long-term plans that could impact their future. The majority of the students seemed to have a limited grasp of their own self-determination. This was also illustrated by students having a limited sense of self-confidence in being able to establish goals.

A Better Life. In virtually every interview of this sampling, Native American students reiterated that one of the principal reasons they had decided to enroll in college was because they were seeking a "better life." In some instances this decision was a reflection of events they had experienced as a child. Peter Peterson related his feeling this way: "I see the way that my parents are; they've kinda had to struggle, and I don't really want to do that. Not to criticize them, but, I just want things better." Peter was motivated to go and stay in college due to his general life experiences. It is a common aspiration for children to want to have a standard of living equal to or exceeding that of their parents. In many instances, the persisters perceived the "good life" as being directly attached to earning a college degree that would free them from unwanted drudgery.

Experiences in the world of work also had been the catalyst for some of the students seeking a better life. Patrick Perkins had gone to State University immediately out of high school and had not been successful. Subsequently he got married and embarked on a series of labor intensive jobs. Patrick, shaking his head remarked, "I've had so many jobs since I got married. It seems like I just move from job to job and never really get ahead. I knew that going back to college was what I had to do, or I was just

going to keep moving from job to job." This experience, coupled with a spouse who had a college degree who Patrick considered, "successful," caused him to later declare, "I finally decided I'm going to go to college and have someone work for me." Patrick had re-established himself academically and was scheduled to graduate in a year.

Phyllis Payne provided an excellent example of searching for something better in her life with her explanation of why she decided to leave the security of her long time job in the factory and start college:

> I knew it would be a sacrifice. We wouldn't live real good. But I decided if I wanted to fulfill that secret feeling I had that I could do better, I better do it now because I was forty years old and maybe it wasn't too late to get out and do something. I know I will probably have to work until I'm retirement age, but I wanted to do something that was going to make me happy, not something that's just income. I want to do something I can be proud of.

Proximity To Home. Whether students were married or single, they all indicated that their choice of attending State University was highly influenced by its location being close to their home town and/or their immediate family. In every instance, these students reported State University was the nearest higher educational institution that afforded them the opportunity to pursue a four-year degree. The proximity of a school is a common selection criteria for many students in college. But for the persisting students in this study it appeared that the choice for them was, to paraphrase Zwerling (1976), they either were going to graduate from State University or no university at all. Paula Pittman had attended State University and left after one semester of being "very

unhappy." She then transferred to an out-of-state four-year institution before returning to State University. Paula Pittman disclosed this about her away-from-home experience:

> I really enjoyed it there, but it was so far away from home, and you know, I wouldn't be able to go home except for major holidays or something. So, it was really hard for me to be away like that, but that's when I decided I wanted to go back to school in Oklahoma, and I came back and started back at State University.

When Paula re-enrolled at State University, one change she made in returning to State University was to live at home with her family, rather than on campus. Paula's out-of-state experience was unique to the group, but all persisters indicated the importance of geographic proximity. Even the one student who resided in a university residence hall, Peter Peterson, acknowledged the primarily reason he had selected State University was, "It was only twenty miles from home!"

Home responsibilities were also found to be a major geographic factor for many persisters. Pamela Pinman related her needing time to provide for the parenting of her baby. Phyllis Payne also shared thoughts about her obligations in the home. Phyllis's husband was disabled and he stayed at home to help in the care of their son. Phyllis described her home situation this way:

> We have a son at home that's mentally handicapped. I couldn't go to school where I couldn't be close enough that I could go home if I needed to. My husband stays home with him but he's had problems when my husband needed me there. I just couldn't go off and be gone all day long and leave him.

Phyllis is typical of this group of students in acknowledging that home obligations have caused them to elect to attend State University due to its strategic proximity.

Strong Family Influence. One of the principle reasons that the proximity of State University to persister's home proved to be such an important factor in deciding to attend the university was the role immediate families played with student choice. Many persisters demonstrated a strong family commitment.

For most persisters, family members had provided one of two functions. Families initially motivated persisters to enroll and/or provided motivation for persisters to stay enrolled. Pamela Pinman conveyed feelings concerning her husband: "He knew that I had the dream of becoming a teacher and many of the people in his family are teachers, so he kinda pushed me towards it and gave me encouragement and confidence that I could do it. So I went back to school."

Phyllis Payne explained that when she was deciding whether to start college, her oldest daughter and her youngest sister were attending a local two-year college. Phyllis recollected she had been very tentative about going to school but had rationalized:

> It's now or never. I thought well, if I need any help I'll have someone to show me around, someone, you know, maybe they've taken some of the classes I'm going to be taking. They kinda know what to expect. So I went. It wasn't like I thought about it for a long time. It was just kind of a circumstance that was involved. Probably if it hadn't been for my sister encouraging me. I would have never, never, even thought about it.

The events of that semester, in turn, provided Phyllis with the positive experience that she needed to encourage her to start and to stay in college.

Patrick Perkins related a similar thoughts of how his wife had played a direct and indirect role on his decision to enroll and stay. Patrick recounted, "Being a teacher, she thinks I should go." He added, "My wife made it through, and she's been pretty successful, so that's kind of pushed me to stay in school." Phyllis Payne confirmed a comparable feeling saying, "I've got a younger sister that's already got a degree, and she's doing real good. I always sorta envied her and looked up to her."

Family influence is not restricted to spouses and siblings. Peter Peterson, a student living in a residence hall at State University, boasted proudly, "My parents are not very talkative, but they are always there for me, and really make sure that I stay in school." Paula Pittman related that her family's influence extended even beyond the time she would be in school. She expressed her point this way:

> I was going to do my internship in Tulsa at Tulsa's Speech and Hearing Association up there. That is where I originally wanted to do it, because I have family up there and could stay there during the summer. Then I heard about the ones in Oklahoma City. I thought, well, that would be better: I wouldn't have to move to Tulsa and I could just stay at home and just drive back and forth. And that's what I decided to do.

Paula also took her family and home into consideration when she was calculating her future plans. When looking ahead to what she would be doing after graduating this semester Paula confessed:

> My advisor wants me to go to (graduate school in) Little Rock. That would mean moving there, and I don't know if I'm ready to move. I'm sure I could find another graduate school closer, but she thinks that's the best one for interpreter training. I know it would be good for me, the best school possible, but I just can't see myself moving right now. I think once I graduate and finish my internship I'll just stay here for a little bit.

In virtually every instance, persisting students indicated strong associations about being near home. This theme transcended considerations of age and gender.

Non-Institutional Affiliation. While there was a large variance in the degree of academic success that the persisting students had achieved in their GPA, all of the students had remained academically viable and conveyed graduation or continuing student plans. Research by Tinto (1987) would suggest the importance of student's gaining an institutional affiliation as an important aspect of their retention. Yet, in each incidence the persisting students in this study did not establish social relationships at State University. Furthermore, for the most part, the persisters made only a minimum of use of the established institutional structures.

Not Affiliated with Campus Socially. The importance social integration, as indicated by Tinto (1987), is reflected in Paula Pittman's first experience at State University. She left after one semester commenting that she was very unhappy there because, "My family and my friends were still back in my home town." Paula begrudgingly stated, "My Mom kept telling me just, you know, make friends, get involved and you'll be OK, but I didn't. All I thought about was going home, just

making it through the week and going home for the weekend." And, as classic attrition studies suggest, Paula did not persist. After having a series of higher educational experiences, Paula returned to State University and was nearing the completion of her undergraduate degree. In discussing why she had elected to commute nearly an hour a day for the past two years instead moving she confessed, "I like the school alright. But I just feel kinda isolated there because I have no family there or anything like that."

Resident student Peter Peterson was possibly in the best situation to develop a social identity with State University. He explained that his roommate was one of his friends from high school. Peter acknowledged with a smile: "That's been great not really having any pressure to make friends with somebody new because you already know this person." Peter also discussed the contacts he had with campus clubs and organizations admitting, "I went to a couple of meetings of the Native American Society, but there's not anything that I've been involved in." Paula Pinman also indicated that she had similar feeling, "I was never one for meetings or group study or anything like that."

The non-resident status of persisters was a factor in the non-institutional affiliation sentiments. Phyllis Payne lamented, "I'm not in any groups, because I would have to sit around [after classes are over for the day] and wait for them to start up. I need to come home." Several students mentioned that they have an interest in some groups, but had continually deferred that decision to join until next year. Pamela Pinman exclaimed, "I'm not a member of any clubs, but I'm thinking I'll join SOEA next year." Patrick Perkins, a business major, discussing his plans for his final year at the university, almost as an after thought, interjected, "I think I'm going to join the business club." When queried as to what had influenced that decision he said, "You can make

acquaintances that might help you in the future, and I think it would look good on my resume." When asked if he had made any friends of students in his major, Patrick rejoined, "I'm sure I'll get to know them in the coming semesters."

Limited Use of Institutional Structures. The purpose of institutional structures is to provide students with support systems that will augment and enhance academic efforts. Traditional research indicates there is a wide berth of needs that exist for Native Americans enrolled in mainstream university settings. However, the persisters in this study made only a limited use of the variety of service areas available at State University. Patrick Perkin's feelings seemed typical of this group when he matter-of-factly stated, "I pretty much just go to class and come home." During Paula Pittman's first semester at State University she lived in a residence hall. She recounted the experience as an ordeal, "I just hated it there in the dorms." Paula found the campus so objectionable that she transferred and didn't return until after she had completed her Associate's degree and was needing a four-year institution. Upon her return to State University she opted to commute nearly an hour daily to attend class.

The state university library was the major exception of an institutional structure that was used by the persisters. Almost every student acknowledged the importance the library had played in their academic efforts. Pamela Pinman's comment was typical of the students in reporting, "I use the library all the time. Other than that I just go to class and go home." When Phyllis Payne was asked about the library she confessed:

> I use to be there ten hours a week, maybe more, doing research. Now I've cut down to three or four hours a week on a paper, because I've learned how to get

in there and get the information I need better. And I also study for tests in the library because it's quieter.

However, not all of the persisting students saw the library as a good resource for studying. Paula Pittman admitted, "I wasn't never one who went to the library to study. . . it was just mostly at home."

Peter Peterson, the second year resident student, spoke about his increased use of the library: "I've been in the library quite a bit this semester, but before that it was just occasionally. But this semester I've really learned the ways of the library, so I've taken better advantage of it." Peter is the only student who seemingly had had numerous contacts with a variety of institutional structures. However, in these instances Peter noted that the contacts were almost entirely casual hit or miss experiences to resolve an immediate problem. Peter related one experience this way, "I had a little trouble in math and those tutors really helped me out. They went over it with me a couple of times and went over it slowly because I'm not really a fast learner, and that really helped me. But I only went a couple of times." The one exception, Peter noted was a specific person who had been particularly helpful to him. The individual was an advisor who he had gotten to know by name. He then professed, "She's really helpful. She can do anything. I just come by and she really helps out." Peter indicated his primary contacts with the advisor had been during the time when he was changing his major. He later indicated that the decision to change his major had occurred this semester.

Nominal Tribal Association. One interview item specifically asked the respondents to explain their views of the Seminole Nation. In virtually every instance the

respondents repeatedly used the term "they" when referring to tribal agencies and when discussing the tribe as an entity. Paula Pittman thoughts were typical of the subgroup when she said, "They pay for my schooling and other than that, you know, we're not really involved with them." These types of feelings related to their level of involvement with the tribe and for some members a sense of guilt over their non-participation

Minimal Tribal Participation. Most of the persisting respondents were not actively involved with most tribal offices. The one major exception was the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office. Even in instances of persisters who did not come to the tribal headquarters to have direct contact with the higher education office, they reported having positive feelings of the effectiveness and the support shown by the program. The office was acknowledged by each of the respondents as being a major factor in their initial and on-going role as a student. In instances where the respondents dealt directly with the Higher Education Office, the office manager was cited as having been a key influence on the student. Phyllis Payne vocalized the gratitude expressed by most of the students: "She's a real pusher to try and get you to stay in school; if it gets rough, she'll say stuff like, 'Just stay in there. We'll help you all we can.' I think she does a real good job doing what she's doing." Students also indicated their appreciation for an incentive program that provides financial rewards for students who make good grades. Patrick Perkins was talking about the bonus program when he claimed, "It really helps me. Kinda makes me want to get in there and study just a little harder."

Persisters' dealings with tribal agencies other than the Higher Education Office, were sporadic and inconsistent. Some students noted assistance that had been provided

to their family by the tribe regarding housing and/or medical concerns. Patrick Perkins mentioned, "I remember before we got this hospital [BIA] here in Ada, we use to do to Wewoka and go to that hospital [BIA]. But I haven't been there to the headquarters [Seminole Nation] since I was a little kid." Patrick also added, "I just last night got my voter's registration card." All of the persisting students indicated they did not participate in tribal or band meetings or activities. In some instances the students in the study noted the distance to events and the time involved were factors. Notwithstanding, Paula Pittman's cryptic comment was the norm: "They pay for my schooling, but other than that, I'm not really involved with the tribe."

There were many reasons that may have accounted for why particular students were not more actively involved with the tribe. The perceptions of several of the persisters suggested some possibilities. Pamela Pinman alluded to when she was younger she had competed for the Little Miss Seminole Nation and was obviously pleased that she had been runner-up. When asked, if she was still involved in tribal activities, she rejoined, "No! I feel a little uncomfortable that I'm not more Indian than I am. I mean, they may not particularly mean to make me feel that way, but I do." She later admitted, "Some members that are full bloods don't look at me as a member because I'm not [full blood]."

For Phyllis Payne the issue was not the amount of her Indian blood. She reported instead that she had kin who were band leaders and who had always been active in tribal affairs. The problem for her was that she had not been raised around here: "I just never really felt I was part of it. I just didn't feel like I could join in and be helpful to anybody, so I never did." Another common situation reported by persisters was, that

while one or both of their parents spoke the Seminole language, the students reported having no more than a minimal command of the language. Pamela Pittman response was typical of this group's feelings when she responded, "My dad speaks the language, but we children never learned." This absence of Seminole language skills was true for all persisters.

Persisters mentioned their lack of knowledge about Native Americans, in general, and the Seminole Nation in particular. Phyllis Payne confided that she had been raised with her father's family, who were not Native Americans: "I never knew hardly anything about Indians except what I read in books. Sometimes people would ask me something about Indians, and I'd tell them 'you probably know more about it than I do.'" Patrick Perkins situation is also typical of the respondents having one parent who was active in tribal affairs and another who wasn't, with the child raised somewhere in between. He mumbled, "My Mom and her mom are all the time going to tribal meetings and things like that. But I just never learned to do that."

Guilt Over Non-Tribal Involvement. A reoccurring theme through out the interviews was a conscious sense of embarrassment and/or awkwardness by the persisting students over their lack of active affiliation with the tribe. This was related in several different comments made during the interview and in different motivations. Pamela Pinman alluded to her reluctance to join the Native American association on campus:

> I'm not involved in the Native American clubs that are in the college. I've just never made it a point to. I need to! But when I've seen them together they're

> mostly full blooded Indians and I feel like, they make me feel inferior when I'm with them. I shouldn't be. I'm not ashamed. I'm proud that I'm Indian. But I feel uncomfortable when, like I'm not suppose to be receiving everything they are because I'm not a whole blooded Indian.

Later she was discussing general tribal activities, "I wish I was more active. But then there I go again feeling a little uncomfortable that I'm not more Indian than I am."

Following graduation several of the students expressed an interest in wanting to work in Native American programs. Phyllis Payne revealed that one of her desires is that she would "love to work with our tribe and do something, maybe work at the Indian hospital." Patrick Perkins echoed a similar thought about employment after graduating in a year: "I would really like to be involved in the Seminole Nation since I'm Seminole, but I really need something close to home." In nearly every instance, the persisting students expressed a desire to work with Native American agencies, even if they were unfamiliar with their operations. Patrick Perkins provided the definitive example when he professed an interest in possibly working for a BIA office near State University, "The BIA is like, I don't really know how to explain it. I'm not totally familiar with it, I just know the building says Bureau of Indian Affairs, and underneath it says the name of a tribe."

Summary

Five themes that emerged from the study were: Apathetic / Fatalist Mindset Towards Life, A better Life, Proximity To Home, Non-affiliation To The Institution, and Nominal Tribal Identity.

The group described themselves as having little direct influence over the events that unfold in their lives. They were found to be generally accepting of the events that happened and attempted a minimum amount of concerted effort to re-direct the flow of events. Their tendency was perceived as embracing a classic fatalist perception of events being dictated and predetermined by fate and therefore unalterable. The group was viewed as being generally accepting versus attempting to change or alter events. Included in this theme were characteristics of not developing goals or a systematic approach to reach desired outcomes.

Persisters were generally seen as holding an unrealistic view that their educational efforts were an end in and of themselves. The completion of their Bachelor's degree was in some way linked to their being able to have a better life. The distinction of what their better life would be or how their education was directly connected was not explained.

The Proximity To Home theme identified the tendency of persisters to choose State University almost exclusively due to its location. The primary reasons associated to that choice were consistently found to be a strong family affiliation and home responsibilities that restricted their ability to travel. In some instances, economic considerations were a factor, but were not identified as a significant factor for most persisters.

In regards to Non-institutional Affiliation, persisters made no significant effort to connect themselves with the institution. Instead, respondents made conscious decisions not to integrate themselves into college systems. For example, even in instances where persisters had investigated various campus groups, they had consistently chosen to not

join the school's social organizations. Similarly, persisters had made only a modest utilization of the institutional structures that were available at the university.

The Nominal Tribal Association theme was evident when respondents tended to refer to all aspects of their tribe in third person. Further, the persisters, have little or no regular involvement with or understanding of tribal affairs,agencies or programs. The exception was the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office. Respondents also have an appreciation for the operations of the tribal government, but do not participate in band or tribal meetings. Because of the lack of understanding and non-participation, many respondents seem to feel guilt for not being a part of the tribe. Unfortunately, their fatalist/apathetic views would not allow them to develop a practical or realistic method to confront this concern.

Persisters were seen as having reached their level of success through their tenacity and their persistence. Persisters seemed not to have been significantly influenced by their culture or institutional structures in making a decision to enroll or to remain at State University. The principal factor for the group was proximity.

Non-Persisting Students

A purposive sampling was made of students who were members of the Seminole Nation, had attended State University, had completed at least one-year of college studies, and had not enrolled for at least one year. A list of the students was created by the manager of the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office who verified these individuals had been eligible to receive educational assistance through tribal funds. The

names of the non-persisting respondents have been changed to pseudonyms with first names beginning with "N" and last names beginning with "P" for confidentiality.

Participants

The following individuals were selected to provide a diverse group of respondents that reflected a substantial variation in age, gender, marital status, type and amounts of employment, as well as location of residence.

Norman Pyle. Norman Pyle was married and 27 years old. He had three children in the home, all were attending elementary school. Norman had completed an Associate's degree at a two-year college and had taken classes at two universities. While enrolled, he had been a full-time student and had commuted from his home. He had maintained a passing accumulative grade point average, but had been placed on academic probation when last attending State University. Norman had not worked while attending school as 100% of his school costs had been paid by financial aid sources. Norman was unaware of his parents educational background. Two of his three siblings had completed high school, one of whom had attended a vocational-technical school.

Nathan Pointer. Nathan Pointer 41, was married. He had three children, the oldest was sixteen. Nathan completed his Associate of Science degree at a two-year college and had attended State University for three semesters. He was registered as a full-time student, lived at home, and maintained a full-time job. While in school Nathan had achieved good grades and was in academic good standing at the university. Approximately 50% of Nathan's college expenses had been paid through financial aid.

Both of his parents had been high school graduates, and one older sister had earned an Associate's degree.

Nancy Pugh. Nancy Pugh was 22 years old and single. She had been enrolled in two different two-year colleges and State University. Her enrollment had varied but after the first year she had been a part-time student. Nancy had maintained a passing grade point average and was in academic good standing. All of Nancy's school expenses were paid through financial aid. Her residence had varied; during her first year she was a residential student and since then has lived with her parents. Both her mother and father had attended high school but only her mother completed school. Nancy was the youngest of five children. Three of Nancy's siblings completed high school, two of which then completed some post secondary education.

Neil Pepper. Neil Pepper was married and 36 years of age. His three children were high school age. Neil had completed an Associate's degree at a two-year college and had taken classes at State University. Neil had attended as a full-time student and commuted from his home. Financial aid had covered 100% of his school expenses, and he had not been employed while in school. Neil indicated he had a good cumulative grade point average and only had been placed on academic suspension for his last term at the university. Both of his parents completed high school, and his mother had completed two years of college. Neil was the oldest of five children. Two of his younger siblings completed high school and two did not.

Data Categorization

The long interview data generated eight subcategories of common themes. Within these eight subcategories five boarder themes were identified. The five themes that emerged for non-persister students were: Getting And Giving An Education, Tribal Perspectives, Educational Persistence, Motivation Factors, and Family Issues.

Getting and Giving An Education. All non-persisting students had powerful incentives regarding the importance they placed on the completion of a Bachelor's degree. In each instance the individual conceptualized a clear and specific goal directly linked to the achievement of their diploma. Nathan Pointer volunteered, "I want to get my degree and then go to work for our school system where I can help youth. I believe there is a real need for that, and with my experiences I believe I can do that." Norman Pyle also expressed a desire to work with youth in education. However, his vision joined technology with a small school setting: "Redrock is a small independent school. I want to go there and make those kids feel like the ones at bigger schools do. To teach computers in elementary education will give them something to look forward to." Nancy Pugh also expressed an interest in getting her degree in elementary education. She wanted to go to Florida and teach at the Seminole reservation school. She confided, "I really want to go to Florida, cause I have some relatives out there and I read in their [tribal] newspaper ads that they really need teachers." Neil Pepper shared the group's interest in education, but in a different direction. Neil's passion was journalism, "Right now I've stayed with my foot in the door doing a part-time job teaching photography, with a Bachelor's degree I'll have a chance to get on full-time." In each instance, these

students made a connection between specific goals and the precise educational credentials that would be required.

There was an indication that these students valued the resultant privileges of obtaining an educational degree. However, they also seemed to believe that they would receive personal satisfaction by dispensing knowledge. Nathan Pointer expressed this perspective:

> I had to start at the bottom and work my way up, which I wouldn't want anybody to have to do. I feel the only way the kids are going to get ahead is to have an education. Because now days to get a good job, you need an education. Whether you're going to use what you learned in college or not, you still have to have the degree just to get a good position.

Just as Nathan's experiences had shaped his goals, Nancy Pugh also related how childhood times of "playing teacher" created a lasting impression with her. Playing with a much younger niece, Nancy found her niece an apt and pliable student. Her success in these games caused her brother to repeatedly say, "She's smart because she had a good teacher. You taught her everything she knows." The radiance of Nancy's face in telling this story and of her intense pleasure in these childhood experiences demonstrated an obvious influence in her career aspirations.

Non-persisters had a variety of reasons why their interests were in education. Nathan Pointer discussed his thoughts, "I believe that teachers can make a difference. We're losing some sort of, some of the values that could help society, basic things like feeling wanted and feeling someone cares is the main things. But it just seems to be a too big of a barrier between students and teachers in the schools now." Nathan then

asserted, "Kids have to have a feeling of belonging to something, whether it's a gang or whatever." Norman Pyle saw a similar connection for his "why" saying, "You know now days it seems everything is more computerized. I want to try and get them interested in doing computers, instead of messing with other things." Nancy Pugh told of her interests: "I want to teach like pre-kindergarten or like first grade. I can speak the language some and while I'm not fluent I can speak and I think that could be a big help." Neil Pepper saw the scope of schools tends to be too narrow: "I want to help kids realize an education is like a profession, and that doesn't mean, they can't still have an interest at being good and enjoy something else that's more of a skill too." Non-persisters presented clear and convincing images of what they wanted to do, how they expected to get there, and why they thought the way they did.

Tribal Perspectives. Non-persisters had many similarities in their general thoughts about the Seminole Nation and the role the tribe had played in their lives.

Family Involvement. Family involvement with the tribe was a common characteristic for each of the non-persisters. However each student held a unique perspective. In most cases the parents of the non-persisters were reported as having taken an active role in tribal affairs. With evident pride, Nancy Pugh related, "My Mom, not only does she work for the tribe, she's a bilingual teacher. She teaches at different schools around here and she interprets for different people, not just in-state, but out-of-state and different countries. She's well known for interpreting the Seminole language into English and anything English into Seminole." Neil Pepper reported a similar level of tribal dedication for his mother; but it was related in an entirely different light:

> My mom is one of those people who spent the majority of her life in a sense fighting for the rights of her people, the rights of our tribe. Things that are suppose to help the tribe and better the people and all that. But, to me, she's lost her life. To me she's wasting her life worrying about her people instead of worrying about herself. Because now she's got no skills, and the only thing she can look forward to is what she can do for my people.

Norman Pyle's parents occupy some middle ground between the two extremes. Norman remarked, " My mom and step-dad are always telling me I should be more active with them in my tribe. But I just don't see that happening." In contrast, Nathan Pointer did not bring up his parent's activity with the tribe but did mention his spouse's activities: "My wife worked for the tribe for years. Now she works for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. . . and she gets so involved in all that stuff."

Tribal Identity. All of the non-persisting students acknowledged that their cultural identity to the tribe, was tied to some type of qualifier. Nathan Pointer declared, "I'm proud to be a Seminole Indian. They are good people; they're a strong people; if they like you, they will stand by you. They just need to learn to stand together and work together; it could be a lot better." Nancy Pugh shared some similar perspectives: "My tribe, the Seminole Nation, is a pretty good tribe. Like trying to help you with your education, that what they stress to the young people." Neil Pepper sees his tribal identity considerably different: "It's not that I'm not proud of being a Seminole Indian, because that's what I am. And I'm proud that I'm what I am. But as far as what my tribe does, I don't see anything that big to celebrate over."

Personal Interaction. The degree and level of personal interaction that non-persisters had maintained with the tribe varied. However, in each instance the non-persisters demonstrated a well developed knowledge of tribal operations, typically accompanied by a distinct perspective of their tribe. Nancy Pugh discussed her involvement with the tribe in this way, "I was Ms. Seminole Nation, a few years ago. I was chosen because of my academics, my college academics. We had to do a traditional and modern talent. They go by your characteristics and stuff like that. A couple of years before that I was Junior Ms Seminole." Later Nancy also remarked, "They have other emphasis too. Like on the elderly, they feed the older people and have wellness stuff like free blood pressure checks. They have other programs that help people of the tribe when like they need help like funeral expenses. I think they do good work."

Norman Pyle acknowledged that "on occasion" he had had numerous dealing with some of the tribal agencies. He offered up these observations:

> They helped me going to school and I know the higher education part pretty good I guess. And the JPTA helps, you know, in the summer putting high school students to work. And they built us a house. That's about everything I know, because the way they run stuff is kinda hectic sometimes. Some of the employees there, you see them walking around not doing their job and stuff and it seems like they don't hardly say anything to them.

As he finished Norman appeared annoyed, but he just shrugged and stopped talking.

Neil Pepper had a sharper and harsher viewpoint: "I'm not too fond of my tribe. I think they're like the low tribe on the totem pole. I've worked part-time with them for years, but our tribe as a whole, to me, is kinda like one of the most mixed up tribes there

are. I don't see them established as anything." Nathan Pointer also shared many of these same feelings:

> The main thing that's wrong with the Seminoles is the government. There seems to be a chip on their shoulders and it's like someone is out to get them. Don't get me wrong; there's good there too; people trying to make a difference. But it seems like the money, the fame and fortune always comes in there and goes to their head and they all wind up trying to be top dog. They haven't learned to run things like the white people.

Nathan later added, "I just wished they get the chip off their shoulder and move on and learn to live like and exist like everyone else does. Because, the old days are over."

The students' perspectives concerning the Seminole Nation's role in their educational process varied. Nancy related, "The education office wanted me to take the ACT when I was a sophomore; it was paid for and everything. I took it, and I did real well. So by my junior year they had me filling out papers and getting ready to go to college. My senior year they even took me up to look at the school. When I came back they got everything ready, and I just had to wait for the fall to start school." Nathan Pointer talked about an experience he had while enrolling at State University: "I've stood behind students enrolling that didn't have their tuition paid for, and they were writing personal checks. I'd think, I've got it tough, look at them. You know I'm real thankful for my tuition being paid, and sometimes books, sometimes not. But you know, it still takes a lot more." Neil Pepper had an entirely different view about the source of his tuition money:

> I look at it as though the American people gave me that money to go to school, the tax payers. If there's a right or a treaty or something that says I was suppose to get that, that's ok. If there's an opportunity, if my tribe offers me an opportunity to better myself and it's through education, I'll take advantage of that resource, and I'll be appreciative of it. But, it doesn't mean I have to fall in love with my tribe.

Educational Persistence. While this group of students was classified as non-persisters, they displayed an incredible degree of educational persistence. They have completed substantial amounts of college studies to date. Each non-persister exhibited a viable tenacity in continuing their education some day.

High School Factors. High school for each of the non-persister students was not spent on a track aimed at college. Nancy Pugh attended a small rural school system. She commented that, "Sometimes we only had five or ten students in classes." However Nancy went on to a small two-year college and did well enough academically to be selected Ms. Seminole Nation. Nancy remembered these thoughts about high school, "One of my favorite teachers really helped me. She always pushed me to do everything, always had something for me to do, even after I went to college." Nathan Pointer took a different route, he dropped out. Nathan related:

> Mom did the best she could. I don't blame her for not pushing me, but after my 10th grade year I just decided I didn't need school no more. It wasn't that important. But it really made a difference in my life. I had to go right from there to working at any job I could get.

Some thirteen years later, Nathan had entered college, remained academically eligible, earned an Associate's degree, and was half way towards the completion of his Bachelor's degree. Norman Pyle also reported some similar problems he had had: "By the time I'd graduated from high school, I was married and had two kids." While his educational career has been somewhat checkered, Norman had completed an Associate's degree and had plans to complete his Bachelor's degree. Neil Pepper did not attend a traditional common school program. Instead, Neil disclosed, "I went to Indian school from 7 until I was 17 and graduated from high school. Boarding school, government schools they use to say, Indian government schools, Indian boarding schools." Neil explained, "My Mom sent me off to school when I was seven, not because I was bad, just economically she couldn't give me the opportunities the way they could." Neil described this series of events this way:

> While I was at the Indian schools, it was a different life. It was like the life a kid should have. The first part of my Indian schools was like a home. Then I went from there to regular boarding schools and that was like, well it was kinda weird. I describe it like kind of teenagers, not like the family supervision, its like a dorm, like college dorms. You got people guiding you but not like in a family sense, like a parent sense. So I think I've had the best of both worlds, both sides of it and its been an experience. Then I got married and started a family when I was 17.

After graduating from his high school, Neil had worked in the oil field for eight years and then began his college studies. Since then he had completed his Associate's degree and had taken a semester of studies at State University. Neil, as did every one of the non-

persisting students, had demonstrated a notable amount of persistence to have advanced educationally to the point they were at in this study.

The College Experience. Each of the respondents in this subgroup were non-persisters by the study's definition. However, in each instance the non-persisting students had already overcome a potentially problematic high school period and had persevered in their education to the extent of having completed a significant amount of college credit. All of the respondents also had the shared experience of having had at least some degree of college success. Nancy Pugh discussed her college experience:

> My first choice for college was a school pretty far away. I didn't know any people there, and it was kinda like me, because I went to a small high school and the largest class I had up there was maybe twenty students, and it was easy to get along with everyone. I liked it because no one I knew had hardly heard of it and there was no one I knew up there and I was going to be by myself. It was just different; the atmosphere was different; and I liked it. I went there for a year, and I did real good.

Nathan Pointer also started out his college experiences in a two-year college setting. He explained his educational journey in this way, "I got started late going to college. Back in '86 I decide to go ahead and further my education. And its been kinda off and on since then. I got my Associates degree at a two-year college and then I went to State University. I guess in the future I can plan on going ahead and finishing." Neil Pepper had tried college briefly after high school, but departed shortly thereafter in order to take

care of his family. Neil recounted the events that led up to his decision to re-enroll in college again:

> I got to know the wife of a president at a two-year college cause our kids played on the same little league team. Well she influenced me to go back and finish what I got started, and that's what happened. I finished, graduated and went on to State University. That two-year school was like a home, a family, I have a lot of loyalty for them.

Norman Pyle took his first classes at a vocational-technical college and then came to a two-year college. He said that it happened this way:

> I got signed up for this computer course. Well, at first I didn't even know how to turn it on. But I got to where I would help some of the high school students that were having problems. Then after we got a new instructor, he got real busy, and I started helping even more students. And I thought, 'This is fun!' So it kinda motivated me to want to be a teacher. So I enrolled at a two-year college, and I've finished up my Associate's degree and even started taking classes at State University.

Each of the non-persisting students had related that positive experiences had occurred to help them get in college. But in each instance, the students had taken action to make the events ensue.

Institutional Structures. Non-persisting students interactions with institutional structures they encountered were quite diverse. Each of the students attended at least one two-year college prior to registering at State University. Non-persisters also saw

differences in the structures at the institutions. Norman Pyle made the comparison, "While I was at the two-year college I was closer to home and it seems I used the library and tutors, and stuff like that helped me a lot. But when I went to State University I didn't have time to do too much there." Nathan Pointer observed:

> State University was totally different from the two-year college. I never could find a counselor that could help me. And the financial aid office over there, Oh man. Mind you I did alright as far as grades, but some of that stuff just wasn't right. I found the library over there, but I never got that computerized system down. I couldn't find no sources and stuff.

Nancy Pugh was the only unmarried non-persister, had started going to college directly after she had graduated from high school. She related her experiences while she was at the first two-year college she attended:

> I lived right on campus. I didn't have far to walk and didn't have a roommate. I didn't have to worry about nobody but myself. Just get up, going to class and doing homework. So that worked out well for me. I would go to the library 2 or 3 hours whenever I needed to. But, since I've been going to school down here, I usually leave and go straight to work, and then I'd go home. I did well up there considering how I've done down here.

Neil Pepper saw things in more human terms: "At the two-year college people really seemed to care, if I needed help I could find it. But at State University it was like going to work, just getting it done and coming back home. I don't have a great history right now with State University."

In each instance the non-persisting students perceived that they had utilized the services at the initial institution they had attended, but had made only nominal use of the same types of services while they were at State University. Still, none of these students indicated that they felt their becoming a non-persister was related to not using the campus services at State University.

Motivational Factors. There were two types of motivational factors that were identified from the long interview process. Push factors were defined as events or people that had a decisively positive influence on respondents deciding to enroll in college. Pull factors were defined as events or people that had a decisively negative influence on respondents deciding to remain enrolled.

Push Factors. Push factors were events or people who encouraged non-persisters into deciding to undertake their most recent college enrollment. Norman Pyle explained how some external events had impacted him:

> When the oil patch started dying down, you know, there wasn't very many good jobs out there. I started working at dead end jobs and realized I can't really find a way to make a living out of these jobs. Then I got into this computer course at the vo-tech and those two things kinda motivated me to think I could be a teacher.

Nathan Pointer also related a similar work experience: "I had a steady job, but I wasn't making that much money. That's when I decided quit and enrolled in college. I said 'I'm not going to do this. I want to go back and get a degree in something that I could believe in and enjoy doing more than what I was doing.'" Nancy Pugh entered college

the fall after she graduated from high school: "When I came back from that looking at that college I knew that was the one. At first when I graduated from high school I really didn't want to go to college but everyone was like pushing me so I went ahead and went."

There were also people who played influential roles in several "pushing" instances. Norman Pyle acknowledged that the main factors were, "Probably my wife, since I couldn't find a job, she was real supportive about me going back. Since then my mom and family have started to encourage me." Nancy Pugh remarked, "My mom, my teacher from high school and Mrs. Streater at the higher education office really helped me get into college." Nathan Pointer also communicated that he had had a lot of support for his decision. He explained it this way:

> My wife always wanted me to go. She's always been behind me for going and finishing. Seems like everybody I know more or less parents of kids I teach, some of them teachers even superintendents, said I should be in some sort of education field. They believed I could do good for the kids. And other than that just more me than anything I guess.

Neil Pepper said, "The president's wife of that two-year college really helped get me to go back to school. Then my family's support while I was in the two-year was real important. My wife thought school was neat, saw it was new goal. It took me three years to finish it and that was cool and she was proud and she was happy."

Pull Factors. Pull factors were events or people who had a strong and adverse impact on the student's decision to stay enrolled. Norman Pyle discussed he events that

unfolded after he completed his Associate's degree. Norman related how he and his wife were making plans.

> I got enrolled for classes at a big university. We had decided to move up there and finish: school up there. Then the Seminole Nation Housing Authority came over and said they were going to build us a house. We had put in the application five or six years ago. So our plans just stopped and we had to stay cause I couldn't afford two rents. Then I wound up developing gout and had to withdraw just after I started classes. So then I transferred to State University. I didn't really care for it much there. Then we started having personal problems that didn't quite work out very good either. I probably went two thirds of the way, and just quit going so that's why I'm on academic suspension. I've been sitting out the past two semesters just trying to cope with my problems. Its been pretty hard.

Nancy Pugh had explained that she been a fairly academically successful as a student while she had attended a residential two-year college. Then she expounded, "I had went there for a year and then my dad got sick, and I had to move back home. I went to a two-year college, near here, and then I took some classes at the university. My grades haven't been so good." When discussing why there had been such a substantial shift in her grades after her first year of college she pondered:

> I don't know. Probably because I've lived at home. I guess because I had to move back, and I really didn't want to. I really didn't have my head into my stuff that time, that first semester I moved back. I look at my grades now and it is not very pleasing. I've done better since then and everything, but my grade point

> isn't what it should be like. I think I'll gradually be able to bring it up, I guess because I'm getting a little bit older.

Nathan Pointer clarified the reason for his situation this way:

> Money wise is really my problem. The Seminole Nation helps; I mean don't get me wrong, they help a lot. They pay tuition. . . . . Its just that whatever is left means night time work. Ya see I started my higher education back in '86. That ten years ago and every time I've quit it was money problems. I quit one semester in the middle of the semester. But, I've finished all the other times; I just don't go back the following semester. I need more money coming in, in order to get by better and that's why its took me so long.

Neil Pepper expressed some concerns that were similar to those of Nathan, but they had a twist:

> Economic, it always seems to come back to economics. When I was going to school my wife was proud of that fact. She was glad when I graduated but economics stilled played a big part. I guess she thought you got your education, where is the job, and that made it harder. The time that I was getting my education there was a lot of support, a lot of backing. OK, I reached that goal and I think she got like, I don't think this education stuff is going to pay off, we need to have money. Cause during the time I was going to school, my wife was the head provider in the family. I appreciated her for that and all but it came to a time where I think she was saying 'OK I've provided enough. I gave you your shot at an education for a job, something needs to happen.'"

For each of the students', a significant "pull factor" occurred after they had had at least one year of college success. In every instance the event that occurred had less to do with the institution, and much more to do with issues within the family structure of the non-persisting student.

Family Issues. The perspective of each of the non-persisters was that they had experience a strong sense of family support during their initial or return venture to college. In addition the non-persisting students also perceived that family issues had influenced their non-persistence. Families played an important role in these student's lives.

Nancy Pugh had discussed the support of her family and the friends of her family as a big part of the "push factors" that sent her off to college in the first place. Then she sadly explained:

> My dad got sick, and I had to move home. My mom needed someone to be around my dad. The only reason I came home was because I was further away from home than my sister was. And they had a job because it was like 200 miles to come and get me and I didn't want to put the strain on them to have an come get me all the time.

Nathan Pointer had established a pattern of enrolling as a full-time student for a semester, and then taking the next semester off to work. Nathan talked about how important it was to have had the support of his family in going back to school each time:

> My dad was killed when I was five. I didn't have a dad, I was raised by my mom and my aunt. They did the best they could, and I'm not saying they didn't do

> their job or nothing. I just didn't have somebody there to nudge me along. My mom would let me do anything I wanted. Whether that is good or bad I don't know, but I had a happy childhood. But if I would have had somebody there to push me a little bit I think that would have made a big difference. That's the feeling I have now, is that if I just push somebody a little bit or give them some encouragement, it might make a difference down the road. That what keeps me coming back.

Norman Pugh explained that he had some problems after he got started at State University. He put quite simply: "The personal problems I was having just kinda took a toll on me. So I wound up just quitting, just quitting." Since that last semester Norman had remained active with his children's sports activities. He said, "I've always been pretty active with my kids, coaching little league softball and basketball. We've all got a good relationship." Norman related a discussion he had with one of his "sports minded" sons concerning college and sports:

> I keep telling him, sports, that's a temporary thing. You see pros get hurt, retire at an early age. But if you have an education, you'll have that for life. That's a life thing. All this sports stuff its just temporary stuff, but an education you're going to have that for the rest of your life. And then you can pass it on to your grand kids.

Neil Pepper spent most of his youth at Indian boarding schools. He discussed what it was like to come home during those years for visits: "I had to go home summer time and holidays. It was during those periods that I experienced the violence and things with my mother and the relationship she had with my step-dad. I still remember she was crying. I

guess I know she tried the best she could, but sometimes I wonder, I think. Could she have tried a little harder?" The intensity of this perception of his home life had an understandable shaping influence on Neil. After a while Neil found that his perspective of his time at the boarding school gradually began to take on a different slant. He found that he really valued the atmosphere at the boarding school. Neil related some of events that occurred to him in those years he attended the Indian schools:

> At 17, I was junior at school and knew I was going to be a senior. I knew a senior needs to start planning for the future. The only thing left for me was to go back home. And I didn't want to go back home because I didn't see a future. I didn't see no way. It's like as a senior as far as the help I'm getting or the opportunity that was given to me over those years to experience a better life was all going to come to an end. I came home that summer and that's when I met my wife. I've been married 18 years now. We went to school and graduated together. I think when I met her was an opportunity for me. I think it looked like a way I don't have to go home. We had our first child when we were 18.

With each student, there have been significant life shaping experiences that had and still might influence their academic decisions today.

Summary

Non-persisting students showed a consistency in their responses. Each student had experienced events during their tenure as a college student that caused them to interrupt their academic program, leading to their apparent attrition. However, it is noteworthy that each of the non-persisters continued to maintain an educational goal.

Five non-persisting themes emerged from the study. The themes were: getting and giving an education, tribal perspectives, educational persistence, motivational factors, and, family issues.

Getting and giving an education was a dual theme used to denote that non-persisters had an interest not just in achieving an education but also had the desire to be an educator. In each instance students related a specific educational goal they desired to reach that would in turn allow them to achieve a personal / professional goal as well.

Tribal perspectives were themes that eluded to the views that students held with regards to their parents involvement with the tribe. Non-persisters were noted as having varying degrees of involvement with the tribe. The respondents tended to hold strong developed options concerning the tribe based on their tribal interactions. The respondents had a high degree of tribal identity.

The section on educational persistence identified the strength of character shown by the non-persisters to overcome significant problems in their past. This strength allowed them to achieve the degree of educational progress they had enjoyed to that point. The impact of events that occurred during their time as students were explored.

The Institutional Structures section compared non-persister perceptions regarding their more extensive use of the institutional structures at their first college then at State University.

Motivation Factors examined factors that radically effected student enrollment. Push factors were interventions of events or people that encouraged the students to initially enroll or to re-enroll. Pull factors were aspects that worked against students' enrollment and were explored from perspective of the individual student.

Family Issues entailed viewing the spectrum of interactions that had effected the students. These views ranged in their time perspective and tended to concern the students' views on the impact that various family members had had on their educational endeavors. As a whole these students placed a high value on their family's support for their education.

Non-persisters were seen as a group who had already demonstrated considerable effort to overcome problems to have been able to have progressed to the point they had reached in their education. As a group they were confronting a significant problem or problems from their past decisions that would continue to challenge them. Each respondent expressed an adamant desire to continue with their education and to complete a Bachelor's degree.

Theoretical Analysis of Data

The second level of analysis for this study involved the application of Douglas's (1992) conceptualizations of cultural bias. This was done by applying a set of cultural bias criteria to the emergent themes (see Figure 2, Chapter II).

Cultural Bias

The basic premise of Mary Douglas's (1992) cultural theory is that all cultures can be classified as existing within one of four cells or types: "Any community however small has in embryo four cultural types, each in debate with the others, each anchored in a particular relation to power and authority" (Douglas, 1992, p. 471). This presumption is based on utilizing her concepts of group and grid. Group represents the degree to

which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit. Grid is the measure of the amount of structure that is imposed on the individual. By combining these two measures one is able to create a two-dimensional conceptualization of an individual's social environment. Douglas (1992) maintains, that for each of the four social environments, there exists a predictable and specific cultural bias. The cultural bias of a social environment is indicated by the distinctive pattern of blame that is used by the members.

Harris (1995a) explains that an understanding of cultural bias provides an indication of how an individual makes life choices. Harris (1995b) refers to cultural bias as "a unique way of looking at the world" (p. 624). Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky (1990) noted cultural bias relates to "shared values and beliefs" (p. 1). Both citations are examples of cultural bias as a description of behaviors expected of individuals who exist within a specific social environment. Douglas (1992) argues that by understanding the cultural bias of a social environment it then becomes possible to explore the perceptual orientations that are held by the individuals within that environmental setting

The persisters and non-persisters were analyzed in the previous sections using McCracken (1989). The goal of this section was to use Douglas's (1992) cultural theory to determine whether variations existed between the subgroups. The process required a re-examination of the interview materials to identify the cultural bias exhibited by the subgroup members. Harris (1995a) labeled seven tendencies that are characteristics of each cultural bias. The characteristics of the cultural bias pertaining to the persisters and non-persisters served as a guide.

Persisters

Persisters in this study exist within the Isolates Environment. The cultural bias that is associated with Douglas's (1992) high-grid, low-group environment is fatalism. Harris (1995a) identified seven tendencies that are characteristic of the fatalist: little or no autonomy in life decision; minimum loyalty to the institution and a strong cultural structure that limits negotiation; a passive avoidance of risk; blame for life's predicaments is credited to fate; a victim's attitude; an inability to either negotiate freely or to join influential groups; and, an apathetic disposition to life.

Little Or No Autonomy. A sense of little or no autonomy was repeatedly demonstrated by the persisters in this study. These feelings were identifed by students not believing they were empowered to take control and make important decisions in their life. Apathetic/fatalist actions by persisters indicated they did not feel like they were making the decisions that were influencing their own destiny. Persisting students saw themselves living within few options. An example of this perspective is that State University was consistently selected by these students, because of its proximity as the nearest four-year university to their home. Phyllis Payne confirmed that State University was "just the closest." The persisters did saw themselves as having a choice to attend State University or to not attend a university at all.

Persisters frequently related they did not feel in control of the forces that pushed and directed there lives. Frustrated over his pre-college education experiences, Peter Peterson complained, "My parents were divorced; so occasionally I went back and forth between schools with my mom and my dad. But, I got to stay the last four years of high

school with my dad so I could graduate." Patrick Perkins talked about how he was unsure of starting college after high school, and indicated his mother made the decision for him. Patrick recalled the events this way, "She was all the time telling me, 'You're going to college.' And, I'd say, 'I'm not going to college.' Yeah, well, she even paid for me to go out of her own pocket my first few semesters because I messed around and didn't fill any grant papers out or nothing." Peter Peterson explained how he decided to attend college. He confessed, "I really wasn't sure what I should do. Other people influenced me to just try and make myself a better person and to better my life and myself and to not just struggle like my parents." In each of these instances, the going to college had little to do with making a conscious choice and much to do with what others thought was best.

The persister's decision making process about enrolling in college conveyed an absence of being empowered to take control of their own lives. Patrick Perkins was talking about his initial enrollment in college and explained, "I guess, it just seemed it was the thing to do. Besides, a lot of my friends were going." Peter Peterson was also influenced by his high school companions: "I don't really know what it was. It was kinda like all my friends were doing it so I thought that's the thing I should do." Phyllis Payne acknowledged that the power for her decision did not come from within. Phyllis explained that even though she knew she was wanting something more from her life at the time, "If it hadn't been for my sister encouraging me, the thought [about entering college] would never, never have entered my mind!" Each of these examples indicates students felt minimum control over the decisions in their lives, suggesting that "fate" played a meaningful role and directed their personal decision making.

When persisters did see themselves in the position to make decisions, they tended to see their choices as limited and for the most part, imposed choices. Phyllis Payne had not joined any campus clubs even though she wanted to "join in more." Phyllis saw the situation this way:

> Of all of the groups that I had an interest in, I think the Psychology club was the only one that met before I go home. I think they have meetings once a week at Wednesday noon. But I had a class at noon this semester. It just seems that it never was where it would be real convenient for me to join. Besides they take trips to Houston and I could never go.

While Phyllis indicated that she had an interest in several organizations, she also related that she had never attended a meetings for any of these clubs.

Minimum Loyalty to The Institution. Minimum loyalty to the institution and strong cultural structures that limit negotiation are a trademark for Isolates. Fatalists tend to live in structures that others have organized (Harris, 1995a). Persisting students do not value the university, but frequently have strong family ties. As a group they viewed the events related to school as being out of their control and unable to change it. Numerous themes from the study provide general support for this section. Strong family influences have been shown for all persisters. The nominal use of the institutional structures provided also has been documented. Persisters did not make any meaningful social affiliation with the campus. As a group the persisters had not evaluated or changed the environment to better suit their needs. Instead they tended to accept the school's systems of operation and did not seek to alter the systems.

Persisting students typically did not value the institution as much as they valued the location of the institution. Students also indicated they had a high need for their family. Paula Pittman provided an excellent example of how these two factors worked together. Paula had attended State University when she first started her college studies. She left and completed an Associate's degree at a two-year college and then studied at an out-of-state university. She had this to say about her decision to come back and complete her Bachelor's degree at State University:

> I just decided instead of starting at a whole new college; it was just easier to go back to State University. I was already familiar with the campus, so it was just easier. The only thing I didn't like was the drive. I preferred not to live there because I had lived in the apartments there one semester. I just knew I preferred to stay at home with my parents.

Therefore, Paula returned to State University since it was the closest four-year college to home. During her last semester at State University, Paula said about her future plans:

> I know I'm going to have to move away from mom and dad sometime or another but I don't know its just hard right now. I know I'm getting ready to finish school and I'll have to think about that though. I just don't think I'm ready for that.

While Paula clearly valued the nearness of her home, she had no affiliation with the university.

Fatalists avoid social integration and accept living out a structure that someone else designed. None of the persisters had made any significant effort to become socially integrated into the university's programs. Pamela Pinman's views were representative of

these students. Even though she was not comfortable with the members of the organization, she still felt some obligation that she should be a member: "I'm not involved in the Native American clubs on campus. I need to." Peter Peterson, the campus resident, talked about his lack of social affiliation while at State University. Although Peter had been a resident student at State University for two years, he related his campus involvement in this manner, "I haven't made a lot of new friends since I came to State University. Just a few here and there." The persisters as a group essentially attended their classes and had little other contact or involvement with their fellow students or the campus activities in general.

A natural extension of an aversion for social involvement was the persister tendency to see themselves as living in an institutional structure that was created without them in mind. The most consistent reason that State University was selected was for accessibility. Students saw this advantage from several perspectives, but the result was the same. Pamela Pinman confirmed the main reason she chose this school was, "State University was convenient." She continued on to explain, "My daughter and I can be closer, and besides her doctor is in the same town." Patrick Perkins was clear and direct. As a married man with plans for having a family, he was out to complete as degree as quickly as possible. State University was his choice because, "Its the closest college around." Persisters were more than willing to operate within someone else's structure, as long as they could pursue their own goals.

Persisting student were unconcerned with trying to effect the academic environment. Instead, persisters tended to accept the college system operations and to simply meet the requirements for their degree. This indifference towards campus

systems was illustrated by Phyllis Payne in her final undergraduate semester at State University. Relating her plans for the immediate future, she informed the researcher, " I'm planning on going to graduate school next fall, but I'm not sure where. I'm pretty sure it will probably be here at State University." Phyllis acknowledged that while she had not processed any paperwork or even applied for admission, and she was not anxious about getting approval because, "I've talked to them a little bit and know that there's no real deadline or anything." Persisters just accept and use the system as it exists.

The persisters also had a reoccurring use of the term "they" versus the term "we" when their comment concerned the Seminole Nation. Phyllis Payne provided a definitive example: "Well they have their groups, they have different well, funny ways that they do things that is so different from the way I was raised. They go to church every other weekend and then to their group. At their church, they might stay all weekend." This general reference was not suggesting there was a lack of tribal identification. Quite the contrary; the respondents all affirmed their Seminole heritage and Native American ancestry with a sense of pride. The point made by the persisters was that they were not making a conscious connection between themselves and the context of the larger tribal unit. While respondent statements indicated it was difficult to separate their tribe from their tribal agencies, there were no instances when a student implied a personal empathy to the tribal collective.

A Passive Avoidance of Risk. The passive avoidance of risk was also associated with a sense of helplessness in the face of danger. Persisters tended to wait out a

problems versus confronting the problems. Apathetic, fatalist thinking was demonstrated by the absence of focused goals. Apathy was also demonstrated through decisions not to engage in new experiences. Persisters avoided making decisions that required the development of specific plans to reach goals. As a group, these students were resolute that they would make a minimum impact on how the institution or tribe conducted their operations.

A sense of helplessness, closely related to fear, is the hallmark of the fatalistic perspective. Pamela Pinman exhibited passive avoidance in dealing with her fear of starting college. Pamela confessed, "I knew I wanted to start in a small college because I wasn't quite sure how I was going to handle it. If I was going to be able to do the school work. I was very scared the first time I ever went to the college." Pamela dealt with her dilemma by enrolling at a two-year college and completing her Associate degree before going to State University. Similarly, Patrick Perkins started college at State University because he grew up in the town: "The campus is pretty easy. I knew I wasn't going to get lost here." Both of these students were not necessarily seeking the best decision, but both were trying to minimize risk. Peter Peterson showed this same resolve as a resident student. When asked about making new friends he acknowledged that he had "a few here and there." Then he added, "But, I keep in contact with most of my high school friends because they are going to school here at State University too."

One characteristic of persisters is a wait-and-see attitude towards situations. During her academic career, Phyllis Payne made a consistent practice of deciding to extending her educational goal at the point she was reaching the completion of her previous goal. She had progressed from plans for a certificate, to an Associate's degree,

then a Bachelor's degree, and now Phyllis had decided in her final undergraduate semester to go to graduate school. Phyllis observed, "I guess what helped me more than anything was just kinda taking it in little stages." Phyllis simply allowed the entire educational process to just develop around her. Paula Pinman took a similar wait-and-see attitude towards her after graduation plans. Paula remarked, "I think once I graduate and finish my internship, I just want to stay here [home] for a little bit and then maybe work on getting my certification." In both instances the students decided to forgo any organized attempt to confront obvious situations. Instead they intentionally delayed making plans for their future.

Another dimension of persisters attempts to avoid confrontation was their lack of focused goals. Paula Pittman discussed the certification process she had alluded to earlier: "Once you start taking the certifications there are levels, one through five, and each level is a higher level. The higher the level the more it pays and then if eventually you think you're ready, you can go and take a national certification. So I'm thinking, that maybe after my internship, I can try for a certification, at least one maybe, at least get started." The point is not that Paula lacked a goal, but rather that her understanding of the certification process was not linked to any conceptualization of how she intended to work on developing her certification skills. Nor did she have a plan to apply her present skill level towards any employment objective.

Blame For Life's Predicaments Is Credited To Fate. The concepts of good luck and bad luck say it all. Whatever happened to persisters was perceived as purely the result of chance. These students had a limited future sense and do not see themselves in

a controlling position. Persisters tended to put off making decisions, making the results that impact them as being viewed as occurrences that were beyond their control. These students perceived most of the changes that they have made in life as being caused by either good luck or bad luck. The apathetic fatalist perspective views the ups and downs of the past and present as the fact that life's events were unpredictable.

Persisting students commonly delayed making decisions and the report feeling that either good luck of bad luck, versus planning, had occurred. Paula Pinman in discussing her internship assignment acknowledged, "I was going to do my internship in Tulsa; then when I heard about the ones in Oklahoma City, I thought, well, that would be better; I wouldn't have to move to Tulsa and can just stay at home." As Paula's statement indicates, she had no interest in moving to Tulsa to do her internship, but she had never made an inquiry as to alternative locations. Persisters tended to take a reactive approach versus a proactive approach to situations. The subsequent results were then generally attributed to chance.

The ups and downs of "luck" are a trademark of fatalists. Regarding the good luck side of the coin Paula Pinman offered this thought, "There's been several times I felt like saying, 'Naw, I don't want to do this anymore.' But, somehow, I don't know what it is, but I've always been able to keep coming back. And so now, I'm finally going to finish." However, Patrick Perkins had seen the flip side of luck. Discussing his first attempt at college he reported:

> If you're not sure about college when you start and something gets pretty hectic and you're all stressed, that's what happened to me, and you're just going to quit. We got out for Spring Break and when I came back I went to class for a

week. Then I decided I didn't want to do this. I just quit going. I didn't withdraw or nothing. I just quit showing up.

Luck also has a future tense. Peter Peterson discussed his plans after graduating and conjectured, "Hopefully I'll go right into teaching and coaching. But I'm not sure what will come along. But that's what I hope to do. But you never know what will happen." Pamela Pinman had another view of luck in the past and present. Pamela recanted, "I should have listened to my mom and dad; they knew better. I should have went to college right after high school. But, I thought I wanted to go see what the real world was like, have my own house, pay my own bills, it was no fun. But, at least I've gotten another chance."

Phyllis Payne provided an example of how persisters had a limited future sense and generally did not see themselves in a position of control of their lives. Phyllis Payne gave some insight as to how a "luck" perspective can develop. She discussed how she had, and continues to, decide on her academic major. When asked how she decided what to study, Phyllis replied, "I really didn't. I just started taking things that interested me. I started out because I love little kids, I always had an interest in little kinds and little kids liked me. So, I just studied some child development classes. Of course, now, I'm a Psychology major, and in graduate school I think I'm going into human resources or counseling or something like that." Throughout her academic experience, Phyllis had continued to demonstrate that she had not really taken a guiding role in her decisions as much as she has let decisions be decided at the last minute by the circumstances that were present, or, by luck.

A Victim's Attitude. Persisters frequently saw themselves as victims, and accordingly, they are not surprised at setbacks. There was a prevailing wish for circumstances to be better. However persisters did not take actions that increased the probability for success. In each instance, the persisters spoke of a vague, better-life that education would make possible. The students did not identify specifics as to how a better life was going to be achieved. They viewed life as a spectator, observing the swirl of events and were not surprised when the results did not turn out desirable. Persisters seemed to have a clear vision of what they had not liked about their lives before college, but there was a near void of a vision about how their college experience would change their future.

Persisters were more focused on the achievement of their Bachelor's degree than in attaching a specific occupational goal to that accomplishment. Phyllis Payne recounted her educational journey: "I'm glad I went ahead and went [to college]. I'm not really sure what I want to do when I get out of school or where I'll get a job, but I know I'm just going to finish up what I started and get me a job somewhere." Paula Pittman discussed her up-coming internship as the final step before graduation. When asked about the setting for her internship Paula responded, "I think it's a state agency; I'm not real sure. I know it's one of those vocational rehabs but the one I'm going to, its called ___ but, I guess I'm really not sure what kind of agency it is."
Both of these students had a clear sense of pride in nearing the completion their Baccalaureate degree, but neither had made any significant connection in relating their educational experience to the development of a plan to secure the "meaningful" employment they desired.

These students continually demonstrated that they were observers of their own lives. The sense of disembodiment was related in their explanations of personal events in which they assumed a passive role. Peter Peterson remembered his early experiences when he started at State University. Peter confided, "I was thinking; I was worrying if this [college] was the right thing for me. But then I stayed another semester, and I thought that I could do it." Peter never identified what he did to make the situation more tolerable. Which suggests he would not have been any more surprised by his withdraw than he was by his retention. Pamela Pinman related a similar fatalist perspective when discussing her current course load. Pamela declared, "This has been a tough semester! I don't think I'll do that to myself next semester." Both students described events they controlled; both implied surprise that things worked out.

Several instances have already been described where persisting students did not identify plans about how they were to obtain the better life they universally sought. The students, had mostly vague ideas about occupational goals and little insight into how they expected to obtain goals. Phyllis Payne was asked about what kind of work she wanted to do, her response was, "I want to help people." When quarried further as to who she wanted to work with her reply was:

> It doesn't really matter to me that much. I mean I love little kids and stuff. And I love to work with little kids, but I don't know how many jobs openings there would be in that kind of work. I mean like nine years old and younger; before they get into adolescence; when they are still young enough to still listen to you and stuff.

Phyllis had a passion for helping others. But she has made a minimum effort to merge her educational process with a plan for her future.

An Inability To Either Negotiate Freely Or Join Influential Groups. Persisting students were not isolates in the strictest sense. But rather that their level social involvement at the university had remained extremely limited, the consequence of personal choice. Phyllis Payne noted that what helped her the most while she was in college was talking to other students. She related that she asked them questions to "find out things." A typical question she would ask was, "I'm going to take this class, what's it like? 'cause you know you've taken it." It is again noteworthy to point out that Phyllis had been successful academically.

Persisters were neither group joiners at the university or participants in tribal activities. Persisters often expressed being excluded from some organizations. On campus, persisters frequently related pending plans to join organizations, but they only had the vague understandings about the clubs or groups. Similarly, persisters typically acknowledged limited knowledge of tribal offices and activities available. They acknowledged virtually no contact with tribal agencies beyond knowing the necessary procedures to process an application for educational assistance.

Persisters had only a nominal association with the tribe and tribal operations. As a rule the students had little contact with the tribe offices beyond the Higher Education Office. Peter Peterson was asked to explain the application process for educational funds. Peter provided insight, "Well, you fill out what type of education you are going into and about how long it will take you. After that I'm not sure how they pick out the

people they will help. All I really noticed is if you apply they will give you enough to pay for tuition and books and things like that." Paula Pittman related a similar knowledge about the tribal organizations: "I don't really know anything about it other than where I go to the higher education office. They pay for my schooling and other than that my family is not really involved with the tribe." Peter and Paula were typical persisters in their scant understanding of tribal programs. Patrick Perkins echoed the sentiments of the other persisters: "Besides education benefits, I've got my voters registration card and that's about it."

The persisters non-involvement with the tribe results is an equal lack of knowledge of tribal organizations and participation in general tribal activities. Phyllis Payne talked about how being raised in a different area of the state had effected her: "They have things they do together. And they belong to this group or that group and I never was part of that. And, of course, I don't feel like I'm better that them or anything; it was just where I was raised up was so different than if I had been raised up down here." Phyllis also mentioned tribal meetings: "I never went to those. My mother use to go to a few of them; I would take her, but I never went to them." At another point Phyllis reflected the feelings of several of the persisters when she reluctantly admitted, "The way they do things is so different than the way I do. I just can't blend in. I just don't belong. I feel like I'm weird and sticking out there like I'm so different than them; and maybe I'm not, and maybe I am. I don't know." Persisters were consistently inactive in tribal activities of virtually all types, with the exception was receiving educational assistance.

As a group these students were also not active in college organizations. Peter Peterson reported, "I went to a couple of meetings with the Native American Society, but they just started up, so that's not anything that I wanted to be involved in." Pamela Pinman in the final stages of her education degree related, "There is the SOEA; it's the education association for students. But I'm not a member." Patrick Perkins expressed interest in joining the business club "next year." Paula Pittman's commented, "When I look back and think about it, I probably should have been more involved in the activities or the clubs or something." None of the persisters reported being a member of any campus organizations.

An Apathetic Disposition To Life. Organizations at the university and in the tribe had little value to persisters. While the persisters noted an absence of control over their lives, their actions did not suggest any significant concern. Persisters commonly expressed a desire to work with the tribe and with Native American programs in general after graduation. However, persisters typically had not previously had any notable involvement with the tribe. Therefore, they had little or no knowledge of the tribe's needs. Persisters also had little understanding of what tribal services were even available. Seemingly, a work decision was left to fate to learn if their vision of working for the tribe was to become a reality. Ellis (1993) suggests, "Visions must be shareable with others else they are merely hallucinations or daydreams. Visions must be liveable else they are merely utopias" (p. 151).

Persisters seemingly accepted that their future was in the control of fate. Persisters expressed an minimum of certainty as to how they expected to apply their

education. Paula Pittman supplied a fatalist perception, "I'll have an education whether I can get a job or not." A little later she added, "I know that I'm getting out of school and I kinda look toward to my future, eventually getting married and having a family and still having my career though. That was my goal that I'd set and I was determined to accomplish that before anything else. But now I do want to get married and settled down." Patrick Perkins was looking into his future and said, "I would rather work for the Seminole Nation, but it's not in my town. I would like to work where I could do something for other Native Americans, no matter what tribe."

Perhaps as a consequence of such thinking, persisters had developed a come-what-may attitude. Peter Peterson interjected, "I think I just want to teach somewhere. That's just what interests me right now." Phyllis Payne, while talking about her final semester as an undergraduate indicated she planned to go to graduate school, but stated, "I haven't filled out any paper work but there's not real deadline. I have to take a test to get into stuff like that but I'm going to go to graduate school. So that's probably what I'm going to be doing unless something major comes up and I change my mind." Later Phyllis commented further about her future plans: "I would be happy to work anywhere that I could be in a profession where I could help people. I'm not sure if I would want to counsel adults, adolescents, young children, or just where I could help people but, that's what I want to do."

Summary. Persisting students existed within the Isolates cell of Douglas's (1992) social matrix. The cultural bias "fatalism" associated with the Isolates cell was used to re-analysis the interview data. Re-analysis established that the seven characteristics of

fatalism, as theorized by Harris (1995b), accurately depicted the behaviors and perceptions of the persisting student. This confirmed Douglas's (1992) assertion that by identifying the social environment and its cultural bias it is possible to explore the orientations that are held by the members of the cell.

Non-Persisters

Non-Persisters in this study to exist within the Individualist Environment (Douglas, 1992). The cultural bias associated with low-grid, low-group environment is individualism. Harris (1995b) identified seven characteristics of individualism: autonomy in life decisions; minimum loyalty to the institution and a preference for minimum structure; risk taking in decisions made for personal opportunity; blaming of other cultural groups, especially structured corporatists; a desire for individual power and authority for personal advancement; a commitment to individual negotiation and competition for rewards and success; and, a detest for apathy.

Autonomy In Life Decisions. Non-persister expressed an empowerment to decide important issues that impacted their lives. While these students were not always in a position to be able to manipulate the various events that occurred in their lives, they did attempt to influence these events and direct their response to those events. Non-persisters were confident in their ability to determine their best course of action and proceed accordingly. These students tended to be independent spirits who did not function well in highly defined organizations in which they had not assumed a leadership or definitive role.

Non-persisters had already faced hard decisions in their lives, and their actions indicated a willingness to deal with consequences. Norman Pyle provided an example:

> I got married and had two kids before I finished high school. So after I graduated I thought I would go to work and support them. Then two years later I went to a vo-tech school, and then to a two-year college where I got my Associates of Arts. Then I went to a big university for a semester, and then I transferred to State University for a semester.

Norman accepted his role as a parent and a provider for his family. Buoyed by the previous college success, before his last semester at State University, Norman was again making plans to return to State University. The principle problem he had previously had was the being able to afford college with a family. He explained his solution this way, "My mom lives in the same town as State University, so I can stay with her a couple of days a week. So, financially I'll make it. Yeah, State University is about the only place I have to go." While Norman was not overly excited about returning to State University, his planning does reflect an intent on getting back in school and the resolution that State University was his only practical choice.

Nathan Pointer was another student who had traveled a non-traditional route in pursuit of his higher education. He told his story this way:

> Back in '86 I decided to go ahead and further my education, and its kinda been off and on since then. I got my Associates of Science at a two-year college and then went to State University. I've been going, I've got a total of 87 hours now. I plan on going ahead and finishing whenever the funds are available and I can concentrate on my studies.

What Nathan has lacked in continuous enrollment, due to economics, he has compensated to some degree with tenacity. Late in the interview, Nathan conveyed with grim determination, "I'm going to get my education one way or the other. Whether it takes the rest of my life or what. Because I'm kinda gambling, I've gone this far now; I'm going to finish it. I'm going to!"

When non-persisters did operate in groups they generally assumed a leadership role. Leadership insured them the best opportunity to set and achieve a personal goal within the confines of the group. Nathan Pointer was discussing his interest in becoming a teacher and related why he thought he was the person for the job:

> I believe kids need a feeling of belonging to something. I know I did, and I think everybody does. But I don't believe there's anyone out there that should be considered an outcast or discriminated against. To me, the minority deal is not really the important thing. Its the whole picture of everybody trying to live together.

Nathan saw his immediate world as needing help to operate properly. And, he saw himself as a person suited to accomplish the task. While the result would yield group benefits, it was still clearly Nathan's goal. Nancy Pugh also saw her role in education. She talked about how she had come to the decision to get her degree and then move to Florida to teach:

> They have these little job listings for people who have graduated and its like even if I had had an Associate's, I could have gone there and did student teaching and still got paid for it, because I can speak the language, and because I'm Seminole.

> I mean I could go there and teach on the reservation and get paid more than what regular teachers get paid here.

Nancy was ready to pick up her life and move to a new location. The key to this move was the completion of a degree giving her the credentials to assume a position she considered desirable.

Neil Pepper had an unusual childhood in comparison to the rest of the group. Neil attended Indian boarding schools. Recollecting those times, Neil reveals an early individualist perspective:

> You're seven years old and your mom takes you some place and drops you off and says well you're going to be living with these people for a while. And at 7 years old you don't understand that at first. A couple of years later I realized how my life was different there compared to my home life. I accepted it, figured I'd take advantage of my chances in this opportunity for a family environment.

Neil's adaptation demonstrated individualist thinking in an attempt to adjust and direct his response to events, rather than just reacting. Nancy Pugh described a similar processes were occurring for her in discussing her adjustment to the university. Nancy portrayed her situation:

> The school is an all right school. I just have to get use to the teachers and stuff, get use to doing homework and stuff, like at any school. You just have to get use to everything and your surroundings. It'll be OK.

Both examples serve to make the point that individualists accept that things happen that can not be controlled, however their response to uncontrollable events is within their control.

Minimum Of Loyalty To Larger Group. Individualists have minimum loyalty to the larger group or institution and have a preference for minimum structure in their lives. Non-persisters students did not become members of campus organizations or actively participate in tribal functions. Non-persisting students were more likely to voice dissatisfaction of university or tribal organizations they did not value. The non-persisting students often took atypical approaches to resolve their concerns. The type of response patterns used was very much in keeping with individualist ways. Behavior was based on the expectation that the systems they encountered, university or tribal, should be adaptive to individual needs.

For many of the non-persisters, the tribe was a source of considerable dissatisfaction. Tribal concerns covered a wide range of issues, for Norman Pyle, the concern was how the tribe spent their funds. He said, "I don't really agree with them. Because they should be putting our money to good use and there's a lot of things I'd be putting my money in. Using that money for different things but the way they run it I don't agree with it." Nathan Pointer saw tribal problems as stemming from a more central issue. He expressed himself this way:

> The main thing wrong with the Seminole Nation is the government. I believe they haven't learned how to live and to run things like the white people. Not that the white peoples' government is prefect, but they have to learn to operate like the white people in order to get by in this country. I mean they can talk about all that other stuff they want, about being conquered and all this stuff, but that's the only way it's ever going to work.

While discussing the Seminole Nation, Neil Pepper described how he thought his role in the tribe should be, "My mom spent her time trying to help her people. People might think why don't you help your people? I've see my mom waste her life away with that. I'm not going to waste mine." In each of these examples non-persisters demonstrated minimum loyalty to the tribe, and their views suggest an absence of cultural identification.

Individualist's lack of loyalty to groups was also evident in the opinions of several students regarding their attitudes towards their academic institution. Nathan Pointer voiced his disenchantment with operations of the counseling and the financial aid departments at State University. Nathan said frankly, "Going over there and trying to deal with them is like, they treated you rude. And it wasn't just Indians. I've seen them be rude to white people and blacks." Nathan also affirmed an opinion expressed by other non-persisting students when he said, "It seemed that some of the instructors just wanted to get through the books. It seemed like that was their goal, no matter what it took."

Individualists tend to evaluate the benefit of an organization based on how well the systems in place service the needs of the individual. Norman Pyle explained why he was not more active in the tribe by saying, "Sometimes the way they run things its like who-you-know. The people higher up, the better chance they will help you with certain things for your family. Its always been like that for a long time. So I don't really want to waste my time." Nathan expressed similar views:

> I hear them talking about things that so and so saying this about so and so; and so and so is doing this. That's not the way to run a government or something. I believe if you're a true leader, somebody is not going to like you but the majority

> of the people are going to look up and trust you if you let them know that you're trying to do something for them.

Expectations of organizations included views about the university as well. Neil Pepper talked about his problems of staying in school. Neil begrudgingly advanced:

> I was trying to do a part-time job, trying to go to school, and be family person at the same time. It was just too many irons in the fire, and it affected my grades. So, I got put on probation. I tried to work it out and got put on suspension and had to sit out a semester.

Neil implied that somehow the institution had failed to perceive his problems as an individual, and the consequence of their was his suspension. Even the family unit was not free from the individualist scrutiny of organizations that were criticized for not being adaptive to individualism. Nancy Pugh remarked that she had been a reasonably successful student academically until she had had to move back home. Asked to explain why her school work was not as good after the move, she concluded, "I guess because I had to move back with my family, and I didn't want to move back." It was not a matter that the family had failed her in some way; but rather that the arrangement had thwarted her independence. The need for independence in thought and action is key concern of individualists.

The situational responses of individualists were sometimes very atypical. Norman Pyle related almost a sense of disappointment when he found our that the Seminole Nation was going to build his family a house. The new house situation developed just after Norman had completed his Associate's degree. The family was in the final stage of planning to move to another town so Norman could work on his

Bachelor's degree when the tribal approval came through for the construction of their house. Norman commented:

> They came over and told us that they were going to build us a house. So, our plans just stopped. So, we had to stay in Seminole and I was already enrolled up there and everything and there was no way I could move up there myself and afford two rents, so I just stayed here and drove back and forth every day.

That enrollment terminated due to illness and the subsequent enrollment at State University ended in failure. Norman was not unhappy with the house, or at getting the house. He was unhappy with the disorientation that occurred afterward. Nancy Pugh talked about her initial college plans. She explained, that when she graduated from high school and decided to go to college, her school selection was influenced by the fact that, "No one had ever hardly heard of it and there was no one that I knew up there, and I was going to by myself. It was just different; the atmosphere was different, and I liked it. I went there for a year." In both instances these students related to the situations using an unique individualist perspective.

Willing To Risk In Decision Making. Non-persisting students were willing to take risks in order to achieve a personal objective. Risks taken were not haphazard decisions. But instead were based on a calculated opinion that the potential benefits of success outweigh the potential consequences of not succeeding. Therefore non-persisters were students who would make a conscious appraisal of themselves as a college participant and made academic decisions accordingly to what they believed was

acceptable behavior. The ruling principle in a given situation was based on the prediction of probable success for an outcome.

Non-persisting students were united in their desire for a Baccalaureate degree. However by study definition these were all individuals whose educational program had stopped after at least one year of college. A measure of their risk taking was therefore available in understanding their resolve and method to achieve their degree. Nathan Pointer supplied his educational perspective:

> See, I started my higher education in '86, that's ten year ago. And every time I've had to quit it was money problems. I needed more work than I was working. Now I'm trying to put some money back because that's the only thing that I can see I can see to finish.

Nathan's problem was not dropping out, but instead was stopping out. Norman Pyle was another student with a family and money problems. He explained that he had resolved some personal problems that had effected him the last time he was at State University. Norman also added that since his mother lived in the same town as State University he could stay there some if he needed. When asked if he was going to go back as a full-time or part-time student he shot back, "Yeah, I want to go full-time. So that way I can hurry up and get it over with." Neil Pepper saw his best option in the opposite direction: "So I'll stay in here at this part-time job cause that part of my goals anyway. Besides I have to have a part-time for me to finish school anyway.

Looking into her future Nancy Pugh wistfully stated, "Hopefully I'll be teaching, maybe in Florida. If not in Florida somewhere in Oklahoma. But I really hope to go to

Florida." Neil Pepper saw his future a different way. Neil stated that money had been a real problem the last time he had gone to State University. Neil figured it this way:

> I've got my foot in the door with this part-time job. And I'm like its either stay with your dream or give it up and get a job. You can see right there it was a hard thing to do. Either stay with your dream, or get up and get a job or loose your family possibly. Well that's when I figured if I work hard enough and prove myself, maybe I'll get a full-time position.

Blame Is Placed On Other Cultural Groups. In instances when an individual's freedom became restricted, individualist blamed other groups. For non-persisting students the tribe, society, institutional rules and inflexible structures were common culprits for problematic situations. These students needed individualized consideration, making it difficult for them to accept a structure imposed by generalized rules and operational procedures of any organizations. The failure to achieve a satisfactory resolution to confrontations with these agencies was typically blamed on an ineffective program.

All non-persisters had theories to explain why they and students didn't always succeed in college. Neil Pepper saw as a simple matter. Even with the financial aid programs out there in Neil's mind, "It was all a matter of economics. You still got to make money and when you're 18 years old." Nathan Pointer felt that the break down occurred at the high school level. Talking about students in general and Native Americans in particular Nathan related this point of view:

> Its a lot of little things, like a little push, a little nudge, that might have made a difference for a student like me back in the old days when I was at school. I believe that's what the kids need now that they're not getting. Maybe some of them are, some of that I don't see.

Norman Pyle took the question a little more personally. Norman was talking about his first and only semester at State University:

> I didn't care much for it over there. Some of my friends they were in fraternities and stuff. They were kinda struck up. When they're by themselves they would talk to me, but when they're with their friends, they wouldn't even acknowledge me or anything. I didn't really care to much for it there.

In each of these instances the core issue seemed to be an absence of someone caring about individuals. In these examples the blame lays on society and other subgroups.

Typical individualist thinking attributed some responsibility for problems to the structure inherent in agencies and programs. Norman Pyle touched on two sources while expounding about his interest in teaching: "Now days you see a lot of younger kids getting into trouble. Downtown at a lot of these stores you see graffiti and stuff like that. I mean it starts at home, but at school you got to kinda motivate them." Nancy Pugh suggested that part of her problem with her grades since she moved back home: "Probably because I lived at home. Now I live at home with my mom and dad. And I work too." Both non-persisters placed some of the blame on the home environment.

Norman Pyle talked about his school experiences and remarked on the differences of his time at State University versus his time at the two-year college. Norman gave this example:

> I've had a lot of teachers tell me I need to do this, I need to make this to make a ceratin grade or like if I'm missing too many days they will let me know. Up there [State University] some instructors probably won't say something to you until after the fact. Like if you miss so many days sometimes they won't tell you until after you've missed the limit.

Norman's perspective was the school in general, and the teachers in particular had failed in their duty to keep him advised of his attendance, projects and grades. Norman did not indicate that this was a shared or student responsibility too. Neil Pepper said this about his college experience:

> State University wasn't such a good experience with me. Trying to work, trying to take care of my family and trying to finish my education. That's why my grades suffered. I think now I'm a bit more established and I don't have to worry about a part-time job. I know its just getting back. I've got established here, I'll go back, get hooked up and finish

Neil as Norman acknowledged himself in a passive role and faulted campus systems and society.

Neil also expressed displeasure at a lack of unity that within the Seminole Nation. Neil saw this lack of unity as the key problem for the tribe. Neil explained it this way:

> I've seen so many people waste their life away with this tribe. There's only one way I think its going to change in how the people are just fussing among each other. How the people have no unity. The only way I think its going to happen is somebody is going to have to martyr. And its not worth my life, I'm not going to martyr for this tribe.

The Individualist Desires Power and Authority. Individualists have a desire and a readiness to seize opportunities for personal advancement. Non-persisting students wanted to be in command and to take control of activities and event that influenced their future. As individualists they willing took risks, if needed, to accomplish their ambitions. These students sought authority to allow them to take a direct role in establishing both the procedures and the goals. The obtainment of success was directly linked to a perspective of non-persisters being able to maintain a sense of autonomy in directing the activities that they valued.

Non-persisters were willing to take risks to reach personal goals. Norman Pyle, a married man with a family, explained how he happened to get started in higher education:

> I couldn't really find a way to make a living out of the jobs I was getting. I was looking at this brochure from the vo-tech. And thinking like you know what can I get into. It was like you know these days things are starting to pickup for computers. So I thought well I'll try this. So I enrolled and they took me.

Nancy Pugh's decision after graduating from high school to leave home and go to a college 200 miles away was a risk she gladly undertook to accomplish her personal goals. Neil Pepper tended to regard life on its everyday terms as risk taking. Neil explained that:

> Nothings guaranteed. The oil patch taught me you can have money and you can have it taken away that quick [he snapped his fingers]. So what I think about is the peace of mind knowing that I've given my family what my mom didn't give me and that's about it.

Non-persisting students demonstrated individualists behavior in their willingness to take risks.

Individualists see authority as a means to take a directive role in matters. Nathan Pointer has taught Karate for twelve years. It is an individual sport and highly competitive. He was very accomplished. In explaining about why he liked to teach this sport, Nathan professed, "Karate teaches the students that things are not going to come easy. They can learn that they can do things that they didn't think they could do. Then they can apply those lessons to their everyday life." Through his role as teacher and in developing his individual talent Nathan has and continues to demonstrate his willingness to seek personal advancement and satisfaction. In this way Nathan served as a classic example of individualism. Nathan continued his thoughts saying, "What I want to try and get these kids to do, what I want my own 16 year old to do, is to kinda know which direction they are headed. And what they want to do with their life, before they can put their all into it." Nathan's actions are directed at guiding others to take authority over their own lives. Neil Pepper sought and seized that individual authority. Neil struggled with giving himself approval to continue with his education. As with all of the non-persisters Neil has had to contend with a multiple of personal and or financial consideration. Neil explained his resolve, "I've been out like four semesters now. But that's OK because I've had to work to get me the job I've been looking for. Now then I've got that, its OK. I like it just fine." Non-persisters tended to assume personal authority to take actions to accomplish their goals.

Individualist value autonomy in others. Nathan Pointer in discussing Karate was talking about why he had continued to teach after so many years. Nathan maintained

that, "I believe this sport can turn peoples life around where they believe in themselves. Where they could have more confidence, where they could stand on their own two feet." Neil Pepper shared the vision of empowering kids with confidence. Neil expressed these thoughts, "That's what I'd like to do. To help make kids know you can be somebody. Just because a guy is a little bigger and faster than you, you've just got to work a little harder than he does." This shared sense of autonomy is a natural outgrowth to individualist feeling of personal autonomy.

The interview with Nancy Pugh found her concern for autonomy as repeatedly emerging as a theme. Nancy had established personal space and self-control as being high priority issues in her initial selection of a college. These same themes were equally prominent in her future planning. Nancy saw her future this way:

> I think I'll finish my Associates at a two-year school and then transfer to another school. I will have a better job opportunity with a degree. Not just an Associates degree but a graduate degree or whatever. Then I can go up to Florida and be able to teach and I'll get paid a lot more. And I'll have a better job than I would get around here.

Commitment To Individual Negotiation And Competition. Individualists are committed to personal goals that they evaluated by their own criteria. The goals and criteria they established may have an over-lapping effect on others, but the principal motivation was individual satisfaction. Non-persisters were students who identified the options and opportunities they felt were offered and then determined how that information could be used to aid them in their own goals. The desire to achieve was

very high for these students. Non-persisters were willing investors of time, energy and resources in order to realize their personal aspirations.

Non-persisters as individualists were not anti-group but rather selective in their group involvements. These involvements were similarly linked to a personal interest that could be achieved through a group. Norman Pyle provided an example through his affiliation with youth sports. Norman explained the situation this way, "I volunteer my time coaching little league girls softball. I also coach Kiwanis league girls basketball. I'm pretty active with my kids. I volunteer my time to do something with them. We've got a pretty good relationship." Norman would have interacted with lots of other kids and parents, but the principle motivation would be to continue to enhance his relationship with his own children. Nathan Pointer also works with lots of youth in his Karate program. Nathan shared these thoughts:

> It's hard to work all day and come to class. You've got to be up for every class and there's things bothering me and it's hard. You don't want to come down, but when you come down here and see the kids come in and even the grown ups, you feel like they come here to get something from you. And that makes the problems go away, for that time anyway.

While no doubt the students come and receive instruction and attention. Nathan's comments indicate that he derives personal satisfaction from this experience.

All of the non-persisters indicated that they had a desire to complete their Bachelor's degree. In virtually every case these students also had a conceptual plan as to how they believed that would happen. Each of these students had numerous factors that pushed and pulled towards or away from this goal. Nathan explained his rational:

> That's my main goal, to finish school. Because I owe it to myself. I put so much time in to it, so I want to finish it. Even if I didn't get a job in what I want to do. At least I can say I'm not a quitter. I quit school once in high school, and I don't want to do that again. I want to finish where I can really tell these kids I teach, it can be done. Because if I don't do it, I feel like I'm letting them down and myself down too.

As an individualist Nathan is willing to share the group as a motivator but the greatest motivation is his own personal satisfaction of achievement.

Non-persisters were individuals who evaluated the situation and determined their best option. Norman Pyle made quick work of deciding what kind of school setting he wanted to in and why. Norman fired back, "A smaller school! To me it would feel like I'm doing something to make them think like the kids in the bigger school do. They're getting to do the same thing as the bigger schools. So that what I want to do. Try to get them into computers." Norman's interest in teaching had been established early in the interview, but it was clear he had given considerable thought to his career choices. Nancy Pugh was also very specific in what she wanted to teach, elementary education, and also clear on why. Nancy explained it this way:

> I knew my major would be music or education. I always wanted to major in education I had taught Sunday School and thought well people told me I'd be a real good teacher. And then I use to play school with my niece and she's done real good in school and my brother would always say 'She had a good teacher.' and 'You taught her everything she knows.'

Nancy had looked at her options based on what she enjoyed, music and children. And she then made her selection accordingly. Norman Pyle explained how he initially got interested in teaching computers:

> An older lady, probably in her sixties, her husband had this little business and he had all his stuff on computer and she didn't know how to run one. So she came to me one day and I helped her. I showed her what she was doing wrong and she tried to pay me. I told her no, that's not much help. But it motivated me to teach computers.

This happened as Nathan was starting in college, and made a lasting impression.

A Detest Of Apathy. To an individualist, apathy is implied consent to cultural constraints on their autonomy. Non-persisters recognized the need and value of being involved. This involvement typically involved group activities but would still supply a high degree of personal satisfaction. The decision to participate in group activities acknowledged the value that was gained by the many, but the determination to participate was based on their perception of the probability of reaching personal goals. Non-persisters classically saw themselves as having a high need to be involved, but the involvement was focused on the obtainment of individual ambition. An individualist's relationship to group involvement is a reflection of their interest in rewards and distinction.

Commitment and personal satisfaction are key concepts for individualists. Non-persisters as a group were involved in numerous activities that were seen their futures as a means to impact youth in an educational setting. Nathan Pointer related that, "I want

to work with the school system where I can kinda help the youth. I believe there is a need for that and I believe with my experiences that I can do that. I can relate to a lot of young people and minorities and everybody." Norman Pyle looked into the crystal ball of the future in ten years said what he would like to see:

> I would always be at a small school. I'd be teacher of the year at least five times out of those ten years and I'd get a tradition in coaching. Playing basketball or whatever. I'd have a lot of kids come up to me and parents from surrounding communities would kinda praise me on how good of a job I'm doing. That's how I see myself. At least teacher of the year at least five times.

In the same vein of individualist doing things for personal satisfaction was Neil Pepper. Neil related he had two part-time jobs. But he continued, "I still take pictures for the newspaper. Because its what I like, its a part of me. It's what I want to do. I don't get paid for it still."

The aspiring educators suggested they had a concern for others on issues of personal autonomy. Norman Pyle conveyed how he tried to help his own kids: "If my kids mess up, I ask them what they can do to make a positive out of it. It's like a lot of people say, you can learn from your mistakes. If you think positive, things will work out." Nancy Pugh expressed a concern for others that looped back around to herself. Nancy had this advice for other Native Americans starting school:

> If you're smart enough to go to college you need to use it. Take what you've got up there to get you where you're going. Because if not you'll just be, you'll be in Wewoka the rest of your life. You'll be there the rest of your life doing nothing. You'll work for minimum wage and that's not what I want to do. I

> want a better life for me, but not only for me but later on for my family. I want my family to have it better. My kids will go to college. Yeah, they're going to go!

Nathan Pointer shared these thoughts about teaching Karate:

> I've been doing this for twelve years now. And to this day I can see any of my students, some I don't even remember their names. But I remember their faces. We're still got that tie where they knew that I cared and they knew that it mattered if they were here. That's something that they all get out of my classes.

Nathan as an instructor took great pride in the success of his students. Nathan as an individualist took great satisfaction in meaningful one on one contacts he had with his students. The satisfaction the individual student may have only be exceeded by the satisfaction of the individualist instructor.

Summary. Non-persisters were found to be in the individualist cell of Douglas's (1992) social matrix. The cultural bias "individualism" associated with this cell was used to re-analysis the interview data collected in the study. This process established that the seven characteristics of individualism as indicated by Harris (1995b) could accurately explain the behaviors and perceptions of the non-persisting students in the study. This study therefore supports Douglas's (1992) notion that by identifying a group's cultural bias it is possible to explore and understand the orientations held by the members.

A Comparison Of Persisters And Non-Persisters

Harris's (1995a) list of seven characteristics of the Fatalistic and Individualism biases were served as an outline to analyze the behaviors of the persisters and the non-persisters in the study. These characteristic tendencies were then paired to examples of quotations that had been collected during the long interview process. Excerpts from these interviews were presented to serve as examples that exemplified the behaviors or attitudes that were in keeping with the cultural bias of that social environment (see figure 3). A compilation of the characteristic tendencies resulted in eight comparative categories.

Persisters as a subgroup indicated they had little or no personal autonomy. Behaviors on their part suggested they felt that whatever actions they took would have had little substantive impact on their life. However, autonomy for non-persisters was a defining issue that was prevalent in the way the lived their lives. These students displayed a sense of being in control of their present situation and of the desire to influence their future.

Both of the subgroups had a minimum loyalty to the school, institutions, or other types of groups. Persisters held this perspective because they presumed that their involvement would not have made any difference to the out come of events. On the other hand, non-persisters simply elected to not want to deal with the constrains that were perceived as being inherently present in any group membership.

As a natural consequence of not desiring group affiliation, persisters were continuously forced to live within structures that they did not create. There

PERSISTERS **Culutral Bias: Fatalism** →	**Example:**
- Little or no autonomy in life decisions	- "State University was just the closest.
- Minimum loyalty to the institution and strong cultural structure that limits negotiation. Fatalists tend to live in a structure which others have organized.	- "I just decided instead of starting at a new college; it was just earier to go back to State University. I was already familar with the campus, so it was just easier."
- There is a passive avoidance of risk. They feel helpless in the face of danger.	- "The campus is pretty easy. I knew I wasn't going to get lost here."
- Blame for life's predicaments is credited to fate; good luck, bad luck says it all.	- "But somehow, I don't know what it is, but I've always been able to keep coming back."
- A victum's attitude.	- "I don't think I'll do that to myself next semester."
- An inability to either negotiate or join influencial groups.	- "The way they do things is so different than the way I do. I just can't blend in."
- An apathetic disposition to life; participation doesn't make a difference.	- "I think I just want to teach somewhere. That's just what intersts me right now."
NON-PERSISTERS **Cultural Bias: Individualism** →	**Example:**
- Autonomy in life decisions.	- "I'm going to finish it. I'm going to!"
- Minimum loyalty to the larger group or institution and a preference for minimum structure.	- "People might say why don't you help your people. I've seen my mom waste her life away with that. I'm not going to waste mine."
- Risk in decision making is viewed in terms of potential for personal opportunity.	- "I figured if I work hard enough and prove myself, maybe, I'll get a full-time postion."
- The blaming of other cultural groups, especially the structured corporatists, when individual freedoms are constrained.	- "Downtown at a lot of stores you see graffiti and stuff like that. I mean it starts at home, but at school you got to kinda motivate them."
- A desire for individual power and authority and a readiness to seize opportunities for personal advancement	- "I've been out like four semesters. But that's OK because I've had to work to get me the job I've been looking for. I've got that now"
- A commitment to individual negotiation and competition for reward and status.	- "Even if I didn't get a job in what I want to do. At least I can say I'm not a quitter."
- A detest of apathy, for apathy implies consent to cultural constraints on autonomy.	- "That's how I see myself. At least teacher of the year at least five times."

Figure 3. Cultural Bias Characteristics/Examples Persisters and Non-Persisters

was acceptance by members of this subgroup that they could not effectively influence the structures within a group, without being a member of that group. Non-persisters avoided this dilemma as much as possible by minimizing their group involvements. Instead these students sought out situations that only required a minimum of structure during interactions.

Persisters made considerable effort to avoid taking risks at almost any cost. This tendency was reinforced by these students' perceptions of themselves as being relatively helpless and ineffective in dealing with confrontations. In contrast, non-persisters were students who willing to take calculated chances when they perceived an opportunity for personal growth. Students in this subgroup tended to have realistic perceptions of the present case and readily developed processes to enhance their future.

The persisters saw fate as being the predominate reason that events occurred. A natural extension of this fatalist conviction was a sense that these students saw virtually no necessity to make plans or strategies as they did not expect the outcome would be varied by their effort. The non-persisters tended to take the position that most predicaments were the results of others, particularly strictly structured groups. Members of this subgroup tended to see the personal benefit of taking actions to prepare for their future. When their plans were thwarted, non-persisters were inclined to suspect that some group had infringed on their personal space.

Students who were persisters fulfilled their role of victims. The assumption of fatalism mandated their waiting for events to eventually overwhelm them. As a result they were rarely surprised when the circumstances in which they did interact did not turn out for the better. In contrast, non-persisters were opportunists. Directly tied to their

willingness to take predicted risks was their desire to achieve and maintain authority. Students in this subgroup saw teaching as a means to influence others.

Persisters were offered a minimum of opportunities to become members of groups and had difficulty relating to groups in general. These students had little interest in gaining any type of group affiliation and tended to have a limited skill in their interactions with various groups. The non-persisters saw groups as a chance to achieve goals they could not accomplish otherwise. The interest of these students was not in obtaining membership but rather to acquire skills or insights that would assist them in accomplishing a personal ambition.

Students who were persisters shared a general apathy towards life. The students in this subgroup were lethargic in thought and deed. These attitudes and actions were directly tied to their sense that they had little or no ability to influence their future. Non-persisters took a directly opposite perspective. These students felt in control of their future and they tended to feel obligated to seize opportunities for what they perceived to be self-improvement.

The analysis demonstrated that persisters presented attitudes and behaviors that were consistent with the cultural bias of fatalism. The research also indicated that the non-persisters' actions were in keeping with the cultural bias of individualism.

Summary

This chapter was used to present a findings that had been collected during the study. These have been reviewed in two sections. The first section presented the data collection process and the analysis of the interview material that was obtained using

McCracken (1988). This same interview information was re-examined in the second section using Douglas's (1992) cultural bias theories as a guide to the analysis. In both instances substantial differences were found in the behaviors and attitudes of the persister and the non-persister subgroups. The variances and their similarities were reviewed in the summary of each section.

Chapter V will be used to present the comments, conclusions, implications, suggestions and commentary of the study.

CHAPTER V

COMMENTS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND COMMENTARY

This chapter was organized to provide a clear and complete summary of a qualitative study that explored the influence of institutional structures and native culture in the persistence of Native American students in higher education. The initial sections in this chapter include a general overview of the key aspects in the study design and a review of the analysis. The next section is the summary of the findings of the study. Implications and suggestions for further research are the following sections. The chapter concludes with a closing commentary.

Comments

The purpose for this research was to explore the reasons Native Americans of the Seminole Nation who enroll in higher education chose to either remain enrolled or to withdraw. This study also explored student perceptions of the impact that their Native American culture and the institutional structures of State University had on their retention. The problem addressed by this study was that Native Americans need to complete baccalaureate degrees in order to compete in the present and future job

markets (Darden et al., 1994). However, studies indicate that American Indians are not completing baccalaureate programs or attending four-year higher education institutions in numbers proportionate to their population (Tierney, 1992; Wright & Tierney, 1991). This study examined retention and attrition in relationship to student choice.

Mary Douglas's (1992) cultural theory maintains the source of personal choice is found in the context of human social and cultural experience. She argues the theory that an individual's choice is greatly influenced by his or her culture. Therefore, Douglas's (1992) cultural theory provided a means to explore the possibility of an interrelationship between cultural bias and Native American persistence in higher education.

Participants for this study were Native Americans of the Seminole Nation who had completed at least one year of higher education and who had attended the same Oklahoma public university. Selection began at the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office (SNHEO). The office manager served as a gatekeeper and identified tribal members who were verified as having completed at least one year of college, who had attended the same public university, and who were believed to be potentially interested in participating in the study. The volunteers who were selected were divided into two subgroups: persisters, those who had continued enrollment after completing at least a year of college and non-persisters, those who did not remain enrolled after a year or more of study. The researcher also gave consideration to selecting students with regard to a variance in their age and gender.

Data Collection

The selected volunteers participated in a long interview procedure. The initial interviews were conducted with the persisting students and were then followed by the interviews with the non-persisting students. McCracken's (1988) seven steps for long interviews were followed as prescribed. As these steps unfolded, McCracken's five stages of analysis were also applied. The results of this procedure identified common themes found in the responders of each subgroup. Between the persisters and the non-persisters, a substantial variation of themes was found to exist.

Data Analysis

The next stage in the procedure involved a re-examination of the interview data using Douglas's (1992) Cultural Bias theory as a basis of analysis. A determination was made of the social environment setting and the accompanying cultural bias for each of the subgroups. As outlined by Harris (1995b), the characteristics of the cultural bias were then used to evaluate the behaviors and attitudes of the subgroups. The two subgroups were found to exist in different social environments.

The collection and analysis procedures were particularly time intensive. However, the intent of the process was to develop a rich, thick description of the respondents, and, in that regard, the endeavor was successful.

Summary of Findings

The following questions were used to focus this study: How do Seminole students who remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe reasons for persisting in their college education? How do Seminole students who do not remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe reasons for not persisting in their college education?

Background Data Summaries

At the conclusion of the interview each respondent was asked to complete a background form (see Appendix D). The following data was compiled from these forms.

Persister background information revealed that four out of the five had family members who had gone to college, a college connection including two with spouses and one with a sister who had earned baccalaureate degrees, and a parent who had two years of college experience. All of the mothers were high school graduates as were three of the fathers. There was no consistency in the birth order of the persisters. The average age of the group was 28.2. The three persisters who had gone to a two-year college earned their Associates's degree. All of the persisters were enrolled full-time and four of five reported 100 percent of their college expenses were paid by financial aid.

Background information about the non-persisters revealed no definite college connections for any of the group members. All of the mothers identified were high

school graduates as were all but one of the fathers. There was no consistency in the non-persister birth order. The average age of the students was 31.5. Three of the four respondents, all of who were males, were married. All students in this subgroup had attended a two-year college, and the three males had earned an Associate's degree. Typically, the subjects attended college full-time, although this criterion varied on occasions. Three of the four reported that financial aid covered 100 percent of their college expenses.

The most common characteristic found in this information was that all of the respondents were first-generation college students. One student had siblings who had completed a four-year degree. Several students reported that their parents had some type of college experiences, but none of the respondents could confirm any type of degree obtainment by a parent. The rate of academic success at two-year colleges and the subsequent transfer rates were both noted as being quite high.

Differences And Similarities In Themes

Differences. There were significant differences in the themes that emerged from the two groups. For instance, there was a difference in the extent to which they controlled their life goals. Persisters were apathetic and fatalistic about their life goals. They felt they had little control in their lives; therefore, they were essentially not concerned about participation or planning. Non-persisters were remarkably committed to being involved in whatever projects and activities that they viewed as directly influencing their quality of life. These feelings encompassed their actions and attitudes towards family and the future.

The degree of tribal knowledge was also quite different between the two subgroups. Persisters consistently reiterated their apathy in their lack of interest of involvement in tribal activities. As a subgroup, they were was almost exclusively limited to their interactions with the Higher Education Office. Non-persisters, on the other hand, were generally well informed about a number of tribal agencies and programs. In several instances, they had worked with a tribal agency or had had dealings with specific programs.

A distinguishing characteristic of the persisters was a near absence of their having established any clear cut personal goals. As a rule, they maintained only a general, unspecific vision of events that they expected to occur after they graduated. This action is in concert with their apathetic nature. Conversely, non-persisters were goal-setters. As a subgroup non-persisters carried characteristically strong tendencies, developed clear goals and made succinct plans about how to achieve those goals.

In general, persisters did not discuss negative factors with which they had to contend in order to stay in college. In keeping with their fatalist tendencies, they presumably attributed their continued success as merely being fortunate. Non-persisters by design were asked about factors that worked against their continuing enrollment. As a subgroup, personal and/or financial problems were at the top of most of these students' lists. The role of the family was found to have played a significant role in their enrollment and, not uncommonly, in their attrition.

Similarities. There were also some similarities between the two subgroups. Families played an important role for both student groups. For example, persisters

consistently reported their family or a family members had played a key role in their enrollment and persistence. Non-persisters acknowledged that their family had strongly influenced their enrollment. By the same token, non-persisters also frequently indicated that their family had also been a factor in their attrition. Another commonality of family in both subgroups was that the mother had been a strong role in the family.

Persisters and non-persisters alike were nearly unanimous in not being involved with university activities and programs. Persisters were generally at least sporadic users of the library. Non-persisters commonly reported they had been users of college services when they had attended a two-year college. However, at State University, they had met with problems in the services areas they had tried to use. Neither of the subgroups had demonstrated any commitment or involvement in a university social organization.

Perhaps the most striking similarity of the two subgroups dealt with their tribal relations. Both the persisters and non-persisters indicated an absolute minimum of contact and interest in involvement with activities of the Seminole Nation. However, both subgroups were just as adamant in stating a strong sense of cultural identification with being a Seminole. Similarly, both groups cited the importance of the financial assistance they received through the tribe as well as their appreciation for the encouragement they garnered through the educational office in general and from the office manager in particular.

Cultural Bias

A comparison of persisters and non-persisters with regards to cultural bias characteristics (Douglas, 1992; Harris, 1995a) was presented in the previous chapter.

Persisters were found to exist in the Isolates cell, exhibiting fatalistic characteristics. Non-persisters existed in the Individualists cell and demonstrated the cultural bias of individualism. A principal difference for the two settings was noted as stemming from the degree of importance that was given to the structure that was imposed. Douglas (1992) argues that a greater variation exists between cells that occupy diagonal positions on the social matrix model, than between cells that are aligned on either end of a continuum (see Figure 1, Chapter One). Therefore, while both the persisters and non-persisters existed in social environment cells at the low end of the group continuum, they were in opposite positions on the structural continuum.

Differences. The re-evaluation of the interview materials applying Douglas's cultural bias theories identifed several variances in the attitudes and behaviors of the two subgroups. The fatalistic perspective dominated the actions and beliefs of the persisters. Consequently, as a subgroup they demonstrated an acceptance of whatever events and results that occurred. However, non-persisters were effected by individualism as a guiding influence. Individualism mandated a sense of ownership and responsibility for interactions in the non-persisters lives.

The principal areas of difference in the two cultural biases lay in the issues of autonomy, willingness to risk, the focus of power, and apathy. Persisters generally felt a low sense of self autonomy while non-persisters felt in control of their own lives. The persisters commonly were fearful and evasive of risks; non-persisters willingly took selective risks when they felt the risks were in their best interests. Frequently, persisters assumed the role of victims in their life choices; non-persisters, on the other hand,

relished the opportunity to seize power and authority. Apathy divided the two subgroups the most sharply. Persisters readily embraced an apathetic life style, while non-persisters were repulsed by the notion to not take a direct role in their lives.

Similarities. Both persisters and non-persisters were found to have a low sense of affiliation with the university and to the Seminole Nation. The use of services offered by either the university or the tribe was nominal for both groups of students. While, as has been noted, non-persisters had a considerably wider scope of knowledge about tribal agencies, this knowledge appeared to be due more to having had specific interactions with those programs versus any general tribal knowledge. The non use of university services by both of the subgroups was almost universal, with use of the library as the principal exception.

Socially, neither of the subgroups indicated any existing or previous involvement in university of tribal social activities. While members of both subgroups did investigate different student organizations or were at least aware of social groups that potentially interested them, none the students had initiated any memberships. Similarly, both subgroups had a minimum of social involvement in tribal activities. While some acknowledged past childhood instances of participation, none of the students reported current affiliations.

Benefits and Boundaries of Culture Theory

The benefit of Douglas's theoretical orientation was that it provided an explanation for various behaviors. One example of why so many of the students in the

study attended a two-year college before going to State University. The explanation for why three out of the five persisters attended two-year colleges included understanding that these students were low risk takers. In their view, fate dictated that the two-year school was closest and as victims they would have simply accepted that it was school they were meant to attend. While all of the non-persisters also when to two-year schools, their behavior was caused by a completely different perspective. The non-persisters simply viewed the school as the most logical risk to taken as a means to reach their specific interests.

Douglas also provided an explanation why both subgroups made such little use of the institutional structures offered at State University. Both the persisters and non-persisters were low-group oriented. As a consequence neither set of students would have desired the type of group affiliation and constraints that using university resources might have involved. In addition persisters would have been fearful to take a risk to find out about available services and then would have been both fatalist and apathetic about their potential usefulness. Non-persisters being individualists would have wanted have made-it on their own without asking for institutional resources. While non-persisters did complain, to some degree, about services none of them attributed the lack of ineffectiveness of services as a cause for their not continuing in school.

Another example of explained behavior by Douglas is, why would non-persisters who were not successful State University be so adamant in the interest of returning and completing a degree? These students were risk-takers when the outcomes for personal advancement were perceived as being desirable. For non-persisters, the risk of returning to State University would be outweighed by their own sense of autonomy directing them

to chance the opportunity to seize individual power. Further their distaste for apathy would be so acute as to find it unacceptable that the educational system had somehow been able to beat them.

However there are limitations on the interpretive nature of Douglas's theory. The cultural bias of the two subgroups does not address why both groups had such strong feelings of cultural identity. Nor does Douglas fully address why when both groups are on the low-end of the group continuum, is there such a degree of importance placed on the opinions of their immediate family groups. In addition, while Douglas's theory provided a means to explore the cultural perspectives of the individuals who existed with a given cell, the moderate and extreme positions that undoubtedly existed for some members was not addressed. The acknowledgement of these inter cell variations is not presented as a theoretical weakness, instead, it is seen as an explanation for the potential for an individual to experience cultural change.

Conclusions

This study has established that persisters and non-persisters were found to be substantially different in most categories. The basis for these differences that have been demonstrated are due to the cultural bias that was exhibited by the social environment of the subgroup. Douglas (1992) proposes that social environments are in a constant and enviable contestment with other settings. Indeed, she contends that this tension lies at the heart of cultural bias.

The reader may feel there is an implication that the social environment, ergo the cultural bias exhibited by an individual, is suggested as being static. However, this

conception is not contended. Ellis (1993) explains that "Culture like theories can exclude reality altogether. Although culture (like poorly formulated theories) builds in lots of self-protection, reality can and does intrude" (p. 152). Therefore, while cultures may be resistent to change, they do change. Douglas suggests that, even though her four cultural settings are continuously contesting with one another, they are also tempting potential recruits. Reconsideration of the social matrix continuum illustrates this relationship. Both the Isolates and Individualists exist on the low end of the group continuum. Their difference exists in their low and high placement on the structural continuum. This placement does not necessarily indicate that a given individual has exhibited an extreme grid or group characteristic. Instead, the placement was a decision based on the interpreted degree of behavior exhibited by the individual. Therefore, it is readily possible for an individual to not be an absolute on the gird / group scale but, instead, be only slightly more or less one characteristic. Further, Douglas (1982) stipulates that these components can and do vary to a large degree. Those components variations could presumedly indicate individuals who are more susceptible to recruitment to another cell.

The research questions of this study served as a focus for the research. These questions were used in conjunction with Douglas's cultural theory to explore the process of student choice. As Harris (1995a) states, "The four cultural portotypes provide a framework within which to understand the complexities of human preference and choice" (p. 26)

The first research question was: How do Seminole students who remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe the reasons for persisting in their college

education? Persisters, or fatalists, appeared to be merely living out the situations in which they found themselves. These students did not articulate a direct relationship of the obtainment of a college degree and a definite plan of employment. Fatalists tend to be accepting of structures that were developed for someone else. Their persistence in school was viewed as primarily being a consequence of going and doing what they were expected to do.

The second research question was: How do Seminole students who do not remain enrolled after completing a year of college describe the reason for not persisting in their college education? Individualists, or non-persisters, accepted responsibility for the ups and downs that occurred in their lives and developed their responses accordingly. Non-persisters cited academics, personal and financial problems as the principal concerns they had faced that led up to the non-continuance of their education. All of these students had previously encountered significant financial and/or personal problems in their past and had still persevered in their education to the point of having gone to college enough to have achieved a reasonable degree of academic success, three of four had earned Associate's degrees. As a result, all of the non-persisters saw this point in their lives as being merely a pause in the pursuit of a degree that they would obtain. This break in their education process was not seen as an end in and of itself.

Research has shown the importance that family in general and that parents in particular have had on student retention (Glau, 1990; Lightfoot, 1978; Tierney,1991). This study's respondents were all found to be first generation college students. All of the students reported that initially their families were critical in their decision making to enroll and, later, to decide if they should remain enrolled. The absence of a role model in

their home who had completed college should not be under-appreciated. Both the parents and students would find it difficult to express their support or articulate their problems in a way that would be meaningful to the other. These concerns could vary from identifying campus services to career planning.

The importance of the Seminole Nation Higher Education Office should also not be under estimated. The SNHEO provided not only quality services, but was also the sole contact at the tribal level used by all of the respondents. Therefore, its potential for disbursement of information or of collectively influencing a wide constituency of the tribe should not be under estimated. Students reported wide satisfaction with the office manager and general operations, and cited the grade incentive monies as being helpful.

For virtually all respondents in the study, financial concerns were present. As acute as their need for financial aid was, it was apparent that the level of funding received by some students was still inadequate to meet some individuals needs. This inadequacy was particularly true for those students who were married with a family. A pressing need exists to identify some additional sources of funds for these students. However, considering first-generation students generally unacquainted with university or tribal services, it is possible these students do not know how or have not explored the financial aid opportunities already be in place.

Alternative Explanations and Implications

The findings of this study provided several useful implications with regards to higher education and tribal programs. Institutional structures at State University were found to have had only a nominal impact on the persisters and non-persisters alike.

Similarly, native culture was shown to have a minimal influence as a determinate of whether a student persisted at the university. The findings suggest that there is a need to consider some alternative explanations as to why neither institutional structures or native culture proven to be a significant factor in swaying students to persist or to withdraw.

Alternative explanations for the results of this study were divided into three categories: research, theory, and practice. Implications for the study findings are presented within the same sections.

Research

The review of literature conducted for this study indicated that either or both institutional structures or native culture could be expected to play a major role in student persistence. The findings from this study could suggest that past research could have been in error. However, a concern raised in this project is that a common practice of a large portion of current research concerning Native Americans tends to lump Native Americans together as if Indians all had a single cultural base. This researcher has argued that such a contention is erroneous. The wide variances that exists for Native Americans with regards to environmental settings and family orientations makes such a composite culture extremely unlikely. As a result, referenced research on American Indians may have been accurate for the population involved in that particular study but may not have the wide application that had been previously perceived. It is also appropriate to note that the sample involved in this study was quite small and was focused entirely on one tribe at one institution. The findings from this study may reflect information that only applies specifically to this group within this particular setting.

There is also the consideration that the researcher resumed that the Seminole culture would be self-evident and clear cut to the respondents involved in the study. Based on such a belief, the culture was expected to be easily identifiable. It can be argued that perhaps for these respondents the concept of "Seminole" did not have the sharp distinction that had been anticipated.

Therefore, taking these considerations into account suggests a need for conducting additional research studies. Projects should include:

- Research directed at Native American persistence in a variety of higher education settings.
- Research focused on factors that impact the success of Native Americans who transfer to universities from two-year colleges.
- Research that examines the impact of a variety of tribal cultures in similar higher settings.

Theory

A second general consideration is that perhaps the application of Mary Douglas's cultural theory was not as powerful a tool as was needed for this study. Orienting the study towards Douglas cultural bias did identify that both subgroups are similar in their strong destain for a sense of group affiliation. K Douglas was also helpful in establishing that there is a sharp difference between the members of the two sub-groups in their need for structure (grid). However, alternative cultural theories might have provided frames for this study that could have conceivably provided some additional cultural perspectives.

Therefore, there is a need to consider some additional theoretical implications:

• There is a need to use Douglas to evaluate several American Indian tribes within the same institutional setting.

• There is a need to use Douglas to see if different Native American tribes exists with similar social environments.

• There is a need to evaluate the use of Douglas's theory for Native Americans in varying higher education settings.

Practice

In making applications of the findings from this study suggests that transfer factors may play a larger role than anticipated. All of the non-persisting students had experienced a significant degree of success at a two-year institution before later dropping out of higher education at state university. Proximity seemed to have played a significant part in their related withdrawal.

An additional consideration is that all of the Seminoles in the study may not represent the same cultural orientation. Seminoles have not lived in a reservation setting since Oklahoma's statehood in 1907. Nearly 90 years have passed with Seminoles living in close proximity with the majority culture. As a consequence, perhaps the persisters are in fact more reflective of the majority culture with which they regularly interact and therefore have a minimal amount of trouble dealing with public education. And, similarly, perhaps the non-persisters are more representative of the traditional native Seminole culture and have greater difficulty with state higher education systems. Thus, persisters may better represent the socio-economics of the area rather than a distinct cultural entity.

These considerations suggest that higher education and tribal agencies may need to develop some programs specifically designed with these concepts in mind.

- The tribal higher education office needs to serve as the focus point for student services. Services should include advising individuals and families of the types of experiences and situations that can be expected to be encountered by first generation students. This should be a cooperative program that involves both tribal personnel and representatives from the various colleges and universities. The institutional staff will provide current information and be potential contacts at the institution.

- Universities need to develop aggressive outreach programs that contact first term Native American students to acquaint them with the types of services that are available at the institution. This could be tied to the disbursement of financial aid. New students should be placed in a situation where is it very easy for them to meet first hand people at the school that can help them with concerns.

- Conceivably universities could benefit from programs that would extend their contacts with Native American students who in two-year college settings, but who desire to continue on to a four-year institution. Programs such as extension classes, telecourse distance learning and dual enrollment activities could be developed to meet this concern.

Suggestions

This study has demonstrated the usefulness of McCracken's (1988) method and Douglas's (1992) theories to gain insights about the influence of culture for members of the Seminole Nation completing at least one year of study and attending a selected public

university. A 1995 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) report the state's concern for Native Americans:

> Oklahoma must identify and address its problems with Native Americans and education for not only is it important to the well-being of the state as a whole, but Oklahoma could be the key to Native American education for the entire country (p. xi).

These results should serve as encouragement for additional research to re-apply these approaches with other tribes and in other public university settings. Seemingly, these additional studies would be best accomplished through either of two principal directions: individual tribal entities taking the initiative to instigate similar research studies or an emphasis program by the State Regents to embrace a system-wide series of projects that could be directed from a central location.

Both options offer distinct advantages and weaknesses. Tribal-initiated programs have a immediate ability to gain successful gatekeeper relations but would have to carefully manufacture distance in the collection process and might not provide ready access for a wide distribution of their results. State Regents directed programs would provide for a high degree of uniformity in data collection and distribution, but would lack ready access to critical tribal offices and relationships. Still, both design considerations are workable.

It would also be beneficial to conduct follow-up research with the non-persisters. Particular value would be gained by determining if the non-persisters were actually dropouts or are, in actuality, stop-outs. Research could be directed at evaluating if the non-persisters re-enter the system and complete a degree as they indicated. Additional

interest would be stimulated by determining if the non-persisters complete a degree and if they then move towards the goals they reported in the study. If non-persister goals change, documentation of that process would prove helpful to educators.

Additional research should also be considered to investigate transfer factors for Native Americans who attend two-year colleges. Six of the nine respondents in this study had completed their Associate's degree; three persisted, and three did not. The other remaining non-persisting student had also attended two-year colleges but had not graduated. Therefore, the importance of two-year colleges was high for this group overall. Most of the students in this study reported that their level of institutional affiliation had been much higher while were attending a two-year college. Studies that were be directed at the examination of the variance of student perceptions regarding these two settings could prove beneficial to educators. Additional research could also explore the levels of enrollment and subsequent transfer success for Native Americans at various two-year institutions.

Commentary

One area of caution that needs to be addressed: The reader needs to recognize that there is no one Indian culture. Native Americans who have spent their lives on a reservation are presumed to be different than Indians who have lived in a city, but there is also little reason to assume that any real similarity exists in the cultures of two tribes who were raised in the same geographical area. American Indians have a certain shared historical unity, but their behaviors and attitudes vary greatly. However, the use of Douglas's (1982/1992) cultural theory makes it necessary to only conceptualize four

cultural orientations. The researcher is then allowed a significantly greater opportunity to interpret the findings for a variety of tribes without having to combine them or considering any two or more tribes as a single entity.

Higher education must meet the challenge of preparing students for a future in which an increasing percentage of the jobs will require a four-year college degree (Hudson Institute, 1987). Furthermore, the number of minorities entering higher education institutions is increasing (Wright & Tierney, 1991). To be able to meet the educational need of tomorrow's leaders, university administrators must recognize that minority students are ethnically diverse and may need to make adjustments in traditional services provided by the institutional structures. Nationally, Native Americans make up a relatively small percentage of the general population, and frequently less than one percent of the higher education enrollments. However, in many institutions, particularly in the Southwest, American Indians can represent a substantial portion of the enrollment. This study was important in the insights it can provide institutions which have a sizeable enrollment of Native Americans. Institutions that appreciate the interrelationship existing between themselves and Native Americans will have a significantly better chance of retaining those American Indian students.

The financial pressures on higher education today have resulted in the necessity for institutions to operate efficiently. A common-sense business maximum states, "It is always cheaper to keep a client than it is to look for another one." It is economically wise for colleges to learn how to increase the number of students they are able to retain in their institutions. An expanding amount of research suggests minority students in general, and Native Americans in particular, find that the traditional public college

environment has not been nurturing to their culture (Tierney, 1992). Obviously the institutional structures developed by the university play a direct role in the creation of a campus ethos. Evidence of the absence of this nurturing is indicated by the increasing number of Native Americans who are enrolling in two-year tribal colleges but not at the four-year, public institutions (Eberhard, 1989). This study was conceived in an effort to provide information to impact the attrition rates of Native American students.

Research centering on Native Americans in higher education shows a consistent and dismal picture of neglect and ineffective effort (Darden et al., 1994; Wright, 1991). A review of the literature demonstrates that attempts to educate Native Americans in public higher education institutions has achieved sporadic and disappointing results (Wells, 1989). The focus of these efforts has consistently been an attempt to approach Native Americans with programs and processes shown to be successful with white students (Eberhard, 1989). The stated and unstated assumption of such assimilative attempts was that Indians would eventually learn that what is appropriate for white students must be appropriate for American Indians (Darden et. al., 1994; Merian, 1928; Moffett, 1914; Wright & Tierney, 1991). The continued near absence of Native Americans obtaining baccalaureate degrees and the tenacity of these centuries-old educational attitudes and racial practices are perhaps the ultimate illustration of the utter lack of respect and appreciation for the differences of a minority culture (Tierney, 1992).

The need is clear. Higher education must move past a point of acknowledging a desire for multicultural education and instead take the essence of multiculturalism to heart. As Lingenfelter (1992) stated, "We will become transformed people, [not only] wearing the multicolored coats of the world's diverse cultures, but living transformed lives within them" (p. 23).

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Dear

My name is Richard Leeper. I teach at Seminole Junior College and am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I also coordinate assessment programs at Seminole.

For my doctoral project I want to study what factors influence Native American students when they are deciding whether to continue in school after they have completed a year of college. The Seminole Nation Higher Education office has agreed to send out this letter to students whom they feel might be interested in helping me with my study. Please accept this as my request for your participation in this project.

The process will involve my doing individual interviews with students who have decided to continue in college and with students who decided not to continue in college. This interview should last about an hour and will be at a place that is agreeable to us both. Your name will not be used in the final report and I will respect your privacy. Naturally individuals will be entitled to stop their interview at any time.

I anticipate doing most of the interviews during the months March and April. Once I have finished the write-ups of the interviews, I will contact each participants to review my report to help insure that it contains an accurate account of our interview. I hope you will decide to join me in this project. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at Seminole Junior College, or phone me at 405-382-9297.

Thanks in advance for your help!

Sincerely,

Richard Leeper

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

"I, _____, understand and consent for Richard Leeper to make an audio recording of our interview of _____."

Use of this audio tape is restricted to providing a record of the content of the interview conducted on the stated date. The audio tape and the interview itself are to be regraded as confidential information and will not be used in a way that allows me to be identified as a participant in the study.

I further understand that I may halt the interview and/or the recording at any time.

The design of the study calls for the participants to be part of an extended interview that is typically completed in a single session. The setting for this interview is a place of mutual agreement between the participant and the interviewer.

This proceeding is done in conjunction with a doctoral study, entitled The Relationship Of Institutional Structures And Native Culture In The Persistence Of Seminole Students Attending Oklahoma Higher Education Institutions.

The purpose of this project is to provide a descriptive reference for universities and tribal education offices regarding factors that influence the retention and attrition of Native Americans in higher education.

If I have questions I may contact Dr. Edward Harris, EAHED Assistant Professor, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; Telephone 405-744-7244. I may also contact Jennifer Moore, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; Telephone 405-744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I verify that I am of majority age and sign this form freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time:_____ A.M. / P.M.

Signed:_____
Signature of Subject

I certify that I have personally explained all the elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it.

Signed: _____
Signature of the Interviewer

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself / general background information.

2. How would you describe the Seminole Nation in Oklahoma?

3. What was your main motivation to go to college?

4. Who influenced you to go to college?

5. Tell me about why you picked this particular college to attend?

6. When you finish here, what's next?
   or
   Why didn't you continue with your education?

7. What's been a normal "school day" for you?

8. What advice would you give another Indians who wanted to enroll at this college?

9. Where do you see yourself being in 10 years?

APPENDIX D

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Name_____ 2. Age _____

3. Current Marital Status: Single Married Divorced

4. Ages of children in the home _____

5. College Attended _____

6. Primarily Enrollment: Full-time Part-time

7. Estimate Your Cumulative Grade Point Average: _____

8. Residence while in school: At Home Residence Hall Other

9. Employed while in attending: No Part-time Full-time

10. Percentage of school costs paid by financial aid received _____

11. Father's highest level of education _____

12. Mother's highest level of education_____

13. Sibling's highest level of education_____ age_____

_____ age_____

_____ age_____

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 02-02-96 **IRB#:** ED-96-067

Proposal Title: THE RELATIONSHIPS OF INSTITUTUIONAL STRUCTURES AND NATIVE CULTURE IN THE PERSISTENCE OF SEMINOLE STUDENTS ATTENDING OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

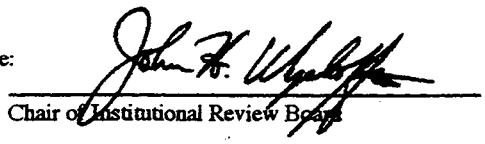
Principal Investigator(s): Edward Harris, Richard E. Leeper

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:  Date: February 9, 1996

Chair of Institutional Review Board

2

VITA

Richard E. Leeper

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: ISSUES OF PERSISTENCE FOR NINE SEMINOLE NATION OF OKLAHOMA STUDENTS IN AN OKLAHOMA PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Holdenville, Oklahoma, September 16, 1951, the son of John Herbert and Billye Lewis.

Education: Graduated from Holdenville High School, Holdenville, Oklahoma, May, 1970; received Bachelor of Science in Special Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, May, 1975; received Master of Science degree in Student Personnel and Guidance from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, May, 1976; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, July, 1996.

Professional Experience: Field Services Counselor, State of Oklahoma, June, 1976 to July, 1978; Educational Services Counselor/Officer, Wiesbaden Air Base, Wiesbaden, Germany, October, 1978 to December, 1982; Owner/Manager of Lewis Printing and Office Supply, Holdenville, Oklahoma, January, 1983 to December, 1988; Dean of Students, St. Gregory's College, Shawnee, Oklahoma, January, 1988 to July, 1992; Assessment Coordinator, Seminole State College, Seminole, Oklahoma, August, 1992 to present.